PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 83

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1984-85

COMPRISING PERIOD
15 JULY—26 JULY 1985

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IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 83**

SEVENTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1984-85

House of Commons

Monday 15 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL

ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE BILL

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

Queen's consent on behalf of the Crown, signified.

Read the Third time, and passed.

DURHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

As amended, considered.

Clause 7

POWER TO CLOSE FOOTPATHS ON RIVER BANKS ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Amendment made: Page 5, line 42, leave out "purpose" and insert "event"—*[Mr. Armstrong.]*

Clause 8

AS TO FREEMEN

Amendment made: page 8, line 34, leave out "for" and insert "or"—*[Mr. Armstrong.]*

To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Scottish Coalfield (Employment)

1. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the employment situation in the Scottish coalfield.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): The National Coal Board tells me that at 6 July it had 10,216 industrial employees in the Scottish area. This compared with 12,590 at 31 March 1985. The net fall in numbers was therefore 2,374. During that period 2,332 men accepted voluntary redundancy.

NCB (Enterprises) Ltd. is actively seeking to encourage job creation in Scotland.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Secretary of State recognise the considerable grievance about the Scottish economy and job losses? We should all be happy to record an improvement in industrial relations and output, particularly in Fife, but would that not be enhanced if the Secretary of State used positive forces to ensure that the cases of more than 200 men dismissed during the strike are reviewed by the National Coal Board? At the same time,

will the right hon. Gentleman use his good offices to ensure that good industrial relations are brought back to the Scottish coalfields?

Mr. Walker: I have already informed the hon. Gentleman that a review of all the dismissals in Scotland has taken place. I understand that the result of that review will be known shortly.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State make absolutely clear to the House and to the nation that those employed in certain coalfields who have been treated differently from men working in other coalfields will get a fair crack of the whip, like the many Members of Parliament who have fallen foul of the law over the years but have somehow managed to retain their jobs, like his old pal Jim Slater, who cost the taxpayer £70 million——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a bit wide of the question on the Scottish coalfield.

Mr. Skinner: —and is now exploiting people once again?. If he can apply something to Jim Slater, he can——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is an abuse of Question Time.

Mr. Walker: We notice the hon. Gentleman's pathetic utterances. Whenever he has a bad case, he does that. It would be appreciated if the hon. Gentleman showed a little interest in those who suffered from violence during the pit dispute.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Opposition welcome his statement that there will have to be some meetings concerning victimised miners in Scotland? It is an abuse of language to say that there has been a review. There has never been a review.

Is the Secretary of State aware that employment in the mining industry in Scotland will continue to contract as long as there is no investment in the area? As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we have figures from Mr. Wheeler showing that from 1979 to the present time investment in the Scottish coalfield has been reduced. No investment means contraction of the industry.

Mr. Walker: The Government's investment record in the coal industry is much better than that of the previous Labour Government. Therefore, any comparison of investment must show that in coalfields throughout the country there has been a substantial improvement under this Government — an improvement that did not take place under the previous Labour Government. Whether the comparison is on closures, investment or anything else, this Government's record compares very favourably with that of the previous Labour Government.

Electricity Consumption (Remote Meter Reading)

2. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Electricity Council to discuss the results of trials on the introduction of remote meter reading for electricity consumption.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): As the trials are still in progress, it has not been possible to discuss the results with the chairman of the Electricity Council.

Mr. Freeman: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the trials are successful, the electronic reading of the consumption of gas, electricity and water will be facilitated? Does my hon. Friend also agree that if that can be done, there will be two advantages: first, that the house owner will be able to see, by visual display in the house, exactly what is being consumed and therefore how much is owed; and, secondly, the important principle in all utility consumption that the consumer is paying for what is consumed and therefore metered?

Mr. Goodlad: As I have said, the trials are still in progress. The indications are that the electricity cable can be successfully used for joint remote reading purposes by all three utilities. Feedback from consumers indicates that they positively welcome the information provided by the display unit.

If the present trials are successful, the next essential step will be to establish the cost-benefits of the large-scale introduction of such a system in order to justify the investment needed.

British Gas

3. **Mr. Michael Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he proposes to include in the legislation for the privatisation of the British Gas Corporation provisions covering safety standards for the installation of gas appliances; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan Smith): Yes, Sir. The installation and use of appliances are already the subject of safety regulations, and my officials are discussing them with the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Morris: That is an encouraging answer, but there is concern outside. Is there not an analogy with the privatisation of British Airways, where pilots have maintained safety and will continue to do so? Can the public be totally reassured in the same way that, when gas is privatised, safety will be a major consideration?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Yes, indeed. British Gas has a very good safety record. We want to do everything in the legislation to encourage the highest possible standards.

Mr. Portillo: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there is absolutely no reason to think that the privatisation of British Gas will involve lower safety standards? Does he agree that if allegations are made that privatisation will involve lower safety standards, they can be seen as the usual scare story that always accompanies a privatisation proposal?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend is correct. Safety is extremely important, and all those concerned are getting the fullest co-operation in the preparation of the law.

Mr. Rowlands: If British Gas is privatised, thereby creating a huge private monopoly that is not answerable to the Secretary of State or to this House, will the Minister at least give us a complete assurance that any regulatory body which governs that industry, in regard to safety, prices or other energy matters, will be of a maximum, not a minimum, character?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: We all know the hon. Gentleman's background. He wants maximum Government interference in the affairs of British Gas. Privatisation will involve less interference and greater

efficiency. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, under the arrangements to be made in the legislation, safety standards will be fully safeguarded and encouraged.

National Coal Board

4. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss future prospects for the industry.

8. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current prospects for the coal industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I regularly discuss future prospects with the chairman, and I am confident that there is a healthy future ahead for the coal industry if it can bring operating costs into line with market opportunities.

Mr. Orme: Is it true that the basis of the new "Plan for Coal" has been agreed without any negotiations with the appropriate trade unions, and that the plan will lead to the closure of at least 50 pits and the loss of 50,000 jobs in the mining industry?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir.

Mr. Dormand: In spite of what the right hon. Gentleman has just said, is he aware that the relationship between the NCB and the miners is as bad today as it was when the strike ended? As we all want a quick return to good industrial relations in the mining industry, will the right hon. Gentleman instruct the NCB chairman to take the pressure off the area directors? Are we to have a continuing dictatorship of the mining industry by MacGregor, or are we to return to local management, which has had such a good record?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman's analysis is surprising, because the NCB chairman believes that the maximum power should go to the areas. Mr. Scargill's view, that all the power should go to the centre, is in stark contrast to that. There has not been a single word of criticism by the Labour party of the monstrous change of rules that Mr. Scargill is putting forward.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Coal Board, will he discuss the confrontation last Thursday night between the leader of the Nottinghamshire democratic union and Arthur Scargill, which showed the nation why Nottinghamshire is having to fight for trade union democracy?

Mr. Walker: It is surprising that the leader of the Labour party, when calling for the unity of the NUM—a perfectly good measure for which to call—does not recognise that all the disunity has been caused by the president of the NUM.

Mr. Mason: Is the Secretary aware that the major obstacle impeding further progress in the coal mining industry is the sad and sorry state of industrial relations? Will the right hon. Gentleman impress upon the NCB chairman that, once more, local trade union officials should be allowed to work on regular day shifts and that NUM branch secretaries should have two days on the surface to enable them to deal with trade union affairs? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that MacGregor and some of his area directors have been harsh and vindictive since the strike ended? Finally, is he aware that, unless this vindictiveness ends soon, there will be no stable industrial peace in the coalfield?

Mr. Walker Most of the vindictiveness since the dispute ended has been shown by the intimidation of miners who worked. It would be nice to hear the Opposition condemn that. The constant utterances that the only way to achieve anything is by industrial action and taking powers from the regions and from the ballot, which are going on in the NUM at present, are constantly losing customers for the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: Are the Government encouraging the NCB to negotiate and recognise the new union? Are they encouraging the NCB to attach particular importance to productivity bargaining?

Mr. Walker It is for the NCB to decide whether to recognise any union. I am sure that it will take that decision in a responsible way. It is vital to the future of that industry and of any other to improve and encourage productivity.

Mr. Foot: Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that his responsibility is directly in dealing with the chairman of the NCB? Instead of making wild charges against everyone else in the industry, why does he not deal with that problem? Is he trying to tell us that there has been no interference by Mr. MacGregor in the way in which south Wales miners and the south Wales organisation run their affairs?

Mr. Walker: I should make it clear that Mr. MacGregor wishes power to go to the areas and negotiations to be taken on a regional basis. He believes that that is the correct way in which to run the NCB. I wish that the same applied to the NUM.

Mr. Skeet: Bearing in mind the coal industry's future, will my right hon. Friend consider strictly limiting the subsidies payable to coal? Will he consider the fact that imports should be related to the price of coal on the world market?

Mr. Walker: There is no doubt that a mass of good investment could and should take place in the coal industry. That could have good results for the industry and all who work in it. I hope that the unions will concentrate on ensuring that that is done and will encourage it to take place. On imports, this is a matter about which there is no total control at present. There is no doubt that Britain can produce coal to supply our industries and the electricity boards with a sensible basis on which to compete in the world.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Secretary of State has told the House about Mr. MacGregor's intentions, but is he satisfied that those intentions are working in practice? Is it not the case that in the past closures have been carried out area by area and that one of the genuine problems of the recent strike was that they were carried out nationally? What guarantee do we have that that will not pertain in future?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should study the position. The recent strike took place because Mr. MacGregor suggested that proposals should be made and examined regionally. If the hon. Gentleman had studied the details of the strike, he would know that what he said was wrong.

Mr. Benn: Will the Secretary of State cast his mind back to March 1980, when the Cabinet, of which he was a member, gave instructions to Lord Soames that a pardon

was to be given to every person in Rhodesia after 15 years of rebellion against the Crown and the most horrendous civil war, and that the best way forward in Zimbabwe was through reconciliation? Will he now look back at that pardon ordinance and ensure that similar act of reconciliation is launched in the British mining industry?

Mr. Walker: I look forward to the right hon. Gentleman seeking reconciliation for the many miners who balloted to work and worked during the strike.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the industry's prospects would be improved if the Labour party made clear its view on the recent changes to the NUM rule book?

Mr. Walker: In fairness, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has made his view clear. It is only the leader of the Opposition who has not.

Mr. Strang: Why has the board's policy of victimisation been pursued with such vengeance, especially in Scotland? Is the Secretary of State aware that petitions circulating in the collieries show virtually unanimous support for the men's reinstatement, and that for Church leaders and leading lawyers the matter has become a human rights issue? How much longer must we put up with this injustice in Scotland and elsewhere?

Mr. Walker: The Opposition are divided on the matter. Some, including those who are sitting near to the hon. Gentleman now, are in favour of reinstating all miners, no matter how guilty of violence they are, and, indeed, of taking miners out of prison. I am glad that at least the Leader of the Opposition condemned that.

Wind Turbines

5. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to allocate funds for the installation of wind turbines for agriculture.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): Wind energy is one of the most promising renewable energy sources of electricity generation in the United Kingdom, and my Department's programme, which plans to spend more than £6·5 million this year, is concentrated on large turbines for electricity generation.

Mr. Speller: The provisions of the Energy Act 1976 have allowed people to erect wind turbines to generate power into the grid. Is my hon. Friend aware that one can produce energy for intensive farm use, such as piggeries, at half the grid price, and yet receive a grant for connecting the farm to the grid system? Should we not think about some form of grant to aid the installation of wind turbines? Is my hon. Friend further aware that as wind turbines have become more popular, rating authorities have not infrequently made a rateable charge per annum equivalent to half the revenue obtained, which is negating all the advantages of the Energy Act?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible for rates. I am delighted that my hon. Friend referred to the potential for agricultural applications, because recently my Department funded a study which showed that at present prices and costs nearly 2,000 farms could operate wind turbines economically.

Energy Efficiency Year

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the resources he proposes to allocate for the promotion of Energy Efficiency Year 1986.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Energy Efficiency Office will be allocating more than £10 million to a range of promotional and demonstration activities. In addition, much greater resources will be provided by a whole range of interested organisations, industries and commercial concerns, which will all join in our national theme of energy efficiency. I anticipate that the overall allocation of resources to energy efficiency year will be substantial.

Mr. Knox: Are many of the ideas suggested in the energy study competition for schools likely to be implemented during energy efficiency year?

Mr. Walker: There were many good ideas in that competition. I am glad to say that, shortly after Question Time, I shall be giving tea to the winners on the Terrace and hearing their views.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In view of the Secretary of State's declared interest in welcoming Hainault high school, some of whose pupils are listening to our proceedings today, does he accept that the clear conclusion of its report is that people will invest in energy conservation if the capital outlay does not take too many years to recoup? Does he further accept that, at local level, we need a facility to allow that to happen, with local authorities as facilitators, the Department as the instigator and millions of people as the beneficiaries? Finally, does he accept that it is his responsibility to instigate such a programme during the next 12 to 18 months?

Mr. Walker: During the past year enormous progress has been made in obtaining the assistance of voluntary groups, especially low-income groups. We shall do all that we can to spread the success that has been achieved during the past 12 months.

Mr. Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend study the position in countries, such as the United States, Denmark and Australia, where the use of home audits has achieved dramatic improvements in energy conservation during the past few years?

Mr. Walker: The audit system is important, and we hope to make considerable progress in that area during the next 12 months.

Polkemmet Colliery

9. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what reply he has sent to West Lothian district council, as a result of the evidence sent to him, following West Lothian district council's inquiry into the future of Polkemmet colliery.

Mr. David Hunt: The closure of collieries must be a matter for the NCB in consultation with the mining unions, which can choose to appeal through the colliery review procedure, including appeal to an independent body under the amended procedure.

Mr. Dalyell: Which specific figures in the district council's evidence do the Government dispute?

Mr. Hunt: Thanks to the hon. Gentleman, I have received a copy of a statement by West Lothian district

council, which I am considering. I shall respond to it, and to the point that the hon. Gentleman has just made, as soon as possible. However, nothing that he has said can alter the fact that Polkemmet was flooded at the end of August 1984 as a result of the withdrawal of safety cover by the NUM. That disgraceful act of vandalism can never be excused.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister cannot get away with that statement. Polkemmet was flooded because the director of the National Coal Board would not permit middle management to go in and do the job that was being done in every other coalfield. Is the Minister aware that Polkemmet is important to the steel industry, and especially to Ravenscraig? If he accompanied some of his hon. Friends to Ravenscraig, he would discover that it is importing all the coking coal it needs. Does he accept the need for Polkemmet to be reopened and the fact that, technically, it can be done?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has got all those facts wrong.

Energy Saving (Capital Investment)

10. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what requests for information have been received by the Energy Efficiency Office from local authorities regarding capital investment in energy-saving measures.

Mr. David Hunt: Local authorities have achieved a great deal, but there is considerable scope for further improvement. The Energy Efficiency Office has had some requests for information about the provision of additional funds for energy efficiency.

Mr. Beith: How can local authorities make the energy efficiency improvements which will really help their tenants if they cannot spend capital on doing so? Would not the most practical contribution that the Government could make in this area be a relaxation of the capital restraints on local authorities spending money which they already have in the bank from the sale of council houses, in order to improve the energy efficiency of their properties? Will the Department take the initiative in ensuring that that is done?

Mr. Hunt: Within existing limits, considerable savings can be achieved by local authorities with only modest investment. I hope that, in 1986, which will be energy efficiency year, there will be a substantial increase in this area.

Mr. Forman: Is the Department taking steps to encourage the production of energy from the combustion of domestic and commercial waste? What progress is being made in that direction?

Mr. Hunt: The answer is yes. My hon. Friend is right to highlight the considerable scope for improvement in the burning of domestic and animal waste and in the general area of biomass. That featured largely in our recent statement about the allocation of research and development funds for the coming year.

Mr. Rowlands: Is not the simplest form of energy efficiency for householders, whether tenants or owner-occupiers, the home insulation grant? Is the Minister aware that in 1983-84 there was a 33 per cent. reduction in such grants in Wales alone, which has been mirrored in other areas? Would it not be better to give maximum encouragement to home insulation grants?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the history in this area is of an underspend. However, according to the latest figures, there is clear evidence of a substantial take-up of those grants. I hope that this area of funding will be fully spent this year.

National Coal Board

11. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss future investment in the industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: I meet the chairman of the National Coal Board from time to time, to discuss many issues, including future investment in the coal industry.

Mr. Nellist: Is it not a fact that 11 days ago Mr. Michael Eaton, the National Coal Board spokesman, spoke of 7,000 jobs created by new investment at Selby, at Ashford and at Coventry? When that is set alongside the 70,000 jobs, which is the real target to which MacGregor and the Tory Government wish to cut the industry, does it not show that the last 12 months' struggle of the miners was totally justified, and that any attempt to set up a bosses' union in Nottinghamshire will merely play into the hands of the Secretary of State, MacGregor and the National Coal Board, who wish to run down the coal industry?

Mr. Walker: I am delighted that during the period in office of this Government investment has been at a much higher level than it was under the Labour Government. The National Coal Board wishes to make major investment in the coal industry. I know how delighted the hon. Gentleman's constituents are at the enormous investment that the board has recently announced for his area, as they were delighted when the majority of people in the Coventry pit returned to work.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a danger that the recent changes in the NUM rule book will persuade existing and potential customers not to use coal as an energy source, whether it be the CEGB, the BSC or industrial users, and that consequently the greatest danger to investment in the National Coal Board is Arthur Scargill's attempt to use the coal mining industry as an instrument of class warfare, a policy which appears to be supported by the leadership of the Labour party?

Mr. Walker: Since the dispute took place, virtually every utterance by Mr. Scargill has been to say how he intends to use industrial action to the maximum in future. The change in the rules, which gives him power to take industrial action at local level without ballots taking place and without necessarily having the agreement of the local people is again an illustration of the type of war that he wishes to conduct, all of which loses orders for the coal industry, all of which stops our programme to get people to convert to coal, and none of which is condemned by the Opposition.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Secretary of State agree that investment decisions and the investment record are matters that should and could be considered by the new colliery review procedures? Will he therefore, when he meets the chairman of the board, tell him that it is about time that

acceptable procedures were introduced, remind him that the board was committed to introduce those last autumn and agree, further, that the Government were certainly also committed?

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman knows better than most, the board has circulated in great detail its proposal, which very much fits in with all the principles agreed last autumn. The sooner they are implemented, the better I shall be pleased.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: In view of the Government's clear commitment to the future of the mining industry, shown throughout the mining strike, does the Secretary of State agree that he should consult the Nottinghamshire miners, if they so wish, about the future of the industry and future investment in the industry? Does he also agree that any party that is seriously intent upon taking power in the country should be able to do that, without fear or favour?

Mr. Walker: I believe that it is true that the Nottinghamshire miners had no desire to split off from the NUM. They did, however, give due warning that, if the incredible changes of rule proposed by Mr. Scargill took place they would almost certainly have to. At no time in that period was there any attempt by the Labour party to condemn those changes of rule.

Mr. Stanbrook: Would it not assist investment in the coal industry if the National Coal Board did not have millions of pounds invested in private firms outside the industry?

Mr. Walker: I think it will be found that those investments are now very small indeed.

Mr. Orme: Will the Secretary of State now address himself to the future of the industry? Is it not a fact that an authoritative report has been published which states that 50,000 jobs and 50 pits could be in jeopardy? Will the Secretary of State answer that point?

Mr. Walker: I have already answered it once. There is no such report that forms the policy of the National Coal Board. Therefore, I have answered it no once, and I answer it no again. If the right hon. Gentleman, in the interests of the industry, would address himself to the damage that is being done by the leadership of the NUM, he might have some respect.

Straw

12. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what research is being carried out to develop the use of straw as an energy producing fuel.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Within my Department's biofuels programme, we are supporting the development of equipment to produce straw briquettes.

Mr. Yeo: The problem of surplus straw is acute in Suffolk. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the Danish experiment in which farmers' co-operatives use straw as fuel for local heating schemes and are able to use the residue for fertiliser?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There is considerable potential for the use of straw. It is estimated that the surplus straw currently burnt in fields could have a potential of about 4 million tonnes of coal equivalent a year. There are interesting experiments abroad. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State recently visited, and was impressed by, an installation in Denmark, which my hon. Friend mentioned.

Coal Industry Dispute

13. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to investigate cases of alleged intimidation and victimisation of miners who continued to work during the recent coal mining dispute; and if he will make a statement.

21. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to investigate cases of alleged intimidation and harassment of miners who continued to work during the recent coal industry dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have taken up with the National Coal Board all such cases brought to my attention and can assure the House that each has received urgent and individual attention.

Mr. Bruinvels: I thank my right hon. Friend for that helpful and constructive answer. Has he seen reports in the *News of the World* and *The Sun*, which show that an alarming number of families of miners who worked throughout the strike have been severely victimised, threatened and had their houses daubed, and that many miners have been prevented from returning to work? Can my right hon. Friend advise miners who want to go to work, and their families, how they might be protected and will be able to convict those appalling miners — *[Interruption.]*—who deny peoples' right to go to work?

Mr. Walker: I am surprised at the hilarity on the other side of the House at such appalling circumstances. There is no doubt that there has been a lot of dreadful intimidation. I am glad that the Coal Board has made it clear that anybody who is found guilty of intimidation will be sacked immediately. In some cases that has been done. The board has organised transfers, early retirement and other means of helping those concerned. I hope that both sides of the House will condemn the appalling intimidation that has occurred.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that all cases of intimidation are being brought to light? Does he agree that it would be sensible for police in plain clothes or dressed as miners to accompany miners down shafts to get a feel of what is going on? I think that they will find that there is a great deal more intimidation than has been reported.

Mr. Walker: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is correct. One of the problems of intimidation is that the person being intimidated is often scared to report it. The police and everyone else are endeavouring to do their best to end these totally criminal actions.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Scotland 70 per cent. of those who were dismissed were lay officials or elected members of strike committees? That is a clear example of victimisation of strike organisers. When the right hon. Gentleman says that miners guilty of victimisation should be sacked, how does he answer the case of a miner in Coventry, Clive Ham, who was accused by the Coal Board of victimisation, found not guilty by a court of law but who still remains sacked? Under the right hon. Gentleman's tutelage, the Coal Board has set itself up as judge, jury and executioner.

Mr. Walker: I should like to hear just one utterance from the hon. Gentleman in condemnation of the appalling violence that has taken place. Those of us who watched some of the events at Bilston Glen on television were only happy that those who caused it should be punished appropriately.

Mr. Strang: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that both sides of the House oppose intimidation, no matter where it comes from? Does he agree that if the board and the authorities really want to improve industrial relations in the coalfields, they must first reinstate victimised miners?

Mr. Walker: The majority of victimised miners are those who worked during the strike, and they have been victimised ever since. As for sackings, each case has been examined individually.

Alternative Energy Sources

15. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what funding has been made available for research into alternative energy sources since 1979.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Total research and development expenditure by my Department on renewable energy from 1979-80 to 1984-85 was approximately £76 million. The forecast expenditure for 1985-86 is £14 million.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend is aware that gas, coal and oil are finite sources of energy. Could not a better case be made for the Government reinvesting some of their receipts from fission fuels into research into alternative forms of energy such as tidal, solar and wind energy? When can we expect a go-ahead for the pilot barrage on the Severn estuary?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is worth while studying these alternative forms of energy as my Department is doing by helping to fund research. However, we have to concentrate on research on those sectors which produce the best prospects, and that is what we are doing. As my hon. Friend knows, a study into the Severn barrage is going on now and it is hoped that the report of that study will be received by the end of the year. This will enable decisions to be taken.

Mrs. Clwyd: Instead of putting money into alternative sources of energy, would it not be a better put money into existing coalfield communities, particularly in my constituency, where we have the highest male unemployment rate in Wales — 28 per cent. at present? On Thursday one of the pits will come up for review and will possibly close, with a loss of 570 jobs, pushing male unemployment up to 33 per cent. Is that not intolerable in the 1980s?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am sorry that the hon. Lady does not support investment into revewable sources of energy, which is widely supported throughout the country. I refute what the hon. Lady has said about investment in the coal industry, on which the Government have the best record of any Government in recent years. What the hon. Lady says is utterly hypocritical.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Questions

34. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will bring forward proposals to require that written questions are tabled either by the hon. Member in person or personally written and signed by the hon. Member.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): No, Sir.

Mr. Chapman: The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) asked a question on 29 April and pointed out that the number of written questions had doubled in the past four years and now cost over £1·5 million to deal with. Will my right hon. Friend have second thoughts about this? Does he agree that my proposal is fair, reasonable and effective, particularly if my right hon. Friend is not minded to recommend a limitation on the number of written questions that any hon. Member can table at any one time?

Mr. Biffen: Any decision formally to limit the number of questions that an hon. Member may table should appropriately proceed after the matter has been considered by the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Is the Leader of the House aware that there is much evidence that this procedure is being abused by certain hon. Members? Is he aware that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) is probably the most expensive Member that there has ever been in the House and that his worthless written questions are costing the taxpayer thousands of pounds a year? Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to take steps to stop that nonsense from that hon. Member?

Mr. Biffen: That is an invidious accusation. It so happens that I have before me a roll of honour of hon. Members who have tabled the largest number of questions, and I have to say that the top three do not include my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels).

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I thank my right hon. Friend for defending me. I ask questions on my behalf, I ask them myself, in my own interest and to prevent others from asking questions relating to my constituency. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there are other hon. Members who ask many more questions that I do? Should they not be the hon. Members to whom this question is directed?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps we should come back from the league table, which I think it indelicate to publish, to the point of the original question. Many hon. Members are uneasy about the practice of hon. Members who sign the question forms and then give them to research assistants to table as they think fit. That is wholly contrary to the spirit of how this place works.

Mr. Shore: It would be quite wrong if any attempt were made to impose a limit on the number of written questions that can be asked by hon. Members. However, it would be interesting to have the reasons of the Leader of the House for rejecting the proposition that written questions should be tabled by the hon. Member in person. What does he have against it?

Mr. Biffen: It is a very interesting proposition that written questions should be not only tabled but written out

by the hon. Member concerned. A very real departure of that magnitude should, I think, proceed after the Select Committee on Procedure has had a chance to examine it.

Research Assistants

35. **Mr. Soames** asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will take steps to seek to restrict the access of research assistants to the House facilities.

Mr. Biffen: Research assistants are already subject to certain restrictions in their access to House facilities. I would also refer my hon. Friend to the second report of the House of Commons (Services) Committee of this Session, which was debated in the House on 12 July.

Mr. Soames: I hope my right hon. Friend will realise that I was very sad not to be able to be here on Friday. I was attending to my constituents. Does he agree with me that our facilities are being overrun by this monstrous regiment of research assistants? Does he also agree that there is widespread evidence of abuse by some of them? Will he therefore seek radically to recast the rules that guide these procedures?

Mr. Biffen: A number of suggestions were made in the debate. The Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) will be considering them, in addition to the original recommendations that were made. I have no doubt that the recommendations that are made during this Question Time will be added to those that were made in the debate on Friday last.

Mr. Beith: If the Leader of the House were to seek to go beyond the sensible recommendations of the Services Sub-Committee, which were debated on Friday, could he not then be accused of seeking to ensure that Ministers are extensively and well advised, but that those who seek to challenge and question Ministers do not have the benefit of such advice?

Mr. Biffen: The usual charge is that Ministers are ill advised.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that some Members of this honourable House are willing to give out passes like confetti? Should there not be a limit to the number of so-called research assistants which so-called hon. Members can inflict upon us all? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!".]

Mr. Biffen: That is one of the points that was made in the debate on Friday last.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think the House approves of the phrase "so-called hon. Members". Every Member here is an hon. Member.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Leader of the House aware that I am not surprised that the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the chairman of the Tory party does not need research assistants? On the other hand, those hon. Members who are in the serious business of politics—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I take the view that the hon. Member is very much in the serious business of politics.

Mr. Boyes: Those hon. Members who are in the serious business of politics and who are trying to solve the complex social problems that have been caused by the reactionary politics of this Government need as many research assistants as possible to help us. If the right hon. Gentleman wants an example, the new board and lodgings regulations are causing massive problems both in my constituency and in the constituencies of other hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: I think that we are all beginning to get a slight touch of July fever. The Sub-Committee of the Services Committee will be considering this matter. Doubtless it will consider the hon. Gentleman's point, along with others.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members, who find that the increasing number of lobby groups with access to word processors are drowning us with correspondence, are very grateful for our research assistants? I suspect that most of the difficulties that are encountered by research assistants, and come from them, are attributable to the fact that hon. Members do not brief them in the practices of this House as well as they should.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what I am sure is one of the relevant factors. I undertake to draw the attention of the right hon. Member for Deptford to the points that have been raised this afternoon. They will be important to him when he makes his further studies.

New Telephone Exchange

36. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the reasons for the decision to purchase a new telephone exchange system for the Palace of Westminster and the criteria which were used to determine that all hon. and right hon. Members and their secretaries should be provided with new telephones.

Mr. Biffen: I refer my hon. Friend to the first report of the Services Committee in Session 1980-81, in which the reasons for a new exchange being required are set out at length. New telephones are required because, among other things, the existing ones will not work with the new exchange.

Mr. Bruinvels: I read the report before tabling this question. To provide the House with these so-called wonder phones with alarms, digital clocks and calculators, not just for hon. Members, but for secretaries as well, seems to be a gross expense, bearing in mind that it will cost £2,037,000 to provide those facilities. Is my right hon. Friend able to say what will happen to the old phones?

Mr. Biffen: The old phones, which were rented, will be returned to British Telecommunications and subsequent use will be made of them. I appreciate my hon. Friend's anxiety that we should not spend more on this than is strictly necessary, but I question whether a secretary should somehow or other have a lesser telephone facility than an hon. Member.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Leader of the House aware that many of us are thankful that we are at long last to have a decent telephone system to replace the decrepit one from which we now suffer, one that has constant malfunctions and gets wrong numbers? It is a welcome step that this House is at last being dragged into the 20th century in at least one area of modern technology.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that that was intended to be helpful. We are to have a new telephone system because

the demand is such that a new exchange must be obtained. It is not true to say that the present telephone facilities are archaic and impede us in doing our job properly.

CIVIL SERVICE

Trade Unions

39. **Mr. Parry** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he nexts expects to meet the Civil Service trade unions; and what matters he expects to discuss.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I will be meeting representatives of some of the Civil Service unions on Wednesday 17 July to discuss, at their request, the pay of senior civil servants.

Mr. Parry: When the Minister meets the unions, will he discuss trade union membership? Will he state whether it is true that the draft new Civil Service handbook no longer encourages civil servants to join the trade union of their choice? If that is so, is it not inferference with the Civil Service trade unions?

Mr. Hayhoe: On Wednesday we will be discussing the pay of senior civil servants. If the unions want to discuss other matters, I am sure that suitable opportunities can be arranged. I understand that the handbook is in draft and is being discussed with the trade unions.

Mr. Forman: When my right hon. Friend meets the Civil Service trade unions, will he make it clear to them that, while it is necessary to keep firm control of public sector pay, including Civil Service pay, all members of the Government recognise the quality and dedication of the work done by the Civil Service?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am happy to endorse what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the Minister refute the suggestion made in an article in *The Times* recently by Mr. David West, that the reduction in the numbers of civil servants has come about as a result of reductions in work? Will he also comment on the suggestions by Mr. West that the Government's systems management in the Civil Service is woefully inadequate?

Mr. Hayhoe: The article in *The Times* by Mr. West was misleading and inaccurate in a number of ways. His direct experience is many years out of date. Staff inspectiion, which was his particular interest, has an important role to play, but the significant reduction in the number of civil servants from 732,000 in May 1979 to under 600,000 today has been achieved in many other ways. I am happy to pay tribute to the Civil Service, which has contributed considerably to an increase in efficiency.

Dr. McDonald: When the Minister meets the Civil Service unions, will he also discuss with them the fact that, despite their continued efforts, the loss of 1,000 Customs and Excise officers since 1979 has contributed to the 750 per cent. increase in heroin smuggling? Will he agree with them that the cut in Customs staff has been extremely irresponsible? Will he admit that the 50 per cent. increase in staff for special investigation will be of limited use because they will be redeployed from Customs staff elsewhere?

Mr. Hayhoe: That is not a matter that is likely to be discussed on Wednesday when I meet the Civil Service unions. As I said, we shall be discussing the pay of senior civil servants. Perhaps the hon. Lady did not hear my original answer. The hon. Lady is incorrect in suggesting that the reduction in the number of uniformed staff has led to an increase in the amount of heroin coming into this country. She should be aware of the significant increase under this Government of the number of Customs and Excise specialist investigation staff. She should also pay tribute to the significant successes that have been achieved as a result of that.

Private-Public Sector Contacts

40. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards encouraging contacts between senior civil servants and leading City business men.

Mr. Hayhoe: Such contacts form a natural part of the work of many senior civil servants. The interchange of staff between the Civil Service and the private sector has been encouraged over the years by successive Governments as a means of improving mutual understanding between the Government and industry.

Mr. Dalyell: What response have Ministers made to the serious statements contained in an article in the *Daily Star* on 13 June concerning the case of Hilda Murrell and highlighting an alleged relationship between the distinguished Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robert Armstrong, and Sir Dallas Bernard, a director of Zeus Securities?

For what particular purposes does the taxpayer finance the activities of Zeus Securities? For what purposes does the taxpayer finance the activities of Mr. Gary Murray? I know that a writ has been issued by Sir James Starritt in relation to the article, but ought there not to be a Government statement on these alarming statements?

Mr. Hayhoe: That supplementary question goes way outside the original question. However, thinking that the hon. Gentleman might seek practically to abuse the procedures of the House in that way, I have had inquiries made. While Sir Robert Armstrong has a long-standing personal friendship, though by no means a close one, with Sir Dallas Bernard, he has at no time had any official dealings either with Sir Dallas Bernard as a director of Zeus Security Consultants, or in any other capacity, or with Zeus Security Consultants and he did not know until he read the article in the *Daily Star* on 13 June that Sir Dallas was a director of that company. I think it wrong that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) should peddle and give credence to tittle tattle of this kind by his supplementary questions in the House.

Sir Dudley Smith: On a far more important question, is my right hon. Friend aware that the relationship between senior civil servants and the whole industrial spectrum is far better than it was, for example, two decades ago, but that it is still capable of improvement and that we have many lessons to learn from a number of other countries, not least Japan?

Mr. Hayhoe: I agree with my hon. Friend. Encouraging contacts between the Civil Service and industry and commerce is of value to both the public and private sectors.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of that reply, I wish to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Merit Pay

41. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on the progress in introducing merit pay into the Civil Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The experimental programme of performance bonuses, which I announced in December last, is now being implemented in Government Departments. The first payments of bonuses will be made during the 1985-86 financial year.

Mr. Eggar: Is not it a pity that the new programme is restricted to the open structure? Should we not be working more rapidly towards being able to make merit payments throughout the Civil Service?

Mr. Hayhoe: This is an experimental programme, and I am sure my hon. Friend will think it right that it should be assessed, monitored and evaluated carefully before any extension can be decided on. But I ought to make it clear that I and my officials are prepared to discuss extensions if they are proposed by the unions.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: If merit pay were introduced for Ministers, would not most of them starve?

Mr. Hayhoe: The right hon. Gentleman must have been reflecting on his own ministerial experience.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How does the Minister justify the widening pay differential between civil servants and people employed in the private sector?

Mr. Hayhoe: The pay settlement made with the Civil Service this year, which gives an average of 4·9 per cent. to the whole of the Civil Service, is, in the circumstances of the time, fair and reasonable.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Terrace (Teas)

37. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal how many teas were served on the Terrace of the House of Commons in the summers of 1955, 1965, 1975 and 1984, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The number of teas served on the Terrace during summer 1984 was 4,894. Information for the earlier years mentioned in my hon. Friend's question is no longer available.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the number of people wishing to have strawberries and cream on the Terrace of the House of Commons far exceeds the supply of teas available? That being so, will he seek to extend the season during which these teas are available in suitable facilities, perhaps starting at Easter rather than at Whitsun? [HON. MEMBERS: "No strawberries."] If strawberries are not ready by then, could not we have cherries—Waterloos or Wellingtons perhaps.

Mr. Biffen: I am not aware of this imbalance, but I shall draw it to the attention of the person who matters, my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving).

Famine Relief

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will urgently make available additional lorries to famine relief organisations in Ethiopia and Sudan.

3.34 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): I have decided to provide £1·6 million to Save the Children Fund for the purchase of 40 heavy trucks for Sudan. A further £400,000 will cover local bodywork for the 60 Leyland trucks already presented to SCF, continuing costs of their logistics team, and 10 Landrovers.

I announced on 10 June that we were providing £750,000 for trailers and truck hire costs in Ethiopia. I shall be reviewing the transport position when I arrive in Ethiopia tomorrow.

Mr. Dalyell: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's visit to Ethiopia and the provision of more transport, which we were told over the weekend was still necessary. But what should I say to constituents of mine who see £40 million-worth of mostly suitable trucks sitting in the car park of British Leyland at Bathgate and hear at the same time on the radio that after all the exchanges in the House there is still a shortage of trucks both for the Sudan and for Ethiopia?

Mr. Raison: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman tells his constituents that, for the 40 heavy trucks, the provision of which I have just announced, we shall be going to British Leyland first to see whether it can provide them.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear whether this is additional to the aid budget or simply, as has happened before, a transfer from one part of the aid budget to another part? Will the right hon. Gentleman look into the possibility of seconding British Railways personnel to Sudan, where the railway network is in a critical state and needs skilled people—as do the ports?

Mr. Raison: The money comes out of the sum that I have set aside for dealing with this very serious problem in Africa, and that is as it should be. We have already provided expert personnel to help solve this very difficult problem with the railway line in the Sudan. We shall continue to do everything possible to make sure that the railway line operates as effectively and as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Although the extra transport is welcomed, is it not deplorable that, as revealed by my right hon. Friend in answer to me on Friday, only 43 per cent. of the food aid promised by the EEC at Dublin last December has been delivered? Is my right hon. Friend willing to discuss with his colleagues how the pledge made to drought-stricken Africa might now be kept?

Mr. Raison: It is not deplorable. There is at present enough food in the ports of the Sudan and Ethiopia and there is no point in piling more food into those ports until it is possible to distribute it. The European Community pledges will be of the greatest value in the months to come. Let us remember that this is not a short-term problem but one that will last for many months yet. Thank goodness the European Community is doing so much to help.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the Minister's reference to the Save the Children Fund, has he had time to consider last Thursday's request by that organisation that the Government should rescind their decision to withdraw the Hercules aircraft from Ethiopia and Sudan? Has he responded to that request, and will he announce his answer in Ethiopia tomorrow?

Mr. Raison: As I said, when I go to Ethiopia tomorrow I shall be reviewing the transport situation there. The great need now is for road transport. The RAF is doing a splendid job, but when the rainy season is over it may not be necessary for it to continue that job.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend be having any contact in Ethiopia with the military authorities, who seem to throw all the people out of the camps, though their Government deny that they have instructed the army to do that? Will he see that the useful aid that is given is not frustrated by being directed to camps that are then emptied by the army?

Mr. Raison: I do not expect to have discussions with the military authorities, but I certainly shall be having discussions with Ethiopian Ministers. The whole question of the effective use of the aid that is being provided will, of course, feature prominently in those discussions.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The Minister has rightly referred to Sudan and Ethiopia. May we have an assurance that the problems faced by Somalia will not be forgotten? Somalia also has a famine, it has also had many refugees coming across its borders and it also needs help.

Mr. Raison: I recognise that Somalia has difficult problems. The European Community will be able to help Somalia, and we shall certainly bear its needs in mind.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): My right hon. Friend has provided considerable aid by way of transport—lorries and aircraft—in helping to deal with the terrible drought, and he is to be congratulated on that. Does he agree, however, that the current need is not for more trucks—in view of the rainy season in the Sudan, when trucks cannot get through the desert, which is flooded—but for research into, and support for, arid agriculture, so as to find a way in which the people can plant crops and reap them year after year, to avoid this problem in future? Will he therefore review the statement, published today, that he made in reply to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, in which he said that he did not believe that additional money should be made available? As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, my right hon. Friend has transferred money. In so doing, has he not deprived his Department of the ability to enter into long-term and vital commitments?

Mr. Raison: The short-term and long-term needs are of the greatest importance. We have found the money for the short-term needs out of the contingency fund, from the shortfall and by reallocating the food aid programme, and that has been a wise and successful policy. For the long-term, we provide substantial resources for development, including the development of agriculture, and we are spending well over £200 million a year on development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that I granted the private notice question on the question of additional lorries for famine relief.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Minister respond to the remarkable generosity of people to the Live Aid concerts at the weekend by agreeing to match pound for pound the amount contributed by the British public following the Wembley concert?

Mr. Raison: I entirely share the view that the Live Aid concert was a magnificient occasion, and everybody who helped to put it together deserves the greatest possible congratulations. In the last financial year we provided £95 million of famine-related aid. This year we are targeting to provide another large amount. That, together with the long-term development aid that we are providing, adds up a very significant sum indeed, and certainly not one about which I need be apologetic.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the point he made about the need for lorries and the fact that in the long-term we shall have to replace them demonstrates the need for a continuing and expanding programme? Is he aware that there would be support in all parts of the House and throughout the country for an increase in the budget spent on the Overseas Development Administration of the Foreign Office?

Mr. Raison: I believe that there is great concern throughout the country about the events in Africa, and that is as it should be. We are, of course, bound by our public expenditure policy. However, I can tell the House that within my budget I shall do everything possible to ensure that we apply our resources where they will be of most effect—and Africa, of course, takes very high priority in that.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is there not a very significant contrast between the voluntary money raised by the amazing Live Aid concerts at the weekend and the attitude of the Government? As there is quite clearly tremendous resonance among the public for support for aid to Ethiopia and the Sudan, why do not the Government look at ways and means of forgoing the money that will go to them from the concerts, which would pay for lorries for Ethiopia and the Sudan?

Mr. Raison: I believe that a sympathetic view is being taken about the tax aspect. Surely the point is that it is uniquely a chance for people to show directly that they wish to contribute. It is entirely admirable that there should be so much voluntary contribution in addition to the large amounts provided by the same people through their taxes. I think that we have nothing of which to be ashamed.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): The whole Chamber echoes the outstanding admiration for and support of all participants in the Live Aid concerts. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that spares for trucks are sent not only in the impending rainy season but going right into next season, which is essential?

Mr. Raison: I think that my hon. Friend is right. Throughout, I have taken the view that the provision of spares for transport is one of the most valuable things that we can do. I certainly do not intend to turn my back on that policy.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): While the Minister basks in the reflected glory of the weekend's events at Wembley and Philadelphia, may I ask whether he considers it hypocritical of his Government to run down the bus and truck industry of this country, losing 40,000 car and other related jobs in the city of Coventry during the past 10 years, while at the same time building up EEC food stocks in that city to the tune of £3 million, and to the tune of many hundreds of millions of pounds throughout the country as a whole? Instead of platitudes from the Box, why do we not have a plan for building trucks to take the surplus food from Britain and Europe to where it is needed in Africa?

Mr. Raison: The very substantial contribution of food by the European Community comes, of course, from exactly those surpluses. Without them, it would be very much harder to find the food.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, a short time ago, the Ethiopian Government promised that they would release a large number of military trucks for use in transporting grain. Recent reports suggest that they have not been wholly forthcoming in meeting that commitment. When my right hon. Friend is in Addis Ababa, will he make it clear to the Ethiopian authorities that the international community expects the Ethiopian Government to co-operate wholeheartedly with Kurt Jansson and the United Nations authorities if they are to continue to receive the same levels of support from the international community that they have received hitherto.

Mr. Raison: I fully understand my hon. Friend's point. It is one of the most important topics that I shall be discussing in Addis Ababa this week.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Does not the Minister agree that the transport crisis was both predictable and predicted some nine months ago? Have not we and the EEC failed in this crucial last stage of delivery from the ports to the people who actually need help?

Will the Minister now consider air-freighting spares for the lorries? Is he convinced that there are adequate teams of mechanics who will be available on the spot to deal with the lorries? Will he reconsider the withdrawal of the Hercules, a point already put to him? Will he give the present position of the trains for which our British manufacturers tendered in January and to which the slow EEC bureaucracy agreed only in June?

Is not part of the tragedy, as has been mentioned, the contrast between the fantastic response of our people and that of the Government, who have not matched that response, who have given not a penny extra in aid in spite of the crisis, and who in real terms in this year, compared with last year, are giving £30 million to £40 million less in Government aid, which almost wipes out the amount of private money given?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are predictable and misleading. We have made the provision of spares a priority throughout. Nobody could have worked harder in trying to help with the transport problems, particularly on the railways, where we have made an exceptional effort. Our RAF Hercules team is unique. It has carried out operational sorties every day since November.

Of course transport difficulties are great, but we must remember that we are not the Government of Ethiopia or

Sudan. Those Governments take the ultimate decisions. We are doing all that we can to help them, but we cannot take over the running of their railway systems.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement that more transport will be made available to Ethiopia and Sudan, but has internal security in Tigré and Eritrea improved, since the Ethiopian Government's genocidal policy is, to a large extent, the root cause of the misery?

Mr. Raison: As the House knows, the civil war which has been raging in Ethiopia—in Tigré and Eritrea—is one problem which has made it so difficult to get aid to those people who most desperately need it. I shall be talking about that problem during my visit.

Trustee Savings Banks (Ownership)

3.46 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I wish to raise with you, Mr. Speaker, a point of order of which I have given you cursory preliminary notice about the Trustee Savings Banks Bill, which is due to be debated this evening. The three branches to my argument will be related to conspiracy to deceive the House, hybridity and whether the sub judice rule applies.

When the Bill was introduced, the Government White Paper stated in paragraph 4.1 that there was doubt about the ownership of the trustee savings banks. The Bill was promoted, not directly by the Government, but at the request of the trustee savings banks through their central board. It was said that the legislation was required for two reasons—to settle doubt and to create a new framework for the operation of the banks.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury told the House earlier this year:

"The TSBs are not owned by their employees or depositors."

Later the Economic Secretary said:

"There is not just uncertain ownership; there is a lack of ownership of the TSBs".—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 35, 70.]

On the basis of the White Paper and statements by the Minister, we assumed that investigations would be made. This morning a copy of a memorial to counsel and the opinion of counsel dated April 1979 came into my hands. It was by John Murray, QC, to the trustee savings banks' central board about the status of the ownership of TSB (Scotland). I understand that the TSB central board asked for similar opinion of counsel about the status of ownership of the banks in England, Wales and the Channel Islands. I cannot say what the outcome of that will be.

The opinion was specifically requested by the TSB central board and the legislation promoted by the Government is based upon it. Counsel was asked to state:

"Who owns a Trustee Savings Bank and in particular:—What is the nature of the relationship between a Trustee Savings Bank and its various categories of customers?."

I shall leave with you, Mr. Speaker, a copy of that statement, but since all my points are based upon the ownership issue I shall quote one more passage. When relating to legal cases, counsel said:

"In accordance with the general rules for Scots law of unincorporated associations therefore the assets were to be treated as the property of the members."

On the following page, counsel went on——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is really making a speech of the kind that he might make in a debate. Will he put his point of order to me?

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman kindly gave me notice that he intended to raise the matter. I have looked into it carefully and I can give him the answer.

Mr. Wilson: Considering that I intend to allege a conspiracy to deceive the House, I think it worth while to give the background to what has happened. I shall encapsulate it briefly and move on to my three points.

On page 8 of his opinion, counsel said:

"I may be thought to have passed too easily over the question 'who are the members'. I do not think that in Scots law this matter admits of much doubt. The members, in my opinion, are these persons who agree to associate for the relevant purposes, and this they do by depositing a sum with the bank under the relevant conditions".

[Mr. Wilson]

Further down the page, counsel says:

"In my opinion the members for the time being, subject to the qualifications I have mentioned earlier, own a TSB."

There is one major trustee savings bank affected, and that is the one covered by the legislation.

At the very end of his opinion, on page 12, counsel says:

"But I cannot accept as correct the view that a depositor in dissolution is merely entitled to the return of his deposit and interest at some stipulated rate. The measure of his entitlement is related to produce, not interest, and the TSB is debarred from deriving any benefit from the deposits or produce."

Counsel then adds that the provisions of the relevant Act strongly support that view.

Finally, counsel says:

"It would suggest that the only funds held by a TSB not falling to be handed over to the depositors on dissolution will be the 'produce' of sums deposited on a non-interest bearing basis. For the avoidance of doubt I should state that I see no reason why produce should not include 'capital' as well as 'income' produce."

"Produce" is a technical term in Scotland for the reserves of the Trustee Savings Bank.

Either the Trustee Savings Bank's senior trustees have sat on a legal opinion and failed to inform the Government, or the Government were informed of the legal opinion obtained in Scotland and chose to ignore the significance of it and thus mislead the House.

The former Economic Secretary to the Treasury from April 1981 to 1983 is now a director of the TSB central board.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is alleging certain things that the Government may or may not have done. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Wilson: The point of order—I have already elaborated on the background—is on a matter that is dealt with in "Erskine May" on page 148 of the 1983 edition, where it says that it is an offence to mislead the House.

We have statements on record by a Minister purporting to say that there are no owners of a bank, whereas he is promoting a Bill which seeks to give away the assets of that bank to third parties without consultation with the owners. We have been given certain information, and it is either correct or incorrect. Therefore, it is a very serious matter, particularly if we recognise that the owners of the Trustee Savings Bank——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are all matters that are concerned with the debate on the Trustee Savings Banks Bill and with the Government. They are not matters for me. The hon. Gentleman must now put his point of order to me so that I can deal with it.

Mr. Wilson: I was doing that, Sir. I was saying that here we are dealing with a bank which is owned by working people, and the resources of which are likely to be disposed of to speculators.

The whole affair of the TSB is either a contempt of the House or a breach of privilege involving the conspiracy to which I referred. It may go further than that, beyond this House.

My second point of order relates to hybridity.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going well beyond a point of order. If he considers that it is a matter of privilege and writes to me in the usual way, I shall look into it with the greatest care, as I have already fully looked into the matters concerning the Bill to which he has drawn my attention. I think that I should perhaps now rule upon it.

I have considered the point——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman got into touch with me to put his point of order and I have looked into it very carefully. He is making the speech that he would make in the debate if he were called. I hope that he may be called.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member put his point very succinctly, please?

Mr. Wilson: My second point of order relates to hybridity, which flows from the whole question of ownership. Until now there has been no problem in relation to this aspect in this public Bill, as the assets of all the trustee savings banks were not appropriated to some other ownership. We now find that, in Scotland at least, ownership could be with the depositors. I shall quote from "Erskine May" to assist you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I can help the hon. Member. This is the first time he has drawn my attention to the point that the Bill might be hybrid. It is normal practice for hon. Members to give Mr. Speaker notice of possible hybridity so that he can look into that aspect. I undertake to look into this matter and to rule upon it when the House considers the Bill. I cannot deal with this aspect now.

Mr. Wilson: I shall be very grateful to you, for that ruling, Mr. Speaker. I received this opinion this morning from counsel in Edinburgh and I have only just arrived in the House. I sent a letter to you specifically to give you notice. I am grateful for your statement on that point.

May I mention one last matter? There is a question of the Bill being sub judice because of an action in court. We have information about ownership which completely changes the whole picture of legislation. I am raising this point of order because we may be in danger of perpetrating a scandal on the reputation of the House by seeking at this stage to deal with legislation that is sub judice and may be subject to subsequent inquiry.

Mr. Speaker: I have looked carefully into the matter to which the hon. Member drew my attention. I remind the House of the terms of the sub judice resolution of 23 July 1963 which is prefaced by the words

"subject . . . to the right of the House to legislate on any matter."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1963; Vol. 681, c. 1417.]

There cannot be any question of debate on the Lords' amendments to the Trustee Savings Banks Bill being affected by the sub judice rule.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) referred to hybridity. You were a Member, Mr. Speaker, when a previous occupant of the Chair had to face a similar situation with respect to the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill. He had to make a study of that matter and the debate on that legislation changed dramatically because of his ruling.

The first matter raised by the hon. Member for Dundee, East concerned Lord Bruce-Gardyne and one or two others

having their fingers in the pie and obviously making a killing. The second point on the ownership argument is one of which you should take account, as your predecessor did. In view of the previous decision on the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill, it would be advantageous for those of us who were not made aware of this problem until the past few minutes if the debate on the Trustee Savings Banks Bill were suspended and dealt with at a later stage. You would be able to make a ruling, Mr. Speaker, and we could delve more deeply into what could be a question of fraud and conspiracy by Government Members either in this place or in the other.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is always a great supporter of the Chair, and I am most grateful to him for his advice. I have already said that I shall look into the matter. I shall certainly do so before we consider the Bill.

American Bar Association (Visit)

3.59 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is brief. I am sure that you are aware that the facilities of the House have been severely interfered with today because of the presence of hundreds of visiting Americans. The Welsh room has been turned into a first-aid room, without prior consultation with Welsh Members. The parking facilities for disabled Members have been converted into a portaloo for the visiting Americans. In future, Mr. Speaker, will you give us notice of such changes? Are we being well paid for the loss of facilities?

Mr. Speaker: I shall draw the matter to the attention of the Services Committee. I was not aware of the point that the hon. Lady raises. I am aware that the American Bar Association is holding its meeting here, because I was present this morning in Westminster Hall.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the motions relating to draft statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Electricity (Borrowing Powers) (Scotland) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 10) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1027) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY] [SECOND PART]

National Health Service (Pay)

3.59 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): From one argumentative Scot to another I beg to move,

That this House believes that district health authorities and Scottish health boards should not be expected to find the extra resources in the current financial year that are now necessary to implement the Government's decisions arising out of the recommendations of the pay review bodies; and further believes that if no extra money is provided from the Contingency Reserve there will be a damaging in and unacceptable reduction in real terms in standards of health care.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Kennedy: In moving the motion, our task and objective is to highlight the disgraceful state of affairs into which the Government are plunging the National Health Service and important branches of it by rather inadequate and third-rate stealth, and to offer a constructive solution to the present financial paralysis facing many health authorities and the nation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), in a question to the Prime Minister, asked whether

"any pay settlement for the nurses which is above 3 per cent. must be paid for by savings inside the National Health Service? . . . Is that not an appallingly unfair way to treat a dedicated profession?"—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1985; Vol. 80,c. 153.]

If the Minister for Health speaks this afternoon, he may have to behave more in his capacity as a Queen's Counsel than a Privy Councillor. The more one studies the Government's financing of the NHS, the more one realises that the description applied to the former Chancellor of the Exchequer in the previous Tory Government could well be applied to the Minister for Health, who displays all the attributes of a barrister trying his best to defend his client without realising that his client has seen the light and changed his plea to guilty.

The unfairness which my hon. Friend tried to highlight was that the lack of extra cash to fund the rewards would lead to job reductions. The complete lack of extra cash in the aftermath of the pay review body recommendations will, as an inevitable and direct consequence of ministerial decisions, lead to a lowering of health provision and a decline in the quality of patient care. That is why the alliance describes the Government's NHS policy as cuts by stealth at the expense of patients. Today we seek to highlight the plight of the NHS, and to persuade the Government to make extra cash available from the contingency reserve.

It is worth putting into context the role and position of nurses within both the NHS and the community as a whole. Who better to quote than the Minister? In a debate on the NHS, referring to the nursing profession's pay increase, the Minister said:

"The Government have made it available to them, because we recognise their abstention from industrial action and the fact that the country, the Government, and the patients in particular, owe them a great obligation. It is irrefutable that it is good news for nurses to have major pay increases, in the second instalment, particularly for the staff nurses and ward sisters. It is irrefutable

[Mr. Kennedy]

that it is a major advance for the nursing profession to have a lasting system."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 216.]

Those are noble and honourable sentiments, which will command support from both sides of the House. It is sad that, characteristically, the Minister is not living up to his rhetoric at the Dispatch Box in his funding of the NHS.

The Minister and the Secretary of State for Social Services have confirmed that the cost of the pay review body awards would be about £240 million in England in 1985-86. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) who is responsible for health in Scotland, is present, and I shall deal with the Scottish position later. DHSS Ministers make great play of the fact that this year they are cash allocating an additional £500 million, which is equivalent to 5·5 per cent., to branches of the NHS. They refer in particular to the hospital and community health services, and rightly so. However, we must consider what the figure means when it is analysed carefully and beyond the rhetoric of Ministers.

The January 1985 public expenditure White Paper notes that the hospital and community health services will account for more than 70 per cent. of the NHS budget. In 1985-86, current expenditure will increase by 5·8 per cent. over last year's total. The inflation rate, which the Government estimate at 3·5 per cent. and which will produce a notional real terms increase of 2·3 per cent., reflects the Government's general illustrative assumption of a 3 per cent. pay rise in the public sector and a 5 per cent. general price rise in the NHS sector. Those figures are taken directly from the Government's White Paper.

However, there is an important qualification and, for the purposes of the debate, a fundamental point to be made. The assumptions about wage and price increases are fundamental to the forecasts, because the 2·2 per cent. real growth figure has disappeared as a result of the 6 June doctors and nurses pay review body reports. The additional pay costs in 1985-86 for cash-limited NHS services will be 5·4 per cent. for doctors and 5·6 per cent. for nurses. The inflation rate or relative price effect estimate has been pushed up to nearly 6 per cent.—I shall return to that figure and quote the Minister shortly —according to the Social Services Select Committee's sixth report, which was published on 22 June. That would mean a real terms decrease of about 0·3 per cent., which is 0·2 per cent. higher than what the DHSS now concedes was one tenth of a 1 per cent. decrease in 1984-85.

Those detailed figures are based on a careful and serious analysis of the projections and on hard accurate statistics, which the Government have made available in their forecasting and White Paper. The figures are extremely damaging because they point the way to further reductions in patient care and health service facilities to fund the costs of legitimate and well-deserved pay increases for the professions allied to medicine — nursing, health visiting and midwifery.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*——

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton) *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: I shall take my pick, but it is something of a Hobson's choice.

Mr. Hickmet: That is not a nice way to describe my hon. Friend and me.

The hon. Gentleman talks about further cuts. Why does he expect further cuts when, since May 1979, the NHS budget has increased by 20 per cent., there are 55,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors and dentists, more outpatients and inpatients have been treated, and there are more day patients and home visits? Why does he speak of further cuts when that is manifestly not the case? Does the hon. Gentleman concede that the Government's record on the NHS is the finest since the war?

Mr. Kennedy: I have been a Member of the House for only two years, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman, who entered at the same time as me, that the gullibility of Tory Back-Bench Members never ceases to amaze me. Let us consider the real world and leave the Thatcherite monetarist universe which the hon. Gentleman seems to occupy. Let us consider what those in the front line of the service say about the figures. The hon. Gentleman did not listen—*[Interruption.]* The public school boys on the Treasury Bench should keep quiet, because we are quoting their figures.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) did not listen to what I said. When he talks about last year's figures, he should remember what I said about a 0·1 per cent. cut in real terms, which, on current predictions, will be trebled this year. That will be extremely damaging.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the National Association of Health Authorities is aware of the difficulties and realities of providing health care. The Minister for Health visited Cardiff last month, and much good that did the Tory party when the voters were asked for their opinion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Cheap."] It was not cheap. I was an expensive mistake for the Tory party to send the Minister to address the annual conference of the National Association of Health Authorities. To be fair to the Minister, we should argue on his terms this afternoon and use his words as the parameters within which the debate should be conducted. When the general manager of West Lancashire health authority asked him what the funding consequences would be for next year's allocation, the Minister said:

"I do not accept that the award poses any threat to standards of care."

Within the NHS, the Minister's is a lone voice compared with what is being said in the authorities of England and Wales and in the Scottish boards. He continued:

"I just hope we are not looking too far ahead"—

it is good to know that the Health Service is being governed by ad hoc expediency—

"with the implications of this"—

[Interruption.] Those are the Minister's words. Hon. Members should heckle him, not me. The Minister continued:

"After all, we have until next February to fund the full award and I hope we will not hear about cutbacks, which I frankly regard as the routine small talk of NHS politics and not necessary in a well-managed and well-run health service."

That demonstration of arrogance and insensitivity to those who must make the painful choices that will be made necessary by having to fund the nurses' pay award is extremely disturbing.

We should examine what some of those who live in the real world said in response to the Minister's comment. The

national association passed a motion calling on the Government fully to meet the costs of the award. The member of Salford health authority who moved the motion said that her authority had already used its efficiency savings—no doubt the Minister will try to tell us about those — and faced a burden of £1 million for wage claims during next year. The person who seconded the motion, who came from North Tees authority, said that patient care would suffer if authorities had to find the cash for awards. Simply to balance the budget, his authority would have to make a 2 per cent. cut, and he referred to this as "crisis management" leading to inefficiency. I ask the House to compare that statement with the Minister's statement that the routine small talk of NHS politics is

"not necessary in a well-managed and well-run health service."

We now know who realises the damage that will be caused by the Government's decision in relation to the nurses' pay award.

However, the matter goes deeper and further than that. During a debate on nurses' pay on 25 March this year, the Minister talked about the expected outcome of the pay review structure. Hon. Members should not let him off of that hook this afternoon. He said:

"The result is that all we are doing is facing everybody—Government, health authorities, staff and review body—with the reality that there is a relationship between pay and service provision."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 195.]

I am glad that we have established that reality, because the thrust of the argument by alliance Members today will be that, given that the Minister has signalled clearly that we cannot divorce the two elements of Health Service management and delivery of patient care, it is wrong for the Government to argue that, even if they do not provide additional funds to meet the pay increases, there will be no detrimental impact on patient care.

Mr. Tracey *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: We have had Tweedledum, so we had better have Tweedledee.

Mr. Tracey: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will give serious instead of frivolous consideration to my point. He talked about service provision. Has he heard about cost effectiveness in service provision? Will he say anything about putting ancillary services out to tender? Has he said a word to the officers of his local health authority about putting services out to tender? He must realise that many costs can be saved in that way.

Mr. Kennedy: Like the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, the hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said at the outset. I quoted from a representative of one authority at the NAHA conference, which the Minister addressed, who recognised immediately that the efficiency savings that the authority had achieved, and which I hope the Minister will confirm have been achieved in many cases, have already been swallowed up as a result of the Government's decision. I was extremely interested to note that the Institute of Health Services Management said that it makes nonsense of Health Service management to try to encourage efficiency savings and then to tell managers that those savings cannot be ploughed back into providing better patient care.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The hon. Gentleman has been remarkably dismissive, as he is entitled to be, of what I said. He used my words when describing an increase which, this year, will be more than 5 per cent. on part of the pay bill of all health authorities when it comes to meeting the review body awards. Given that authorities have had a cash increase this year of 5·5 per cent. and that they are making cost improvements on top of that, has the hon. Gentleman bothered to check the assertions of one stray delegate from Teesside, or is that his only evidence for sweeping aside the carefully considered financing of the nurses' pay award?

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister is being extremely helpful, because he is falling back—I shall quote his words from the debate of 2 July—on the argument that he used against the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who gave an example from his constituency. The Minister said:

"I prefer that intervention"—from a supporter of his——"to anecdotes about a man in Aberdeen."

When it comes to savings, the Minister should take seriously the views of any Aberdonian. He continued:

"It is obvious, apart from anecdotal evidence"—

this from a Minister who talks about me being dismissive—

"that the Opposition have produced from a few places, that pay for nurses and improving the services can go hand in hand if one continues to improve the way that the service is delivered, as the Government have."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 215-16.]

It is interesting that the Minister is sticking to that trenchant defence today.

Let me give a little more anecdotal evidence, and consider the difficulties of Bloomsbury health authority. I know that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is extremely worried about this matter. The authority faces a shortfall this year of about £1·4 million, and the figure could rise to double that.

In Northampton, the district health authority chairman has already said that he is envisaging a £500,000 cut in terms not only of expanding—we are talking not just about pushing the frontiers further—but of maintaining the service of health care.

In Canterbury, the health authority has lobbied furiously, and the nurses in particularly have met their constituency representative to express their grave concern and the fact that they feel that they are being held open to moral blackmail. That is their phrase.

With regard to the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), his district health authority has expressed its grave concern, as no doubt he is aware, about the effects in the area.

As one piles up case after case, it is not enough to be dismissive. The Minister has been dismissive about the anecdotal evidence, but this is the real front line health care, and these are the people who are having to make the unpalatable choices.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): On the question of anecdotal evidence, would it not be an innovation in such a debate to hear from Conservative Members anecdotal evidence that the standard of health care in their communities is increasing? Is not one of the problems that, despite the figures which the Government publish, when we go to our constituencies, constituents report cuts rather than increases in services?

Mr. Kennedy: I think that the hon. Gentleman hits the nail on the head. He is correct in pointing out that that kind

[Mr. Kennedy]

of constituency surgery experience is by no means confined to Opposition Members; it is also apparent on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman keeps referring to me. He began his search for further evidence by citing the example of Bloomsbury district health authority. He knows perfectly well that what is happening in Bloomsbury has nothing whatever to do with the nurses' pay settlement. It has a great deal to do with the implementation of the redistribution of resources between Bloomsbury and other parts of that district and of the country. As the RAWP policy now being implemented by Bloomsbury was introduced by his right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and has been supported by his party throughout, would he please withdraw Bloomsbury and its £1·5 million as an example of anything to do with the debate?

Mr. Kennedy: I do not know how recently the Minister for Health spoke to Bloomsbury, but we spoke to Bloomsbury last week. He is quite right to say that my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) introduced the RAWP formula and policy. He is also right to say, as I pointed out in the debate on the National Health Service cuts less than two weeks ago, that we continue to support the thrust of that policy. But he is quite wrong to try to attribute all the difficulties and ills affecting Bloomsbury to the pure product of the RAWP formula. He knows as well as I do that much of the difficulty which Bloomsbury is facing in terms of the £1·5 million, and indeed almost twice that amount, which it is having to find from the figures which it has presented, comes largely from the lack of additional revenue resources which are being made available to implement the pay review body recommendations. It is typical of the Minister to try to deflect the argument on to other ground and to argue some other formula, which is not the core of the debate, to provide the shield for his own inadequate resource support for the National Health Service.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that Golden Square hospital, to which every deaf person in the country has been grateful, and which is attached to the Royal National throat, nose and ear hospital, is a victim also? It is a constituency case in which we know that everything is good, yet the hospital is closed.

Mr. Kennedy: It is interesting to hear in the House and in the National Health Service generally the contrast between the ivory tower which the Minister seems to occupy in regard to NHS funding and the reality in the streets and communities where patients are worried and nurses are disillusioned and depressed about being given a phased pay increase. It is being made clear locally that this can be borne only on the backs of cuts in provisions elsewhere.

Mr. Hickmet *rose——*

Mr. Kennedy: I shall not give way. I have given way quite a few times. I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's contribution.

I turn briefly — the House will appreciate that it is only fair that I should — to north of the border, Scotland. Thinking about the other land, Wales, I am delighted to note that the cuts in the Health Service and the failure of communication and of content of policy exemplified and personified by the Minister were an important item on the agenda in the Brecon and Radnor by-election. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livesey) will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and put the case for the people of Brecon and Radnor who forcefully identified the paucity of the Government's policy.

The Minister will have heard my views on several other occasions, so I shall not dwell on the difficulties which the Highland health board is encountering. In some respects it is akin to the problems which Livingston is encountering with the new West Lothian district general hospital. It is like something out of "Yes, Minister". It has been told that it can open up new and important technological facilities, which we all welcome, but is being given not a penny extra to run them. Highland health board, for example, has two new hospitals, one in Inverness, which will be opened in August, and one in Wick, which we very much welcome. However, in response, Highland health board had to issue a consultative document which envisaged the effect of the closure of two hospitals in my constituency and in the island of Skye—the reduction of maternity facilities to two beds on Broadford at the south end of the island. Those are the kind of hard-line cuts which are having to be envisaged to meet the revenue implications which arise from lack of Government support. The situation will worsen as a result of the pay award.

It is interesting that the position is no better in Ayrshire or in the health board in Argyll.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that the SHARE formula, which is the equivalent of RAWP in Scotland, was designed by the last Labour Government, supported by most of his hon. Friends, in such a way that central Government did not keep back money in order to help with new hospital opening? It was agreed then that all the money should be disbursed and that health boards should plan for the future opening of hospitals. That is what Highland health board has done with Raigmore which is being opened, has patients in it and is in no way like the hospital in "Yes, Minister".

Mr. Kennedy: It is amazing to hear the Minister sound like an Opposition Front Bench spokesman. He blames the previous Government when his own party was elected to government in 1979. If he thinks that the policy is damaging and if he finds the reductions in patient care offensive, why does he not change the policy? He is the Minister with responsibility and authority to implement such changes. We know why only too well. As he proved in such matters as the limited list, he is willing to lie down at the feet of the Treasury rather than fight his corner for Scottish health provision.

We argue today that cash must and should be found. We specifically earmark the contingency reserve as one possible area where cash can be made available. It has been deliberately set high this year and increased by £2 billion which, on the other side of the swings and roundabouts, will mean a further deflationary measure elsewhere in the economy. The contingency reserve has been increased by £2 billion. That is probably due to the Chancellor learning from his experience of a £3 billion to

£4 billion overshoot last year. The public sector borrowing requirement currently is set at about £7 billion — approximately one third higher than last year. It would appear that the Chancellor is going to allow for a further £3 billion to £4 billion overshoot this year. We do not know exactly how the Government view public expenditure and whether they are proud or ashamed of it.

The truth about NHS expenditure is that a lot of the overshoot—the item which we are debating today being a notable exception — often comes about by default rather than by design. It comes about through demographic pressures and the pace and pressure imposed by medical technology. It comes about through increasing equipment costs in a financial year. That is why at the time of the Budget, alliance Members argued that PSBR should be increased, and we were quite unashamed about that. The proposed increase to £9 billion was relatively modest by international standards. We said that it would be expansionary, that it would require more borrowing and that we should have to find money to increase real expenditure on the Health Service by 1·5 per cent. per year. Such an increase only begins to make some inroads not so much in keeping pace with expenditure but pushing forward the frontiers of health care. That must be a better resource to fund welcome awards for nurses, widwives, health visitors and other allied professions. We should not forget that there will be more cost increases, which will increase the pressure. Anything less than that approach amounts to a serious cut by stealth.

It will be interesting to see how the Centre Forward Conservatives decide to vote at 7 pm. If they support the Government amendment, which is thoroughly fraudulent and bears no resemblance to the funding problem, they will be supporting later this year, and even more savagely next year, further demoralising, debilitating cuts which alliance Members firmly oppose, based on our carefully costed economic programmes which were published at the time of the Budget. We will try to reverse that trend after the next general election when we assume government.

4.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on implementing the recommendation of the Health Service Pay Review Bodies and awarding a fair pay increase to all the staff concerned, with particularly high awards for staff nurses and ward sisters; notes that nurses' pay has risen by 23 per cent. in real terms between April 1979 and March 1985 and will rise significantly this year as a result of the Review Body award; welcomes the 5·5 per cent. increase in health authority and health board funding which, together with the extra resources gained from cost improvement programmes, will enable service developments to take place in addition to the funding of the pay award; and notes with approval the continuing increases in the number of patients treated by the Health Service.'

If I was attempting the briefest possible opening speech, it would go like this. Thanks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health, we now have a record number of nurses paid record salaries helping a record number of patients in a National Health Service which is funded at a record high. However, after what the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) said, it looks as though a bit more is needed.

The motion shows a surprising lack of realism. Rather surprisingly, alliance Members seem today to want to indulge in the luxury of ignoring the substantial improvements that have been made in the Health Service during the past few years. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye is generally a reasonable sort of bloke. We listen to him with care and interest and sometimes with respect for him as a bit of a prodigy—a Boris Becker of the Highlands and Islands, even down to the correct patination.

On 2 July, the hon. Gentleman made some criticisms of Government policy and mentioned the funding of the nurses' pay award. Unlike the Labour Front Bench that day, the hon. Gentleman was realistic about some of our achievements and, unlike today, he was prepared to give credit where credit was due. He talked of our "sensible ideas" and recognised

"that cuts in the number of beds do not always mean that there are cuts in health care."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 229.]

I welcomed that speech and was looking forward to today's. Alas, today, leading for the Social Democratic party, he seems, in view of his talk of cuts by stealth, accusations about public schoolboys on the Front Bench and savage personal attacks on my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health who, as we all know, is not a robust spirit, to have caught more than a touch of Meacheritis during the weekend. I hope that he will recover soon and return back to his old, balanced, self.

We went over much of the ground that the hon. Gentleman covered today in response to a similarly ill-conceived motion moved by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who we are pleased to see on the Opposition Front Bench. The scene set by my right hon. and learned Friend in that debate hardly lends itself to the prospect of overblown damaging long-term reductions such as the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye would have us believe. I shall not repeat what my right hon. and learned Friend said in that debate as we have only until 7 pm and many of my hon. Friends hope to speak.

Nobody would dispute the importance of paying dedicated staff a fair wage for their vital work. I believe that we are achieving the right balance in the NHS. Our concern for the Health Service is amply demonstrated by what we have done for nurses since 1979. There are four main points, all of which, uncharacteristically, the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye skated over. First, between April 1979 and February 1986, nurses' basic pay rates will have risen by an average of 111 per cent.— more than 30 per cent. ahead of the forecast rise in prices during the same period.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Patten: Secondly, we have reduced nurses' working weeks from 40 to 37·5 hours in 1980-81——

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): With no loss of pay.

Mr. Patten: —at a cost of £116 million. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) says, there have been substantial increases in pay, not losses.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is for the Minister to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is difficult for the Minister to decide to give way when he turns his back on the House and is not aware that an hon. Member is trying to intervene.

Mr. Patten: I apologise unreservedly if I have offended the hon. Gentleman, but I shall not give way to him.

Thirdly, we are now employing more nurses than ever before. The House has heard some criticisms of our conduct of the NHS, but I can announce that the manpower figures for March 1985, which we have just received, reveal that the NHS in England has 401,200 nurses—the most in its history.

Mr. Frank Field: Full or part-time?

Mr. Patten: An extra 42,500 whole-time equivalents have been employed in England since we came to office. The equivalent figure for Scotland is 6,358. Even if we take account of the reduction in the nurses' working week, 18,900 more nurses are on the wards in England. Within those increases, the proportion of fully trained nurses is also rising. More and better care is being given on the wards.

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. Friend will recall the challenge made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), stating that the Government cite the blanket figures of 42,000 in England and 6,000 in Scotland. Is my hon. Friend aware of the position in Scunthorpe general hospital, where the number of staff has increased by 55 in the past year, seven of whom are paramedical staff and five of whom are doctors, where there is a new £30 million building programme and where a new psychiatric wing opened last year?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a short debate and interventions, particularly from those wishing to catch my eye later, will prevent hon. Members who wish to make contributions from doing so.

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the improvements to which my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) referred. I was in the Humberside area two Fridays ago and I heard about how pleased people are with the developments in hospitals such as that in my hon. Friend's constituency and in the nearby hospital in Grimsby.

Fourth and last in the list of improvements for nurses, is the establishment of the new review body to make recommendations about appropriate pay levels. This is a most important step foward. There can be no question but that this represents a major advance for the nursing profession. Nurses have never had their pay determined through a standing system of this type and the two major inquiries that produced for a while substantial pay increases for nurses—Halsbury in 1974 and Clegg at a later stage—were one-off exercises. Consequently, pay levels, for example those established by Halsbury, were quickly eroded as a result of the high inflation under the last Labour Government. By 1979, the pay awards had been written off by inflation. Is the Labour party proud of that? It cannot be. I do not believe that the Labour party did anything other than let nurses and the nursing profession down badly.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): While the Government have every reason to congratulate themselves on this magnificent achievement, does my hon. Friend accept that, under Governments of both parties, there is a special problem of underfunded districts and overfunded regions? Will he be prepared to look into this problem urgently, particularly as Southend is one such area?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend knows that I am concerned about the problems of funding in the Health Service in Southend. He has already been to visit me and talk about these matters. He knows that discussions are going on between his health district, the North-East Thames regional health authority and my Department. We are continuing to look at the problem of the Southend health district and I take this opportunity to congratulate its excellent chairman and all those who work in it on what they are doing.

I am sure that the setting up of the pay body has been welcomed, not only by nurses but by everybody in this country who feels an enormous debt of gratitude for the magnificent work that nurses do. Against this background, which was ignored by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, I move on to the arguments about the 1985-86 pay awards and their funding. I thought that the SDP was keen on fair and even-handed treatment, but the hon. Member looked at the one without having set the scene of the other.

We would have preferred to be able to implement the latest set of review body recommendations all at once instead of in two stages. However, we had to strike a careful balance between the speed of implementation of the awards and the capacity of the NHS to absorb these major pay increases without damaging patient services. Our evidence to the review bodies for both nurses and doctors clearly spelled out that no additional funding would be forthcoming on top of the large increase in cash that had already been made available in the general allocations. It is no good pretending that pay can somehow be divorced from the realities of spending generally in the NHS. We have faced up to this, as any Government must, and have made our position abundantly clear. Pay accounts for between 73 and 75 per cent. of the NHS annual revenue budget.

Nor should it be overlooked that the full rates recommended by the review body for nurses and midwives, like those for doctors, will be in payment well before the end of the financial year. I take just two examples. First, this means that ward sisters and staff nurses, the main clinical grades, will be on pay rates between 9 and 14·3 per cent. higher than they were in 1984. In layman's terms, forgetting percentages, this means that from next February we estimate that the average earnings of a staff nurse will have risen by £11·50 per week and by £21·40 per week for a ward sister. These are very considerable increases.

Secondly, the position of student nurses has improved. They get an increase of £3 to £5 a week. Before Opposition Members start talking about the erosion of pay awards by increases in lodging charges for those in residential accommodation, in which a number, but far from the majority, of student nurses are housed, I point out that residential accommodation charges have gone up by 44p.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Will the Minister say something about the effect of this award on nurses' night duty payments?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman has in front of him, or he would have if he went to the Library or looked at

Hansard, the pay agreement arranged between the nurses, the Royal College of Nursing and the Government. The nurses have settled on the figure announced for this year, which includes all their duties. If the hon. Gentleman is telling me that he is unable to recognise genuine improvements in the position of a staff nurse getting £11·50 a week more or a ward sister getting £21·40 a week more, he is blind to the facts. I am afraid that we have to use facts in place of absurd arguments.

I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will be pleased to learn that the new pay rates for both nurses and the allied professions have now gone out to health authorities and should be reflected in the August pay packets.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I have given way a great deal already and I trust that the House will forgive me for not giving way any more in the interests of other hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House who wish to make speeches. If there is one hon. Gentleman who would have to wait a very long time before I gave way to him, it would have to be the hon. Gentleman for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), with his interest in the IRA. Anyone who, like me, has served in the Northern Ireland Office would, like me, treat the hon. Gentleman's attitude with contempt.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The hon. Gentleman is windy.

Mr. Patten: "Windy" describes all too well the hon. Member for wherever it is that the tube stations are located —Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye made great play of the impact that funding these awards will have on health authorities.

We need to pause and get the funding of the pay awards into perspective. For example, health authorities in England will receive some £9·5 billion in revenue funding from the Government this year. This includes a cash increase of over £500 million for 1985-86. Scottish health boards received £1·35 billion, a cash increase of some £70 million. Health authorities have also told us that they plan to realise about £150 million extra this year through their growing programme of cost improvements—something largely ignored by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye. In Scotland, health boards are doing the same, including the health board that is chaired by the hon. Gentleman's former headmaster.

Mr. Kennedy *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I did not intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech but I shall give way once more, in recognition of the hon. Gentleman's important Front Bench position.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister confirm or deny my argument, based on the Government's White Paper and applying the Government's Treasury GDP deflator technique, that last year there was a 0·1 per cent. reduction in output, and this year this has been increased threefold to 0·3 per cent.?

Mr. Patten: One has to look at figures that demonstrate the economic cost of the services being provided.

In the face of the formidable additional sums which have gone into the National Health Service, linked to the equally formidable sums of cost improvement, both south and north of the Border, it is completely misleading to suggest that the pay rises of nurses and doctors can only be met at the expense of patient services. It is obvious that decisions like this, taken during the course of the year, sometimes require the revision of short-term plans, but flexibility like this always has and always will be a characteristic of NHS planning. The vast majority of authorities recognise this and will cope more than adequately with the pay bill costs that they face this year.

I was surprised that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye indulged in speculation about the prospects for 1986-87 and future expenditure years. It does the NHS no good if, far from talking about the current or the past position, people indulge in highly speculative and morale-damaging allegations about the future, and I do not propose to join the hon. Gentleman. The effect of the staged awards on next year's pay costs will be taken into account in the public expenditure review. I hope that those who are making alarmist statements about problems that they imagine will arise next year will take note.

I reject the hon. Gentleman's strictures. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health and I stand by the Government's record. I am convinced that the Government's treatment of this year's award represents a highly satisfactory outcome, which is fair to nurses, taxpayers, the NHS and NHS patients. I believe that, together, the review body that we set up in 1983, our increased spending on the NHS and its better management is enabling us to begin to solve sensibly the difficult and complex problem of settling the pay of nurses. This is essential to the united aim of the Government and the NHS to improve the service that we provide for patients. Nurses and doctors have a critical role to play in achieving that aim.

I am slightly confused about the health policy of the Social Democratic party and about how it hopes to help more patients. Is the SDP's health policy the same as the Liberal party's health policy? If not, how does it differ from the Liberal party's policy? We may be told by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) when he winds up the debate. I understand that a little later tonight those hon. Members who want to do so can hear him play the clarinet in the Liberal jazz band. It will be interesting to see whether he and his SDP friends play the same tune about health care.

Every time we look at the policies of the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party we see very wide gaps between them. Is the gap on health as wide between the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party as it is between the unilaterialism of the Liberal party defence policy and the nuclear deterrence defence policy of the SDP?

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Does my hon. Friend agree that it will be interesting to see whether the spokesman for the Liberal party mentions patients in his speech, and in particular whether he is able to bring himself to appreciate the substantial increase in the number of outpatients, inpatients and day case patients who are now being treated by the NHS? It will be interesting to see whether he welcomes that increase or whether he denies its existence, which was the theme of the spokesman for the Social Democratic party.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is characteristically right, so I am pleased that I acceded to the temptation to give

[Mr. Patten]

way to him. Either the hon. Member for Leeds, West must agree that more patients are being treated nationally and locally, or he must disagree with his hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye. He cannot have it both ways. The Liberal and Social Democratic parties cannot try to have it both ways in public relations but then go in two separate directions over policy, one party being in favour of unilateral disarmament, the other party being in favour of nuclear deterrence. Shall we find that the same differences exist over NHS policy as exist over economic policies, with one party liking free market economics and the other party wanting to manage everything in sight? The Liberal party opposes the use of nuclear power for providing energy, while the SDP supports it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is the third occasion upon which the Under-Secretary of State has mentioned nuclear policy. It is far removed from the amendment that he is supposed to be moving.

Mr. Patten: I apologise profoundly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having gone down that road. I thought it was important that the general public should know about the substantial policy differences between the Social Democratic party and the Liberal party and that it should be exposed in a way that the press is all too disinclined to expose. We shall have to wait and see how big is the gap between them on health matters. However, the hon. Menber for Ross, Cromarty and Skye has made no case this afternoon which allows us to understand any more clearly his party's health policy. He made no case at all for his motion and I must invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject it in the Lobby.

4.56

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): The Opposition support the motion. It is broadly in line with our own response to the Government's handling of the pay review body's awards that were announced on 6 June. I agree with many of the points made by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). It is even more significant that in the reply of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary—or PUSS as I believe he is known in the trade—he played the usual gramophone record about the Government's performance but in a characteristically ungenerous speech flailed about at everything in sight and said embarrassingly little about the subject under debate, and very little indeed about the funding of the pay award for nurses.

There are three aspects to the awards about which we made strong objections at the time and about which we still object. First, there is a marked difference in the time scale for implementing the awards, which severely discriminates against nurses. The award for the armed forces was met in full and was backdated to 1 April. The award to the doctors was met in full and paid from 1 June. The award to nurses, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine is, however, to be held back for 10 months.

On the nurses' pay review body the Minister, with a wonderful elasticity of language, said:

> "We are accepting the review body's recommended levels and we will bring them into payment in full as soon as we can."

When translated, I think that he meant: "The Government have rejected the review body's proposals for nurses and midwives and will pay the recommended increase only for the final two months." For almost the entire year, nurses will receive, at most, 5 per cent. This will leave them below the rate of inflation and will do nothing to eliminate low pay among unqualified nurses who are living on the poverty line.

The Opposition's second objection is that, compared with last year, the funding arrangements represent, by any standard, a major tightening of the screw on the National Health Service. In the year before last, the Government covered 100 per cent. of the pay award to nurses out of central funds. They were quite right to do so, and we would do the same. Last year, the Government covered £180 million only out of the £216 million award to nurses and related groups, which is 83 per cent. This year they are covering only 33 per cent. That is a measure of the sharpening pressure on NHS budgets during the last two years.

Our third objection is that the whole exercise has involved the declaration of a pay norm that the Government know to be completely unrealistic as a way of camouflaging the imposition of further cuts. To that extent I agree with the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, who referred to making cuts by stealth.

The Minister has denied that he set a 3 per cent. pay ceiling at any time. But it is clear from reading the document that both the permanent secretary, Sir Kenneth Stowe, and the chairman of the NHS management supervisory board, Mr. Victor Paige, told the Select Committee on Social Services that the pay assumption was 3 per cent. If the Minister doubts that, I suggest he reads the record. The Government know perfectly well that a 3 per cent. limit can never be met while inflation is running at 7 per cent. and pay settlements generally at something between 7 per cent. and 8 per cent. It was simply a device to offload most of the onus for meeting the pay claim on to the health authorities, and the Government knew it must lead either to cuts in nurses' jobs or to cuts in services to patients. Either way, that is moral blackmail.

The Minister chose to disregard these criticisms in the bland statement he issued at the National Association of Health Authorities conference in Cardiff last month. That cannot have been one of his most enjoyable visits. At that conference he said he was

> "'singularly unimpressed' by any English health authority which said the nurses' settlement would have any impact on its budgeting plans."

He went so far as to say:

> "I must greet with disbelief any authority saying it cannot afford the full cost of the nurses' pay award."

I have news for the Minister. The disbelief is all on the side of the health authorities, who view such a dismissive statement from the Minister as either supremely arrogant or astonishingly naive. A great many health authorities believe that the nurses' pay award cannot be met without substantial cuts. It is not difficult to see why.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, not until I finish this section. I will say why we believe that that crucial point is the case. In a year when the total cash increase for hospital and community health services in England was £521 million —that is the Government figure—this pay award alone will cost health authorities £240 million. Even those health authorities which receive additional cash to help them cope

with demographic pressures will find that this money is needed to fund pay awards, and savings obtained from cost improvement programmes will have to be diverted from new developments, for which they are intended, to compensate for this.

That is because this year's pay award to nurses and doctors can be accommodated—this is the crucial point Ministers have to answer — within health authority budgets only if prices rise by only 5 per cent. — as everyone knows, they are currently running at 7 per cent. —and only if pay to other Health Service groups does not exceed 3 per cent. Ministers and possibly other hon. Members know that a pay increase to other Health Service workers of 4·7 per cent. has been rejected. The Government's only refuge is to talk, as the Minister has done many times and as his hon. Friend did today, about efficiency savings. But in this world, one does not get owt for nowt, as they say in Lancashire.

So-called efficiency savings, which is a euphemism if ever there was one, are bought at a price, and are often achieved only at the expense of reduced maintenance and repair work or through land sales or the postponement of new projects. That is not a saving at all. It is simply an uneconomic deferment of today's problems until tomorrow when they will be solved often at higher cost. The cost of the Government's foolish policy, not the savings, was pinpointed recently by the Audit Commission. Its report drew attention to the fact that completing the backlog of repairs to hospitals would cost £1,700 million. That is some efficiency saving, if it is at the price of postponing those repairs even further.

Mr. John Patten: Will the hon. Gentlman give way?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman was exceedingly rude about many Opposition Members and I feel tempted not to give way. However, as I am a little more generous than the hon. Gentleman, I will give way.

Mr. Patten: I am very grateful to the hon. Member. Does he not recognise that one of the reasons that the backlog, both in the capital programme and in building maintenance in the National Health Service, grew so much in the late 1970s was the savage 30 per cent. cuts in the NHS capital account that the last Labour Government set in train?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman's attempt to defend the Government would be much more plausible if the Government's current spending on investment in the Health Service was up to the level achieved by the last Labour Government. When the Government can achieve that performance, they might have some case.

The Government's excuse about efficiency savings needs to be met once and for all. It resolves itself into two options: either maintenance or repair work or new projects needed now are postponed, in which case the eventual cost to the NHS will be substantially higher and efficiency savings can be seen as merely storing up bigger trouble for tomorrow; or this needed work is carried out now, as it should be, in which case there will have to be other cuts in the Health Service to meet these pay awards. Either way, it must surely be clear to everyone in the House that a sizeable funding gap cannot be filled by glibly trotting out phrases like "efficiency savings".

Exactly the same conclusion was reached by the Select Committee on Social Services in its sixth report, published on 12 June. In a carefully argued passage in paragraph 13 the Committee says:

"the additional pay costs in 1985-86 for cash-limited NHS services would be 5·4 per cent for doctors and 5·6 per cent. for nurses. The Department is unable to give a sensible estimate at this stage for an HCHS pay and prices factor, because of the outstanding pay settlement for other NHS staff."

I understand that. The report continues:

"It is highly unlikely that inflation in the HCHS will be under 5 per cent. If it were to be 6 per cent, that would leave an input volume figure of −0·2 per cent, similar to 1984-85."

Leaving aside the jargon, that means a cut, and on the most careful analysis, the Select Committee on Social Services, on which Conservative Members have a majority, arrived at the conclusion that, based on the likely level of this year's inflation, there will be cuts in services. That is the report to the House of the Select Committee on Social Services and its analysis of the evidence. The report makes it clear that, far from there being any growth in the NHS services this year, following these pay awards there will almost certainly be cuts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I always regret, almost as soon as I get up, arguing against the hon. Gentleman's tortuous use of figures. He will admit that the passage he has read is about measuring spending in the Health Service in relation to pay and price movements. It says that "if" the pay and prices factor inside the NHS were to reach 6 per cent. then there would be a reduction.

Mr. Dobson: That is what my hon. Friend is saying.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is either not listening or not understanding. We are talking about 1985-86. The nurses' award is 5·6 per cent., but we do not have a settlement for the other staff. An amazing settlement for the other staff would be required to take it up to 6 per cent. on that basis alone. The hon. Gentleman is being alarmist by taking an inflated view of the likely level of inflation for the whole year, which he thinks is going to come to 7 per cent. That is the highest estimate that I have ever heard. That has been driven up anyway by mortgage interest, which is not, to my knowledge, paid by health authorities. Even the month-to-month figures have been driven up by factors which health authorities do not meet. The hon. Gentleman has also overlooked the effect of the reduction of national insurance contributions in this year's Budget. Those are paid by health authorities on the great bulk of their staff.

For all those reasons, will the hon. Gentleman admit that once again he is going through the evidence of a Select Committee desperately trying to put together unlikely figures to turn £500 million of increased cash limits into an alleged and fictitious cut?

Mr. Meacher: The Minister is getting very worried at my simply repeating what the Social Services Committee said. If he disagrees with the Committee, perhaps he will give us his estimate of the likely pay and prices factor for this year. If he disagrees with 5 or 6 per cent., I will give way so that he can give us his estimate of what he thinks it will be.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman forgets that a moment ago he said that it was fair for us to say that we could not give an estimate because we had not yet settled. Therefore, will the hon. Gentleman stop basing fatuous cases on hypothetical assumptions?

Mr. Meacher: The other way of putting it is that the Minister cannot deny that there may be a pay and prices factor this year which will lead to cuts in the NHS.

What worries health authorities most is the fact that the situation could become much more serious next year. They are having to meet two thirds of the 9 per cent. nurses' pay award from February next year, and if a similarly large proportion of next year's pay award were left unfunded by the Government—given the trend of the past two years, that is extremely likely—health authorities could find themselves forced to make far bigger cuts than anything yet contemplated.

I shall give the Minister several examples, which he will be pleased to hear are not anecdotes. I have been in touch with several health authorities about how they propose to fund next year's pay award. In West Lambeth — [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] West Lambeth is a significant health authority. The Minister wishes to sack the members because of their unwillingness to carry through cuts which will amount to £80 million by 1993. The West Lambeth treasurer tells me that, as a result of the authority having to fund most of the pay award, there will be a shortfall of £450,000 this year and of £1 million next year.

The health authority already has to cut £1 million from next year's budget—the Minister wishes it to do that—in addition to suffering a cut of a further £1 million in RAWP money, making a loss of £3 million by 1986-87. The authority told me:

"Inevitably, there will be cuts in services to patients"

either in acute beds or in putting a stop to community development.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No.

Salford said that the fact that it is being required to fund most of the nurses' pay award will produce a shortfall in finance for health services of £360,000 this year and £1 million next year. It does not have a development fund and gets money from the region only for specific programmes.

The Salford authority says that it has cut everything possible over the past few years, and all that is left to be cut are services to patients.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Rubbish.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman knows nothing about Salford. His intervention demonstrates either arrogance or absurd pretentiousness.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No.

As a result of having to fund most of the pay award, the Brighton health authority will have to make cuts of £500,000 this year and £1·3 million to £1·5 million next year. I have with me Brighton's document "Impact of Pay Review Body Awards and Increased Rate of Price Inflation on the Finances of the Authority", which makes it clear that the authority is planning cuts from among 60 items. They include taking all or most services from Hove and Lewes hospitals, not replacing consultants when they retire, employing trainee nurses rather than trained staff in GP surgeries, abolishing the ambulance bus service for the sick and frail, reducing nursing cover on night duties, reducing cleaning standards in staff accommodation, charging low-paid NHS staff more for meals, cutting staffing levels on long-stay wards, reducing training spending, reducing fire precaution levels, reducing the quality of services in the control sterile supplies department and reducing family planning and dentistry services. *[Interruption.]* Here is the report: if the Minister does not believe me, he can read it for himself.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Having listened to that list, all I can say is that they must be paying their nurses a fortune in Brighton.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the two authorities that he has quoted—West Lambeth and Salford—are both overspending authorities and that the changes that they are having to make are to get back within planned budgets? The previous Labour Government insisted on that policy. Whatever arguments we may have about the overspending that has happened in Salford and is planned in Lambeth, all Governments have insisted that health authorities live within cash limits, and neither case has much to do with the nurses' pay claim.

How can all those cuts be necessary in Brighton when the pay award to nurses is costing only 5·6 per cent. this year? Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that all this is based on a hypothetical assumption about next year's PESC settlement and next year's cash limits? None of the health authorities, any more than the Government and the Opposition, can have firm figures. We have not even started speaking to the Chief Secretary yet. I do not know the figures, never mind Brighton knowing them.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister must get out of the doublespeak in which he indulges so readily when he talks about overspending. Underfunding is causing all the difficulties. It is not a case of authorities overspending and having to be brought back within budgets. The Minister is imposing intolerable strains on health authorities that are trying to provide a decent standard of service for patients.

My final quotation comes from the Lewisham and North Southwark health authority. In a letter to the Secretary of State dated 26 June, the authority said:

"This Health Authority . . . views with disdain this Government's repeated abdication from its responsibilities to fund fully pay awards to which it is a willing party. In not funding fully such pay awards, this Government is displaying a cavalier and uncaring attitude towards our staff and those people with whose health-care we are entrusted. Should this Government claim that those monies voted by Parliament are sufficient to cover any underfunding of pay awards, then we can only conclude that this Government has no understanding, by design or otherwise, of the parlous and precarious state of NHS provision in this inner London Health District attributable directly to this Government's attitude to Public Spending."

That comes from a Tory-dominated health authority.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No. I know that the health authority is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, but I must get on.

Like so many health authorities, Lewisham and North Southwark has a majority of known Tory supporters. Its letter shows how exasperated health authorities, even Tory authorities, are becoming at the Government's high-handedness in forcing major cuts, especially next year, which cannot be absorbed, whatever productivity improvements are made and however much the Minister juggles the figures, without significant cuts in patient care.

If the Minister cannot or will not see that fact, it is high time that he took the telescope from his blind eye and started looking directly at the facts and at what health authorities are telling him.

The heart of the debate is the central question of NHS funding. I cannot repeat too often or too strongly that there is no way that an adequate health service can be provided on a budget that is unchanged as a proportion of GDP or, even worse, on a budget that represents a declining share of GDP over the next few years, as the Government's public expenditure White Paper suggests is proposed.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No.

Under this Government, Britain is the lowest spender on health services in the western world. We spend only 5·7 per cent. of our GNP on health, compared with 8 per cent. in France and Germany, 9·5 per cent. in the United States and 10 per cent. in Sweden. Those are enormous differences between countries. We are not just marginally lower than our competitors; we are substantially lower.

The Government seek to force health authorities to fund most of the pay award to doctors and nurses and to force them, without extra Government funds, to cope with major new and pressing requirements, which are not the Government's fault, but have arisen in recent times—such as community care provision, countering AIDS, cervical screening, containing the spread of hard drugs and countering further outbreaks of Legionnaire's disease. That is impossible within an NHS budget that is declining as a share of overall national resources.

That is why the Government stand condemned and why no amount of special pleading about cost improvement programmes or so-called efficiency savings can insulate the Government from the stark reality that they are trying to force on to health authorities the onus which falls squarely on the Government for failing to fund the National Health Service properly.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Will the hon. Gentleman now give way?

Mr. Meacher: No.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) must resume his seat.

Mr. Meacher: It is not that health authorities are guilty of overspending. It is that the Government are guilty of underfunding. Until the Government reconsider that position and the increasingly intolerable consequences on the ground in terms of patient care, the Opposition will be supporting the motion.

5.21 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I hope that the House will excuse my by-election voice, which is compounded by a heavy cold.

First, I pay tribute to the late hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, Mr. Tom Hooson. He was an excellent constituency Member and has been taken from us at an early age. He was dedicated to the people of Brecon and Radnor and served them well. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in remembering his good work and in extending great sympathy to his family. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The people of Brecon and Radnor have entrusted to me the great privilege of representing them here in Parliament. This I shall do to the best of my ability. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will know that I was brought up amongst them and therefore feel well qualified to communicate with them and they with me, so that our voice can be heard here at Westminster.

Without doubt, Brecon and Radnor is the finest constituency in Britain. Its beauty is unsurpassed in all of Wales, and the great quality of its people was recognised by the huge numbers of people of all political persuasions who visited us during the recent by-election. In fact I see many familiar faces on the Government Benches, and I am told that no fewer than 150 members of the official Opposition visited us. I also saw them in the highways and byways of my great constituency, some in Brecon, some in Llandrindod Wells, others in Knighton and Ystradgynlais, and some, too, were even lost.

Brecon and Radnor is a series of communities, many of which are very small. The result is that the people are great individualists and rightly expect a lot from their Member of Parliament—hence my voice at the moment —and from their Government.

The people of Rhayader will not tolerate being ignored or their efficient Vickers factory being under threat as a result of the privatisation of British Shipbuilders. Builth Wells was up in arms about the Audit Commission's thoughts on denying it a new school. Brecon would not suffer the closure of St. David's hospital, nor would Crickhowell tolerate the closure of Cwrt y Gollen camp. Ystradgynlais and its people have seen levels of unemployment in excess of 18 per cent. for far too long.

The by-election was fought and won largely on the issue of cuts in public expenditure. These are policies being implemented by the Government and they have been found wanting by the people of Brecon and Radnor. Opposition to these cuts was focused on education and other local government expenditure, farming and especially the National Health Service.

I was brought up in Talgarth, a town which is almost entirely dependent on National Health Service employment. The NHS employs 2,100 people in the constituency. There were many problems identified during the by-election campaign, but the future for the NHS in Brecon and Radnor is grim.

Government cash limits throughout Powys area health authority allow a 3 per cent. increase in 1985-86, yet the nurses are to receive a 9 per cent. award, well deserved but not exceptional taking into account that it covers a two-year period.

According to the chief executive of Powys area health authority, the net effect is a deficit of 5·4 per cent. on the area health authority budget for 1985-86 not catered for by the 3 per cent. increase in cash limits. The knock-on effect for the authority is to have to find £700,000 in the current year to finance pay awards from within its own resources — this in a budget of £21·496 million. The latest presumption is that a further £1·3 million will have to be found in 1986-87.

I draw attention to the fact that 78 per cent. of the area health authority's expenditure in Powys goes on salaries. If this is related to the 1986-87 figures it will, taking account of Powys area health authority's average employer's cost of £8,000 per employee, result in a possible loss of 126 jobs within the authority.

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

If losses in Government revenue from redundancy payments, national insurance and tax losses, and VAT are taken into account, the so-called saving of £1·3 million will cost the Government £1·89 million in lost revenue and at the same time inflict great hardship on the people of Brecon and Radnor.

These figures imply that a £1 restriction in cash limits has a consequent loss of revenue of £1·45 in the first year —in other words, a net loss of 45p. This is surely the economics of despair.

These matters also cast suspicion on the Government's claim nationally of a 20 per cent. real growth in National Health Service funding since 1979. There was a 30 per cent. increase in nursing staff salaries in May 1979, and there has been a reduction of two and a half hours per week worked by nurses since 1980. If this is coupled with a 2·5 million increase in out-patients since 1980, a 650,000 increase in in-patients and 300,000 more day patients in the same period, Health Service output has increased significantly.

These factors must surely be taken into account in future policy decisions about the National Health Service. The service requires adequate funding and a built-in allowance for an increasing aging population. This is a particular problem in my constituency and featured very strongly in the by-election campaign.

Brecon and Radnor is a fine constituency traversed by the valleys of the rivers Usk and Wye. It is farmed supremely well, whether in the uplands of Radnorshire or in the Brecon Beacons, and in the great traditions of its livestock farming. The rewards of honest endeavour at present are declining farm incomes. These good people of Brecon and Radnor, whether in the hamlets, villages or towns such as those of Sennybridge, Llanwrtyd, Presteigne and even "independent" Hay-on-Wye, all need a better future.

Our small businesses and communities must be allowed to thrive. Nor should we forget the immense job that needs doing for the area of Ystradgynlais and its fine people. The Government must provide us with the means to get aid from the European social fund. The need is quite clear. All that is required is the will power to provide it.

I dedicated myself to Wales, my constituency and its people—to work constructively for them all. Will the Government of the day take their cue from the verdict of the people of Brecon and Radnor and work for them, too?

5.29 pm

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): It is my pleasure to be called immediately after the new and hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) and to welcome him to the House.

I speak for all right hon. and hon. Members when I say that the House will appreciate his generous tribute to his predecessor, who was a brave and much-respected Member and who sat on the Government Benches. He practised what many Liberals preach by way of community politics, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will serve his constituency as well as his predecessor did.

The hon. Gentleman has started well. His speech was responsible and constructive. I hope that his tenure of Brecon and Radnor will be glorious, even though it will necessarily be brief.

A general feature of health services everywhere is that there is no natural level of expenditure and no level of expenditure that satisfies the requirements put on it. Expenditure can increase practically without limit. That is partly because demand is increasing. For example, we have an aging population, and the number of old and very old people will increase dramatically by the end of the century.

I pay tribute to the private sector for looking after large numbers of elderly people in nursing and residential homes. About 30,000 people are looked after in nursing homes. That is often done more economically than would be possible in the public sector or in geriatric hospitals. I urge Labour Members to think long and hard before they dismiss the private sector in that respect. Where would those people go if the Labour party carried out its threat and shut down or restricted the entire private sector?

Demand for health care is increasing for other reasons. We are now better at diagnosing diseases and there is an almost inexhaustible supply of new technology in the health sphere. The effect of the new technology is perverse. In industry, the introduction of new technology usually leads to savings in manpower—at any rate in the short term—to a reduction in unit costs and to lower revenue expenditure. A new piece of equipment in a hospital can have the opposite effect. It tends to increase demand. Expenditure rises and often new staff are required to service and look after it.

The advance of medical science is almost without limit. That is welcome because it means that previously incurable illnesses can be treated. It also means, however, that treatments costing a few hundred pounds last year can be replaced by new treatments costing a few thousand pounds this year. It will always be difficult to accommodate such increases in expenditure in a budget which, in overall terms, can increase by only a few percentage points annually.

If medical need is to be the sole criteria, there will be no limit to the scale of expenditure, because, if any human being anywhere is receiving a more advanced type of treatment, it will be open to people to demand that treatment, and patients and doctors will say that they need it, that the NHS should supply it and that the Government should pay for it.

There is no escaping the fact that there is no level of expenditure or increase which will ever meet medical demand in its entirely. That is why, in the real world, choices must be made and priorities set. There will always be allegations that some treatment is being denied one or other group of patients. That fact must be faced by any party in office, and that is why I have been disappointed by the speeches made so far by Opposition Members. They have not addressed themselves to the central facts of expenditure in relation to health care.

Labour Members should think carefully about their policy of ending private medicine. I have spoken of that in relation to the care of the elderly. How could the NHS cope with the additional patients if the private sector were shut down? How could it manage without that revenue and still have resources over to increase expenditure in the ways in which Opposition spokesmen promise?

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I urge my hon. Friend to pay tribute also to the way in which the private sector makes available pieces of equipment which the NHS would find it difficult to buy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point. It is a partnership between the private and public sectors. That, under the present Administration, is enabling many patients to receive advanced medical care which would otherwise not be available to them.

Nor should Opposition Members be so dismissive of the internal economies and efficiency savings that have been achieved and the scope for funding at least part of the nurses' and doctors' wage award out of further economies. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) seemed almost to say that economies were impossible. I put that down to his lack of business or any other practical experience. He can take it from me that it is possible in any undertaking to increase output while holding costs.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the amount of expenditure that is not represented by staff costs in the NHS amounts to about 25 per cent.? Thus, the savings that can be made in percentage terms bear more heavily on that component than on staff costs. If, however, savings are made at the expense of staff, what happens to those who are made unemployed? Presumably the net cost would not be great enough to warrant the redundancies that might be thought worth while if the policies that he is advocating were taken to their logical conclusion because the low-paid, being almost invariably those who are made redundant, cost almost as much to keep unemployed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall come to the question of the balance of staff and other costs later in my speech. The answer to the rest of that intervention is that the hon. Gentleman's argument is a case for making no economic change at any time. If his argument is generalised, everyone must stay in his or her existing job from now until the end of time.

I hope that Opposition Members are not so naive in relation to efficiency savings to imagine that only recorded and published savings give the full picture. It is of benefit to have in-house services and the knowledge that performance can be assessed against some external yardstick. Those concerned then know that their ultimate job security depends on their performance and the performance of the units in which they work. That feeling is familiar to anyone working in industry, but it has not been sufficiently prominent up to now in the NHS.

Naturally, people prefer a quiet life. Few organisations ever reform themselves. That is why the Government must keep the pressure on. It is no criticism of existing NHS managements to say that there must be areas of waste, overlap and duplication still to be found and corrected. With almost 1 million people employed in the NHS, it is fantastic to allege that no further economies can be made. Of course they can, and it is no disrespect to the administrators at present in the health service to say that. Above all, let us end the obsession with how much money we are putting into the NHS and concentrate instead on how that money can be turned into patient care for the maximum number of people.

Mr. John Patten: I am interested in my hon. Friend's remarks about the level of NHS expenditure. Does he agree that we should not compare carelessly or easily the amount of the gross domestic product spent in this country on health care with that of other countries? We should relate that expenditure to the quality of health care that is given. Does he agree, for example, that it is extraordinary for the NHS to be spending at the present level of GDP and to be achieving lower perinatal mortality and higher life expectancy rates than are being achieved in the United States?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is an achievement of the Government that they have not only provided more resources for the Health Service, but have made them go further.

I was disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), which was all about cash and resources. He said almost nothing about patients and patient care and the performance of the NHS.

I do not wish to get into the statistical quagmire with the hon. Member for Oldham, West. He was obviously confused by the figures and failed to present a convincing case using them. The overall expenditure increase of 17 per cent. in real terms during the past six years gives the lie to the allegation that the Government are relentlessly cutting or dismantling the NHS. My hon. Friend the Minister gave a detailed breakdown of the figures, and they will no doubt be referred to again.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who is not currently in the Chamber but who intervened earlier, said that figures were one aspect, but that there was no anecdotal evidence from Conservative Members that health care was increasing and improving on the ground. I can help the hon. Gentleman with that. The people at the western end of my constituency will soon have the benefit of a new, large, modern hospital at Weston-Super-Mare. During the past six years capital expenditure has increased substantially more than it did during the previous six years. The treatment of the mentally ill and mentally handicapped in Somerset is undergoing a process of structural change and reform. That will not save money, but it will improve care. The change will involve the closure of a number of large hospitals, including the Mendip hospital in Wells, and the transfer of patients to smaller satellite units, community residential units and day care units.

That change is controversial in many respects and some people think that the trend towards community care for the mentally ill has gone too far—and I am inclined to agree with them. The new structure will not save money; indeed, the budgeted costs will be somewhat higher than at present. The emphasis is on improvements in care. The increased costs—which will be modest, but nevertheless will occur — have been agreed with this so-called uncaring Government.

Mr. Kennedy: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman did not deliberately misrepresent what I said. He is describing what is happening in his local area, and I am listening to him with care. Can he tell us how much direct benefit will accrue to his area as a result of the health authorities having to meet the cost of the nurses' pay award?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My regional and district health authorities are perfectly confident that they can proceed with budgeted plans on capital and revenue expenditure and meet the nurses' pay award.

Reference has been made to inflation in the NHS being faster than the general index of prices. It has been alleged that, therefore, spending increases have not really taken place. The reason for a faster rate of inflation in the NHS is precisely because wage costs and wage awards have

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

risen faster than the retail prices index. Nurses' pay rates have risen by 23 per cent. during the past six years, but, even after taking account of that price deflator, it is still true to say that there has been a substantial volume increase in NHS expenditure during the past six years. Nothing that Opposition Members may say, either inside or outside the House, can alter that fact.

Opposition Members appear to be saying—and it is reflected in the motion before us—that we should have two NHS budgets: one for pay and one for general expenditure, and both of them elastic. I do not think that that is a sensible way to run the NHS. No commercial organisation can regard its wages bill as separate, to be topped up by an outside body from time to time. Indeed, it would be quite wrong and damaging for future negotiations if the Government stepped in in that way this year. If that happened, the review body and the Health Service negotiators would know that they were not working within a strict financial framework, but that their recommendations, negotiations and settlements could always be funded by some additional levy on the taxpayer. That is an old, familiar story of nationalised industry. We have been trying to move away from that way of settling our affairs. Let us not re-import it into this year's—or any year's—negotiations.

If anything, I believe that this year's award highlights the problem of having an independent review body. I appreciate that it is convenient for Ministers to have such a body, and I pay tribute to its work in juggling some of the gradings within the NHS. But, by and large, it is better if those who pay the piper also negotiate with the piper.

It would have been better if the alliance had faced that issue rather than, as usual, following the path of least resistance and calling for more public expenditure. The alliance has a long way to go, based on today's debate, before it can pose as a credible party of government.

5.46 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) said that the debate was about priorities, and to that extent I agree with him. Every Government must decide how much they allocate to health, defence, education and so on. Everyone who listens to or reads the debate must know that the NHS is in a shambles. It is being ruined day by day. That is why we are supporting the motion tonight.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on his speech, especially for its brevity, clarity and the unequivocal statement that he won his seat because of the Government's neglect of the NHS in that area. Other hon. Members throughout the country know that to be true.

The Government themselves, when they prepared their paper for the National Economic Development Office, provided figures showing that £1,700 million would be required to renovate and maintain our existing hospitals. The Government even said that that figure might be wrong because it included estimates for repairs to hospitals that should be demolished. That is the state of our National Health Service today.

The Government's amendment congratulates them on "implementing the recommendations of the Health Service Pay Review Bodies".

Quite frankly, that is a lie. If I am called to order, I shall say that it is a deliberate distortion of the truth. They are not implementing the proposals of the review body, which said that the award should be paid in full and backdated to April. The Government are making an award of 5·6 per cent. now, but the nurses will have to wait until next February for the rest. In other words, it is jam tomorrow. Meanwhile, some of the nurses have to make do with less than 5 per cent. while prices are increasing by 7 per cent.

The Government are saying to the nurses, "You are wonderful people and because you are so dedicated we shall cut your standard of living." That is what the figures mean. A 5 per cent. increase in salary and a 7 per cent. increase in prices results in a 2 per cent. reduction in a nurse's standard of living. However the figures are dressed up, they mean a cut in the standard of living for tens of thousands of nurses.

Pupil nurses and first and second-year student nurses will have an increase of 4·7 per cent. or 4·8 per cent. up to next February. Hon. Members may argue that student nurses are training for qualifications, but we are talking about cheap, exploited labour. Even with the increase, those kids will receive only £80 a week gross.

The *Nursing Mirror* carried an article the other day about student nurses. It warned:

"Staff shortages are putting patients' lives in danger by leaving student nurses alone in charge of wards."

That is being said not by the Labour party but by the Royal College of Nursing. The article continues:

"A survey of 1,000 nurses showed that 31 per cent. of student nurses were often left in charge of wards, usually at night. Another 61 per cent. had occasionally been left alone. Staff shortages are blamed. Nearly 90 per cent. of qualified nurses in the survey said that they had warned hospital authorities that staff levels were dangerously low. Young students were being left to cope with acutely ill and dying patients.

That is said by the Royal College of Nursing Students Association head, Miss Sandra Mills. That is what is happening in the real Health Service.

The Minister behaved like a juvenile delinquent when he adopted his sneering manner today. He treated everyone who dared to criticise as either ignorant or malicious. We know from our surgeries throughout the country that we are talking about the real Health Service.

In their amendment the Government preen themselves on the

"particularly high awards for staff nurses and ward sisters".

Of course the £6,000 starting point for newly qualified staff nurses is good, but only because the salary has been so inadequate. The staff nurse is the key nurse in any hospital. The maximum pay for a staff nurse in 1982-83 was £7,008. In 1983-84 it was £7,569. I obtained the figures in answer to a written question on 10 July last year.

The hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) talked about priorities and how we pay different rates for different services. In 1982-83 an untrained, unqualified police constable was paid a maximum of £9,798. By 1 September 1984 his maximum pay had risen to £11,193 — about £3,600 more than the maximum for a fully qualified and fully trained staff nurse in our hospitals. Does anybody in the country or in the Government dare to say that a fully qualified staff nurse is not worth as much as a police constable?

Government Members say that throwing money at the problem is no good, but that is exactly what they have done with the police. There is no talk of cash limits for them.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: No. The hon. Gentleman has only just arrived. I want to make my case and then sit down.

I say good luck to the police. In 1980 the police had an increase of 21·3 per cent. In 1981 they received another 13·2 per cent., in 1982 a further 10·3 per cent., in 1983 another 8·4 per cent. and in 1984-85 a further 5·1 per cent. Let us compare those figures with the figures that apply to nurses, who this year receive a miserable 5 per cent. it is not worth tuppence. The Government are throwing money like confetti at the police and armed forces when the nurses have to wait.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: No.

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is not giving way.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Member for Lanarkshire, West (Mr. Hind) has only just come into the Chamber. He wants to intervene only to prove to his constituents that he has taken part in the debate.

The Minister did not mention waiting lists. Since the Government came to office there has been an increase of 15 per cent. in the number of people on waiting lists.—*[Interruption]* I see that the Minister is impatient to intervene. He has given me figures about waiting lists for Scotland. In March 1980, a total of 69,904 people were on the waiting lists in Scotland. In March 1984, 85,364 people were on the waiting lists. The provisional figure for March 1984 was 83,061—an increase of over 18 per cent. That is the measure of how the Health Service is failing the people.

Mr. John McKay: The reason for the increase is the dispute in the National Health Service which the hon. Gentleman supported day after day, despite the damage that it was doing.

Mr. Hamilton: I thought that the Minister would say that. The figures up to that date were not down. I challenge the Minister to say whether he is claiming that over the next two years the waiting lists in Scotland and in the United Kingdom as a whole will be reduced. If he is not prepared to say that, it is a measure of how the Government are failing the people of Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hind : Give way.

Mr. Hamilton: No. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself. The Government talk about priorities——

Mr. Hind: Give way.

Mr. Hamilton: No.

The Government talk about shortage of money. If there is a shortage of resources in the Health Service they should explain why they are spending £2,000 million over the next three years on 1,200 folk in the Falkland Islands. They can find money for that. Members of the Labour party should go on repeating that because it is indefensible and a waste of public money. That £2,000 million would be far better spent on the Health Service, for the good of the 56 million people in Britain, rather than being poured down the drain for 1,200 people 8,000 miles away.

5.59 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): There is always a whiff of unreality and almost a whiff of hypocrisy when the House discusses an Opposition motion on the Health Service. There could be nothing more unreal and hypocritical than the speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton). The hon. Gentleman comes to this House with his heart on his sleeve, telling us what this wicked Thatcher junta is doing to the Health Service and forgetting what his own Government did.

We had the privilege of listening to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) giving his swansong as the Opposition spokesman on the Health Service. The right name for him would be "Mr. 30 per cent.", because he was a Minister at a time when the Labour Party cut capital expenditure on hospital building by about 30 per cent.

Under the Conservative Government, 35 hospital schemes in excess of £5 million each were completed between 1980 and 1984. In addition, 11,000 new beds have been provided, together with 169 new operating theatres, 105 X-ray rooms, 25 accident and emergency departments, and 22 out-patient departments.

Admittedly, the hon. Member's speech was not quite so over the top as his previous speech, and I am delighted to see that he is sweetening his words. That is understandable. With the gaffes that he is making, he can only sweeten his words, because he never knows how often he will have to eat them.

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) ignored the fact that when the Conservative Government took office in May 1979, the NHS waiting list was 749,000? It is interesting to note that the hon. Gentleman is leaving the Chamber. Before the dispute that he supported, the waiting list had been reduced to 619,000. Even after that dispute, the waiting list is still much lower than it was when the Labour Members Government left office in 1979.

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend is 100 per cent. correct.

If Labour really cared about patients, the hon. Member for Oldham, West would be the first to get up and say that he wholeheartedly condemned the decision made the NUPE annual conference to abandon the TUC code of conduct about giving industrial cover for emergency services. It is important to note that Labour Members will not condemn action that they know will jeopardise the old, casualty wards, and young people.

Although there is a whiff of hypocrisy and unreality about the debate, and although I am the first to congratulate the Minister for Health and his able deputy on their success in increasing finance for the Health Service, I must draw attention to two problems that affect my district health authority.

I find it a peculiar paradox that the British Medical Association tells us that there are 700 junior doctors unemployed, and that 20 per cent. of junior doctors have experienced six months' unemployment over a two-year period, when in my authority in the past month a casualty ward has been closed in three hospitals, not through lack of resources or lack of finance. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh and joke but I have spoken to the administrators of those hospitals, and they have assured

[Mr. Hayes]

me in writing and orally that it is not due to lack of finance. The difficulty that the NHS faces is a shortage of casualty locums. Surely it is not beyond the wit——

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: I will give way in a moment if the hon. Gentleman will be patient and let me finish the point I am making.

It is a paradox that casualty wards are being closed not through lack of finance or resources or because of the alleged cuts that Opposition Members talk about but because people on programmed leave cannot find the locums to replace them. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to look at that paradox. Surely it is not beyond the wit of the DHSS to put right those imbalances.

Mr. Kirkwood: I shall not debate with the hon. Gentleman the point that he is making. Having introduced the debate, I simply want to ask him whether he believes that health authorities should be given additional support by the Government to meet the pay increases of nurses, midwives and other sectors of the Health Service which have been recommended by the pay review bodies.

Mr. Hayes: As the hon. Gentleman knows, this is a wide-ranging debate. I notice that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has joined us. Sadly, I note that she is not wearing a fur coat.

I assure the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that I am particularly worried that there will be difficulties in financing and funding the pay awards, which are especially generous. My right hon. and learned Friend and his able deputy, the Under-Secretary of State, have said that the Health Service should be cost-effective. That statement is greeted by the Opposition with howls of derision, but why should the Health Service be cost-effective? Why should not doctors understand the true cost of the treatment that is given to patients? Why should not the Health Service be run on a more commercial footing, so that the benefits may go directly into patient care?

We have had the Rayner reports and the efficiency reviews, and my own health authority has been particularly good in cutting back and allocating directly to patient care the resources that have been saved. In the next few years my health authority will be gaining about £20 million extra resources for the centralisation of acute casualties. There will be benefits all over my constituency and in neighbouring constituencies as a result. However, there are problems to which I must draw the Minister's attention.

The Government rightly say, "Make your health authority cost-effective. Run it like a commercial enterprise." Last year we had 4·2 per cent. allocated to us for pay awards. Rightly and properly, we shall have to find, on average, 8·6 per cent. for the nurses and about 12·1 per cent. for the additional workers. We have not settled on the figure for the ancillary workers, and we still have to find 6·3 per cent. for the doctors and nurses. On a half-yearly basis there will be a shortfall of £450,000. In a full financial year there will be a shortfall of £1 million.

The shortfall will cause us several problems which, sad to say, will be reflected in patient care. It would be wrong and irresponsible to deny it. I am grateful for the considerable efforts made by my right hon. and learned Friend and his deputy in giving an extra £500 million—an additional 5·5 per cent.—to health authorities this year.

My health authority is not a RAWP gainer but a RAWP loser. It does not gain from the efficiencies. I know from where this funding will come. It might mean the closure of an acute ward in Princess Alexandra hospital in Harlow, costing £200,000, an acute ward at St. Margaret's hospital, costing £200,000, a children's ward at Herts and Essex hospital, costing £105,000, the accident and emergency department at Herts and Essex hospital at Bishop's Stortford, costing £105,000 and the associated casualty ward at the same hospital, costing £200,000, a reduction in community nursing at Waltham Abbey, costing £100,000 and the closure of the minor injuries ward at Saffron Walden hospital costing £30,000.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: I shall not give way, out of deference to all those hon. Members who want to speak.

I support the Government's policy and the amount of money that they have put into the Health Service—20 per cent. in real terms since 1978. Since then there have been 12 per cent. more in-patients, 45 per cent. more day care attendances, 52 per cent. more patients accepted for kidney failure treatment and 112 per cent. more heart bypass operations. It would be foolish and churlish to ignore that.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister to consider generously in the next financial settlement the plight of authorities, such as mine of West Essex, which have shown that they are prepared to make themselves cost-effective and put themselves on a commercial footing and which are not RAWP gainers but RAWP losers.

6.12 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I wish to pick up some of the points of the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) in my own time and in my own way. The nurses have been conned and the con trick has been compounded by hypocrisy. The Government have made great play of the fact that they are accepting the pay award. I pay great tribute to the review body, which has done a first-class job, but the Government have not accepted its recommendations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) said, once again for the nurses it is jam tomorrow, never today.

Nurses suffer from the effects of two public attitudes —the Florence Nightingale attitude, whereby nurses are expected to live on pay that is not incomparable with the pay during the Crimean war, and from the attitude of "the nurses are so good; it will be all right tomorrow". In this case, "tomorrow" does not come until next February.

I am sorry that the Under-Secretary of State did not have a good day today. He was forced to flail around a number of other subjects. The hon. Gentleman is not usually short of matters to bring up. Nurses' pay in 1985-86—I do not need to labour the figures—means that they have been short-changed. The 10-month delay is exceptional—doctors faced a two-month delay. Why have one rule for doctors and another for nurses?

The next pay award for the nurses will be made on 1 April 1986, and the review body will have to report back

after that date. If the Government persist in their policy of phasing, in three years the nurses will have lost at least one year's worth of pay increases.

The Under-Secretary of State referred to the board and lodging charges for the people who will get the least out of this pay packet. Whereas nurses will not receive their pay increases until the end of August, board and lodging and other service charges for nurses who work in hospitals have increased. For four months these nurses paid extra money out of a pay packet which has not yet shown their pay increases.

The Government made great play of the fact that the nurses could have a review body on condition that they did not strike. For that reason the nurses were to have what the doctors have had since the 1960 Pilkington award. The Government know that the nurses never strike. Nurses have been disadvantaged compared with doctors. The doctors went on strike twice in 1974—first the junior doctors went on strike and then the consultants worked to rule. At that time my colleague Barbara Castle was Secretary of State. Because of the doctors' struggle in 1975 and 1976, the waiting lists increased tremendously and it took six or seven years to start to reduce the numbers. Yet there is no thought of stressing a condition of no industrial action in relation to the doctors.

When discussing the way in which nurses' pay has been funded we always come back to what has happened before. The Prime Minister makes this point regularly. Conservative Members say that between 1974 and 1979 there was a tremendous cut in capital expenditure. I can claim some credit for that. When Barbara Castle was made Secretary of State I was privileged to attend the planning conference at Sunningdale with the chief medical officers and the various boffins who surrounded the Secretary of State. About 75 per cent. of the huge resources of the NHS go towards pay. After the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) had had his four years in office, the Labour Government were faced with a choice. Once again, the Labour party came into office after a balance of payments deficit when the country was bankrupt. The choice was whether to give the money to people or to give it to buildings. Should the money be given to nurses or towards more equipment? I believe that the Labour Government were right to cut capital expenditure. The nurses' only good pay award was the 1974 Halsbury award. They could not have been given that award had the Labour Government not been prepared to cut capital expenditure so that nurses could have a fair deal.

The North-West Thames regional health authority is the authority for my area. I received an emergency notice stating that this year the authority has to find another £2 million. This is disastrous for economic planning, because budget estimates are made at the beginning of the year. What happens if, half-way through the year, the authority is told that it has £2 million less? It is nonsense for the Under-Secretary of State to say that these measures will not interfere with patient care. They can do nothing else but interfere. The Government cannot suddenly say in the middle of the year that the authority has to take £2 million out of the amount budgeted for, and claim that this will not interfere with patient care.

For three years every regional health authority was given a certain increase in its budget—about 0·5 per cent. for the North-West Thames regional health authority—through the RAWP formula. The North-West Thames regional health authority has had a tough time. During the past three years a percentage of the increase has been for efficiency savings. It is money that is not given but has to be found within the budget. For three years there have been cuts in each of the regions, under the various budget headings, to make efficiency savings.

The wretched computer is a further con for the nurses because it cannot make payments before the end of August. Therefore, although the announcement was made in June, nurses do not see the money until four months after it is due. I know of no other employees who receive such treatment, yet we pay lip service to nurses and say how marvellous they are.

The Minister keeps saying that the Department does not yet know what it will receive from the Exchequer next year, and that it is still making estimates. The North-West Thames regional health authority now has a chairman, Mr. Doughty, and a general manager, Mr. Kenny, who has the same job that he held previously, but has been given more money and a fresh title. They say that next year £6 million more will be needed for nurses' pay on this award alone. Taken over the whole country, next year there will be another increase in nurses' pay. Therefore, unless the Government do a U-turn in their public expenditure policies, the money will not be available.

The second cheat relates to the £240 million which should have been paid on 1 April but which will start to be paid at only 5 per cent. at the end of August. Therefore, the Government will borrow money from the nurses for four months. Every year out of the kindness of its heart the Department of Social Security gives pensioners a £10 bonus. Considering the present rates of interest, if the Government have any sense of justice, they could give nurses in their Christmas pay packets the amount of accrued interest which the nurses will have lost during four months.

We bandy figures about, and I know no better jugglers of figures than the Minister for Health and the Secretary of State for Social Services. One minute money is there, the next it is not. I do not accept that the productivity argument for industry and commerce applies to the NHS.

Mr. John Patten: In my introductory remarks I said that, net of the reduction in the nurses' working week, 18,900 more nurses were on the wards than in 1979. Does that or does that not represent an improvement in health care in England?

Mr. Pavitt: That does not. The reduction in the working week from 40 to 37·5 hours accounts for a great deal of that. The latest figure I have from the Department of Employment shows that 9,500 nurses are on the dole. As I said earlier, the Minister chooses the figures to make selected points.

If the Department of Employment could announce to the House that 650,000 more people were in full-time employment and that 2·5 million more people were in part-time employment, that would be a success. However, when one learns that 650,000 more people are chronically ill and need hospitalisation, and that 2·5 million more people are so ill that they must be referred by their general practitioner to an out-patients department, that is a failure. It is a reflection of sick people in a sick society. There cannot be 4 million people unemployed without all the stress and problems that the NHS must counteract accumulating.

[Mr. Pavitt]

The Government have deceived the nurses by the funding of the pay award. I hope that the nurses will remember that when the Minister, or, if all the prophets are right and he climbs up the ladder before we return from the summer recess, his successor next deals with the subject. I hope that in the Queen's Speech he will guarantee that next year the nurses will not have a con trick played on them, as they had this year.

6.24 pm

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I welcome and congratulate the new hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). I am sorry to see that, having burst into the debate, he rushed out quickly; I hope that he does not find the House so fearsome that he has returned to the Brecon Beacons so soon. Today he has witnessed mark 2 of a Lib-Lab pact, with an appendix written by the Social Democratic party. When the debate is reported the public will know that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) did an Armageddon job on the state of affairs in the National Health Service, and that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) who is almost Armageddon itself, completely agreed with the speeches from the SDP Bench. We saw a similar great unity at the end of the 1970s, which led us into the disastrous position that then produced a large Conservative majority to run the country and the NHS properly.

I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health said in his interventions, and what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security said about the Government's record on the NHS. The hon. member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who also burst into the debate and rushed off, asked whether we had received compliments from our constituents. My constituents who have been treated at Kingston hospital —the main hospital in the Kingston and Esher district health authority — are full of compliments for the doctors' and nurses' services, the food, the cleanliness, and every other aspect. If the hospital's record is ever attacked in the press, anybody who has been treated there jumps to its defence.

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend will undoubtedly have seen the recent Marplan poll which showed that 90 per cent. of those asked were satisfied and felt that they were well cared for by the NHS.

Mr. Tracey: I have seen that Marplan poll, and I noted that the Audit Commission found a similar high standard in the NHS when its officers reported.

Throughout the Health Service there are undoubtedly more doctors, more nurses, more out-patients being treated, more highly technical operations carried out, such as heart bypasses and kidney transplants, more dental treatment and a large hospital building programme. I welcome the Government's decision on the nurses' pay award.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye has asked when we shall spell out how we shall pay for the extra award to the nurses, if we do not take money from the contingency fund. I refer him to the words of the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It states that the Government

"welcomes the 5·5 per cent. increase in health authority and health board funding which, together with the extra resources gained from cost improvement programmes, will enable service developments to take place in addition to the funding of the pay award."

That is the key factor, and answers his question in plain language.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the hon. Gentleman answer the question which the Under-Secretary of State, who spoke about many issues which had nothing to do with nurses' pay or the funding of health authorities, was not keen to answer? Will he answer the economic argument based on the Government's figures, which I spelled out in my speech? Is it not the case that, when the percentage figure in the Government's motion is analysed under the constraints against which the Government measure health spending, in the present year there will be a 3 per cent. cut?

Mr. Tracey: The hon. Gentleman made that point earlier, and I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health will answer it with complete authority.

My main reason for speaking in the debate is to stress that substantial savings can be made through the cost-effectiveness programmes. In May this year, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, answering a question in the House, said that £13·1 million savings had been made from cost-effectiveness programmes, £10·7 million as a result of contracts going out to tender and £2·7 million as a result of in-house savings after putting services out to tender. Those savings have been made in only a few district health authorities—the ones that have grasped the nettle, carried through the process faithfully and contracted out their services.

It is possible to achieve anything up to the remarkable savings—58 per cent.—made by Merton and Sutton district health authority on the cleaning of St. Helier hospital at Carshalton. The in-house service cost £1·4 million, and the new service costs £583,000.

Why will not Opposition Members, whether from the Labour party or from the other half of the new Lib-Lab pact, encourage trade unions to pursue those policies in better faith? Why do they always wish to destroy the efforts of district health authorities to put services out to tender? Why must the TUC produce propaganda documents——

Mr. Corbyn: Trade unions oppose the privatisation of cleaning and other services because the job is done less efficiently by private enterprise, and workers have worse conditions, lower wages, shorter holidays and fewer work prospects.

Mr. Tracey: That is an almost perfect paraphrase of the propaganda that one hears from Opposition Members.

Mr. John Patten: My hon. Friend mentioned the considerable savings made at St. Helier hospital. Alas, I must report to the House that one criticism of the district health authority was that the standard of work done by NHS employees was lower than the standard of work carried out by private contractors. It should not have been the case, but unfortunately it was.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I wish to illustrate how far from the truth was the intervention of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). There is no doubt that the TUC and the Health Service unions have pursued a campaign of destruction and cynicism when attempts are made by district health authorities to put

services out to tender. A classic example was Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge, whose problems have been reported in the House and outside by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant).

I end with the specific example of Barking hospital. Following a strike by cleaners in March 1984, the TUC reported a lack of regular and effective cleaning, resulting in the presence of grease, dirt and cockroaches. At the request of trade union representatives, an inspector from the Health and Safety Executive made three visits to the hospital. He reported:

"As you know, I have recently made a series of visits to Barking Hospital to look at the standard of cleaning. I have visited in my opinion a reasonable cross-section of wards, public areas and service areas. On each occasion the hospital has been very clean and I have no cause to criticise. Accordingly I have no recommendation to make."

That report was made during the first year of the contract. It has been renewed by Redbridge district health authority for a further four years, which represents a saving of £150,000 a year and a total saving of £750,000. Such savings could be made in many district health authorities, and they would more than adequately fund part of the nurses' pay award.

6.35 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) has just demonstrated everything that the Tory party hates about the Health Service. Conservative Members hate Health Service workers, especially the lowest-paid ancillary workers. That is why they are trying to destroy their jobs through privatisation, and their living standards through the inevitable cuts in wages and working conditions that follow privatisation. The brave people at Barking and Addenbrooke's hospitals, who fought for the principle of high standards of cleanliness in hospitals, deserve more praise than the hon. Gentleman gave to them.

I am sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees, which, with other unions, has many members among nurses and midwives in the NHS. The speeches of Conservative Members have not adequately demonstrated to the House the attitude of nurses and midwives to the Government and to the pay increase that has been offered. It is one of disgust and anger, and of shame at being stuck between a Government who will not adequately fund the Health Service and increasing demands for better health care. They are told that the real problem in the Health Service is high pay. That is why they are so angry about what the Government say about them.

NUPE has produced a substantial document entitled "End Poverty Pay—A Strategy for the 1980s", which tries to describe the erosion of the wages of local government and Health Service workers. It states:

"Each year we are climbing up an escalator that is moving down, as the rising cost of living cuts away at our living standards. In some years we can beat inflation and our members are better off. But the Government is making it more and more difficult to climb the escalator, blocking our way with cash limits, the threat of job cuts and the threat of privatisation. So in some years the pay rises we are offered do not even match the cost of living."

That is true of the pay increases that have been offered to some nurses and midwives.

I should tell the House how appallingly low NHS pay is. Under existing pay arrangements for ancillary staff, who are the lowest paid in the NHS, 58·7 per cent. earn less than £100 a week, 92 per cent. earn less than £150 a week and 10 per cent. earn less than £68·70 a week. By any standards, those wages are disgraceful. Before the Government's announcement, 33·1 per cent. of nurses and midwives earned less than £100 a week, 74·1 per cent. earned less than £150 a week and 10 per cent. earned less than £80·60 a week.

Everyone recognises that those who work in the Health Service, in whatever grade, have valuable and responsible jobs. Nurses and midwives are doing extremely valuable and skilled work. How many Conservative Members would be prepared to live on those wages? How many of them go round the country saying what a splendid job the nurses do, but are not prepared to pay them for the work that they must do? That is the issue facing us.

Under the Government, the way in which the poverty trap and the funding of the Health Service and local government work means that the people who have lost out most are already the worst off, and their prospects, particularly those of the nurses after this settlement, are not very good. There are 550,000 people employed as nurses, which is 484,000 whole-time equivalent jobs.

To give a couple of examples of the sort of pay levels I speak of, a nursing auxiliary will get an increase of £3·30 per week as a result of the settlement. Even under the retail price index figures—and people do not live on the retail price index but on what they can afford to buy and to eat—nursing auxiliaries should have an increase of £5 per week. A sister will get an increase of £36·42 per month. All these figures are verifiable, and in my view they are disgraceful.

Conservative Members have made great play of the way in which they believe hospital waiting lists are being reduced and, indeed, of the way in which they believe Health Service expenditure has gone up. I wish to quote from a letter written by Mr. D. J. Holdstock, MD, FRCP, of Ashford hospital, Middlesex, which appeared in The *Guardian* of 13 July:

"Mr. Clarke claims that the NHS is treating more people. Like most statistics emanating from the Elephant and Castle, this is a myth. Many patients, particularly the mentally ill and elderly, are readmitted many times, having been discharged not because they are well enough to remain in the community, but to make room for others who are worse. Mr. Clarke's figures refer to numbers of admissions, not individuals. Community care, when it is available, is labour-intensive and therefore expensive; often it is a euphemism for care by hard-pressed and unsupported neighbours or relatives."

Many people in the country would support that statement and agree with it wholeheartedly.

The Government stand condemned for their attitude towards the Health Service and Health Service workers, whom they expect to bear the brunt of Government cuts in the Health Service and of hospital closures, of which more than 200 have occurred since the Government came into office. The Government expect these people to care for those who have been so badly treated by a Government who claim that they support the National Health Service when in reality they are reducing Health Service standards in the country. If hon. Members cared to talk to people who work in hospitals and to people who are or who expect to be patients in hospitals, they will observe a dangerously low level of morale and a deep feeling of anger towards the Government. People look forward to the day when the Government are swept out of office and those who genuinely care about the health of the people of the country are put into office.

6.42 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I am glad that so many hon. Members have taken part in this important debate even though some were rather wide of the mark in their comments. I had hoped that we would have more of substance from the Under-Secretary. I had hoped that we might have had a rather more formidable attack on the form of words of the motion and a more passionate defence of the amendment.

At one point, the hon. Gentleman used some figures to match nurses' pay to inflation. It is important that we study the figures carefully. Their validity depends on what base year one uses. If one takes the base year of 1979, there has been some increase in the comparison between nurses' pay and inflation since that time. As was mentioned by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) the fact remains that, if one considers the year following the 1975 Halsbury report and awards, nurses' pay has not yet got back to that same level.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Under the Lib-Lab pact.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) assists me in his reference to a pact. I would be as critical if not more critical of members of the Labour Government who allowed nurses' pay to slip back more than the Conservatives.

The figure dropped between 1975 and 1978, it picked up a little in 1979—and we might speculate on the reasons for that—and it picked up still further in 1980, but it has dropped back since and has never returned to the 1979 level.

The Under-Secretary also challenged us on patient numbers. He said that we ought to come clean on whether we were prepared to accept that more patients were treated. Of course I accept that. There is some element of double counting of people. He referred to the number of treatments. If people are discharged early and have to go back into hospital, they count as two patients in the figures. This should be recognised.

One cannot always measure the adequacy of care by the number of patients treated. I have referred on other occasions to renal work. The local health authority in Leeds is delighted to have less dialysis done because this means that more transplants are carried out. It wishes to see a reduction in the number of patients because this means better health care. As large mental health institutions are closed, there will be fewer patients in NHS care, but more people out in the community, and again, the figures will go down. Therefore, I do not see that the number of patients being treated is an adequate measure of improvement in the Health Service. I would argue with the hon. Gentleman, as I have done on other occasions, that the Government might better claim that the health of a country has improved because fewer people are being treated than claim that this is so because more people are being treated.

The Minister then tried to drive a wedge between the two parties in the alliance. I will give him the official alliance policy position. It has to be recognised that, in the great mass parties in the Chamber, there are differences between all sorts of people. The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) veered a bit here and a bit there, but he expressed his opinion. He was not entirely without criticism. That will happen with all mass parties. Ultimately, one has to come down to some agreed statement, and I will give it to the Minister. The joint programme for the last election, in 1983, stated:

"the continuing commitment of all NHS staff is vital if the health service is to deliver the best care it can. This means that NHS staff must be properly and fairly treated. We gave our commitment . . . to determine pay in the public services by a new system based on fair comparison with other groups and a fair arbitration procedure which will also apply to NHS staff."

I think that that is straightforward. The Minister asked for it, and he has it.

After that, we went all round the block—defence, nuclear power and even jazz. I am not averse to a plug for the band—heaven knows we need it—but with no admission fees. I am also worried about the reference to the band because I have maintained my reputation as a musician by never playing in public, and I was hoping to continue in that.

What is rather alarming—it may be a new trend in the speeches of the Minister—is that, just when I thought that he was going to return to the motion and to the peroration, he sat down. I could not understand this. Not only was there no peroration, but there was no finger wagging. Where is the Minister without some finger wagging?

It was a pleasure to hear the contribution of my new hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). Indeed, I anticipate that the increased frequency of the alliance Opposition days will coincide with the increased frequency of being able to welcome new Members representing the Liberal party.

The hon. Member for Harlow baffled me. He started off as a straightforward pure monetarist. I thought that he was going to go straightforwad down the line. He then veered in a centre forward direction but, before he could get right into that camp, he drew back from the brink. At the end, I thought that there was a slight warning. The right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) should beware if the hon. Member for Harlow sends him a post-dated cheque because the cheque will certainly be cancelled long before the right hon. Gentleman gets round to cashing it.

We then heard the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), who, I thought, was unnecessarily snide and looked for ulterior motives. I do not believe that there is a monopoly of compassion in any political party. I have never been one who wishes to look into people's hearts and minds to find some ulterior motive. One accepts the debate on the terms in which it is framed and put forward. Thus, if things are right, they should be supported and, if they are wrong, one should oppose them rather than look for some ulterior motive. If things are as good as the hon. Gentleman set out, why has there been virtually no increase in male life expectancy in the 40 years since the inception of the National Health Service? It is not enough to say that things are wonderful, that the Government are doing a great job and that we ought to be able to support everything that they do.

The hon. Gentleman went on about privatisation. The Select Committee report published a week ago says that, although we have had pressure for privatisation for four years, that process has not yet "brought home the bacon". It is difficult for people in the Health Service to count and treble-count the same efficiency savings that the Government are demanding.

I said in an intervention that about 25 per cent. of spending does not go on staff, so the spending available

from which cuts can be made is smaller than many people imagine. It has not been proved that it is wise from an economic or from a service point of view to cut staff numbers and their pay.

The logic of a pay review is that, if there is to be independent inspection of pay, the Government must fund it. The psychological effect on nurses of having to fight for pay increases at the expense of the service to which they are committed is immoral and insupportable.

6.50 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I congratulate the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on his election and on his maiden speech. He spoke with admirable brevity and clarity and with patent sincerity. I am sure that we all wish him well and trust that he will represent his constituents as well as his distinguished predecessor, Mr. Tom Hooson, whom we all miss.

When the hon. Gentleman referred to his constituency and matters relevant to this debate, he slipped into one or two factual errors. He talked of a 3·5 per cent. cash increase to his health authority, which has received a 4·5 per cent. cash increase. He also heavily laboured the effect of this year's pay award on the finances of Powys health authority. It is costing that authority £22,000 more than it was planning—0·1 per cent. of its revenue allocation—and Powys is one of those authorities which is unaffected by this year's award. I trust that, away from the rhetoric of the by-election, we shall find that, as with everything else the hon. Gentleman said, he devotes himself to the problems of his health authority. I hope that he will consider the terms of the first alliance motion that he has been asked to support.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarthy and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) tried to construct a great deal of bad news out of the opening of a new hospital in the Highlands. He also tried to create a good deal of bad news out of this year's review body recommendations and the pay awards for nurses and midwives. That seemed to be the whole point of the argument advanced by the Liberal, Social Democratic and Labour Opposition. They cannot sweep away the underlying good news for nurses, and those who have their interests at heart, of this year's pay award. With the exception of one or two speeches, I detected no criticism of the review body system, or of the size of the award that we are giving.

The creation of the nurses and midwives review body is one of the Government's major achievements. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said, it opens up the prospect of nurses' pay no longer being dealt with by those pre-general election one-off gestures. We now have a permanent system which will give the Government the advice of independent people about the right level of pay for nurses and which will put Governments under an obligation to honour its recommendations.

If the national interest determines it, we will not follow the body's recommendations, but normally, as this year, I am sure that the Government will implement the recommended pay awards. I do not meet many nurses who think that they would be better off going back to what preceded the review body system which the Government have set up.

I listened with care to see whether any of the Opposition parties would commit themselves to the review body. Before we announced the award, the Leader of the Opposition went to the Royal College of Nursing conference and threw out vague figures about the money that Labour might give nurses. I do not think that he expected the level of the full-year award that was about to be forthcoming and hope that what he said was not intended to imply that, under Labour, we should go back to some form of bargaining process. We ought to know whether the review body is safe under Labour.

The alliance is meant to believe in pay policy. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) described what I admit was a fairly generalised passage from the alliance's last election manifesto concerning the arbitration arrangements that might be set up for all public sector workers. If I were a nurse, I am not at all sure that I should be happy to exchange the review body system that we have given to them because of the regard in which we hold them and because they do not take strike action against their patients, unlike other key public sector workers and their clients, for some form of Liberal pay policy for all public sector workers. When, under the Lib-Lab pact, there was pay policy, nurses did especially badly compared with inflation and other workers.

After the Halsbury award, between June 1974 and April 1979, nurses' pay went up by 65 per cent., whereas the retail prices index went up by 97 per cent. That is the record of the Labour Government and the Lib-Lab pact and their pay policy. Before this year's award, we had begun to redress the balance. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State explained the effect of this year's award. By March 1985—before that award—the pay bill had increased by 126 per cent. because it was already 23 per cent. ahead of prices and we had cut hours from 40 to 37·5 a week. We had also employed 57,000 more whole-time equivalents in England. This year's award gives an average of 9 per cent. in a full year across the profession, up to 14 per cent. for sisters and up to 11 per cent. for staff nurses. That is an extremely good settlement.

The Opposition have to challenge what I believe is undilutedly good news for the Health Service by means of this motion on how the award will be funded. It is being funded as we always said it would be and in a way which health authorities can perfectly well contend with while delivering the patient services that we require. We have said from the word go that the cash limits for the Health Service this year would be increased by 5·5 per cent. We had to say what the Government could afford for the whole NHS, and not divide it artificially.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) described the process clearly. I parody what he said, but we do not collect from the Treasury—nor would any Government—one pile of pound notes labelled "services" and another pile labelled "pay." There is a cash limit, which Governments have always determined. We told the review body of that limit. I do not care what anybody said in the Select Committee. I was at the negotiations with the Treasury when we agreed that the cash limit covered everything. There was no 3 per cent. norm for anybody. Therefore, when the review body made its recommendations, it knew what it was working within.

The chairman of the review body made it clear in public statements that he left the timing and implementation of an award which he knew amounted to 9 per cent. in a full year to the Government. We had to make a judgment, and we made a judgment precisely to avoid the dangers of which the motion accuses us.

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

We knew that health authority limits in England were going up by £500 million and that health authorities had identified for us £150 million which could be provided through cost improvements—not efficiency savings as some people have called them, and certainly not cuts. Those cost improvements did not affect patient care. We therefore decided that we could pay nurses in two instalments, so the total cost fell as £240 million in one year.

Hon. Members have tried to find anecdotal evidence to the contrary. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye ought to go back to his stray delegate at Cardiff from Teesside and ask how on earth a 2 per cent. cut is being forced on that authority as a result of the figures that I have given. Hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and even my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), threw in examples of health authorities with all kinds of difficulties, but none of those difficulties was attributable to nurses' pay.

The fact is that at the new Arrowe Hall hospital in Birkenhead, at the new Oldham hospital being built at Oldham and in my health authority and others, services and increased pay are going hand in hand because we are giving more money. The alliance even tried to outdo us in money. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye said that the alliance would increase expenditure by 1·5 per cent. each year in economic cost terms. If we had followed that modest target, health authorities would have £500 million less to spend than they have. He is promising——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 154, Noes 233.

Division No. 271] **[7 pm**

AYES

Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wilson, Gordon
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Charles Kennedy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 223, Noes 148.

Division No. 272] **[7.12 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey

Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Teriezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wilson, Gordon
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on implementing the recommendations of the Health Service Pay Review Bodies and awarding a fair pay increase to all the staff concerned, with particularly high awards for staff nurses and ward sisters; notes that nurses' pay has risen by 23 per cent. in real terms between April 1979 and March 1985 and will rise significantly this year as a result of the Review Body award; welcomes the 5·5 per cent. increase in health authority and health board funding which, together with the extra resources gained from cost improvement programmes, will enable service developments to take place in addition to the funding of the pay award; and notes with approval the continuing increases in the number of patients treated by the Health Service.

GLC Lorry Ban (Judgment)

7.23 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have you been asked by the Secretary of State for Transport for permission to come to the House and make a statement on the findings of Mr. Justice McNeill today in the High Court? According to *The London Standard*, Mr. Justice McNeill informed the court that the Secretary of State's refusal to approve the GLC ban on lorries was "unreasonable, irrational and unlawful." The article states that,

"in issuing a 'direction' last February that the ban could not go ahead without a public inquiry,"

the Secretary of State had "exceeded his powers" under the Road Traffic (Regulation) Act 1984. It adds:

"The Minister did not have the power under the Act to force them to hold a public inquiry, said the judge."

This is not the first time that the Secretary of State has been found to be acting in an unlawful, unacceptable and certainly unreasonable manner. We cannot understand why he has not seen fit, even at this late hour, to come to the House not only to apologise for his irrational behaviour, but at least to make it clear that he had no right to attack the GLC in the manner he did.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

Mrs. Dunwoody: What is more, his intention in so doing was totally unlawful. May I remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If I could anticipate the further point of order, the hon. Lady should come to her point of order now.

Mrs. Dunwoody: May I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you are aware that the Prime Minister today told American lawyers in London that the desire for justice imposes very firm requirements on the politician?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must come to her point of order.

Mrs. Dunwoody: In view of the Prime Minister's statement that

"unstinting support for the courts which administer the law and for the police who enforce it"

is the first duty of politicians, why cannot the Secretary of State come to the House and tell us why he is behaving in this arrogant and arbitrary fashion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The answer to the hon. Lady's point of order is that I have not received any such request.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it not be in keeping with the traditions of the House that when a serious matter is raised in the courts, once again catching out this ridiculous Secretary of State who is clearly a recidivist, there should be a statement at the earliest possible opportunity? Surely that is something the Opposition can expect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Secretary of State and the Leader of the House have heard the exchanges and will doubtless take them into account.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there any procedure whereby the Secretary of State can come here? I am sure that he would welcome an opportunity to make a statement this evening. Can you tell us how to ensure that that happens?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a hypothesis, if a request were to be made, the Chair would have to consider it and seek an appropriate moment for the Minister to make his statement. I have received no such request.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it possible that the matter is sub judice? I understand that the Secretary of State may be considering an appeal. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I know nothing about the judgment. I have heard references to what has been reported in *The London Standard*, but I prefer to see some harder facts. In any case, it is not a matter for me—nor is the hypothetical question of an appeal. The only issue to which I have to respond is whether I have received a request for a statement to be made, and the answer is no.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. While accepting that something in *The London Standard* is not necessarily a hard fact, it is a hard fact that the Secretary of State and the Leader of the House are here. Are they going to make a statement? If not, are they going to inform you when they intend to make a statement? This is the second time that the present Secretary of State has been held in the courts to have acted irrationally and unlawfully in relation to the GLC. It is time that he came to the House to explain what he is doing.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it possible that the Secretary of State has not yet received the judgment and is awaiting it before coming to the House? On the previous occasion, legislation was rushed through the House to make legal a previously illegal action by the Secretary of State. The House is surely entitled to know whether that is going to happen again.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a former probation officer, may I offer my services to the Secretary of State? We all make mistakes occasionally. We are all allowed one, but on the second occasion there is an indication that rehabilitation is needed.

We seek your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the Prime Minister's comments. She said:

"The first heresy is that if only a determined minority gather together"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot raise a point of order about what the Prime Minister is supposed to have said at a meeting today.

Mr. Soley: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Prime Minister was saying that a minority could not be used to break the law. A member of a minority group—the Government—has been found guilty of breaking the law on two occasions, and that must be a serious matter. We are asking the Minister to give an explanation to Parliament. Having been found guilty before the courts on two occasions, he ought to come to the House and make a statement.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all support

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

the rule of law. I wonder whether you could advise hon. Members what they should tell constituents when the courts tell us that the Secretary of State for Transport has twice acted irrationally and unlawfully? How are we to explain to our constituents that the country is being run by Secretaries of State who are clearly irrational and behave unlawfully?

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) underestimates the magnitude of the problem. As a former assistant director of social services, I believe that this is a section 25 job. I shall be consulting my social services colleagues in London to se whether instant action can be taken against the Secretary of State.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are not matters for me, and I cannot give advice to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). The only question to which I have to respond is whether I have received any indication of a wish to make a statement. I have received no such indication. If there is a will to make a statement, no doubt I shall receive a request.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek confirmation as a genuine point of order. Further to the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), will you confirm that it is not possible under the general law for an hon. Member to be subject to section 25 procedure, except with the written consent of Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know nothing about section 25. Standing Orders are enough for me to worry about.

Orders of the Day

Oil and Pipelines Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered

New Clause 1

SECURITY OF SUPPLY AGREEMENT

'(1) The Agency shall have power to enter into agreements, on behalf of the Crown and at the request of the Secretary of State to secure the supply of petroleum and petroleum products.

(2) Such agreements shall include provision that—

(a) the Company with production from the United Kingdom continental shelf shall continue to supply United Kingdom customers with crude oil and petroleum products with at least the quantities supplied over the previous year or contracted to supply over the coming year, and will increase the supply where possible and will use its transportation and distribution system for this purpose; and

(b) the Company will make supplies at the prices ruling at the time of request (or as otherwise determined by law and regulations)'.—*[Mr. Rowlands.]*

Brought up and read the First time.

7.35 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In the 10 sittings and nearly 30 hours of the Committee stage, there was a common thread to our arguments. Our charge throughout the proceedings on the Bill has been that the abolition of the British National Oil Corporation will weaken and undermine many aspects of the security of our oil supplies. We believe that BNOC's control over about 800,000 barrels of North sea oil represented one of the vital means of ensuring our supplies in times of shortage.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy argued repeatedly in Committee and on Second Reading that he had a combination of powers and arrangements to ensure the security of our oil supplies. One part of that combination—and, therefore, a part of the right hon. Gentleman's defence in supporting the abolition of the BNOC—was that he had a series of security-of-supply assurances from the major oil companies, particularly those with refining capacity in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman claimed that he could afford not to activate the participation agreements for six or 12 months.

I asked the Minister on Second Reading about the character of those assurances. He said that he could not give us information at that time, but would consider enlightening us in Committee. However, he said that the assurances from the major oil companies were informal.

The matter was not raised in detail in Committee—the new clause breaks new ground—but we put some sensible and reasonable questions to the Minister about his dependence on those assurances. He told us that he could say no more than he had said on Second Reading, which was very little.

Therefore, we need further advice from the Minister about the nature of the assurances that he has received. We believe that the assurances should be formal agreements with the oil companies. My support for that view was

strengthened when I read an article in today's *Financial Times* about a letter that might be typical of the assurances on which the right hon. Gentleman is dependent.

The right hon. Gentleman will have seen the report in the *Financial Times* about the letter of assurance from BP to the Department of Energy. Is that typical of the informal assurances that he holds from the major oil companies? Are they in the form of a letter from an oil company manager to a civil servant at the Department of Energy? The illustration in the *Financial Times* is not even a letter from an oil company chairman to the Secretary of State for Energy; I do not know whether a letter from a chairman would increase or diminish the strength of the assurances, but it gives us no comfort to believe that the assurances may be only informal letters from oil company managers to civil servants.

The second and revelant question is whether, if the letter mentioned in the *Financial Times* is a typical example of the assurances, the right hon. Gentleman has received any advice about the contractual strength of those assurances. Would such an assurance be legally binding if a dispute arose about its terms?

Although the letter quoted in the *Financial Times* is dated November 1983, it may be one of the assurances received by the Minister of State. If it is not, I should be pleased to hear how the Minister has strengthened the assurances. More important, I want to ask the Minister about the terms of such an assurance. In the letter, the assurance is given in very general terms. About the types of supplies being offered in times of shortage or crisis, we are told in the letter that the oil company—in this case, BP—would be keeping customers supplied

"in accordance with the relevant contracts and established patterns of business."

If a shortage occurs or there is a potential crisis and pressures grow, those words could mean almost anything to anyone, especially to the oil company giving the assurance. Many of these established patterns of business may involve contracts with terminal dates. There may be very short-term arrangements with the companies concerned. How strong, reasonable and effective would such an assurance be at a time of shortage or crisis?

We also ask the Minister about the reference in this supply assurance letter, if it is still in force, to a total disclaimer on prices. The letter of assurance says that BP

"makes the above affirmation subject further to there being no legal or governmental constraint on its ability to raise prices as a necessary means of recovering costs."

It appears that a fundamental condition of the assurance is that, in return, the Government have to assure the oil company that they will make no endeavour to restrain or to restrict price increases in times of shortage. Those phrases cannot be read in any other way. It appears that, in return for a very general assurance about oil supplies, the Government will have to accept that there will be no intervention in the prices that BP wishes to charge during a time of shortage or potential crisis. That is a serious commitment to make in return for the very general assurance offered by BP.

We do not know whether the letter dated November 1983 is the type of assurance that the Minister told the Committee he had. We do not know whether it is out of date. We do not know whether, since that date, the assurances have been strengthened or improved. However, the Opposition wish to register their objection to a general assurance of this kind combined with a disclaimer, because it does not add up to an effective form of assurance.

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): During the last supply difficulty that we experienced, the Government attempted to restrain prices and the result was a shortage of petrol. Why is the hon. Gentleman so dismayed that there should be that disclaimer?

7.45 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I am dismayed because it seems unreasonable that, when Britain is a large oil producer, there should not be some reasonable relationship between its production and refining capacity and the prices that a company in that position should be able to charge its customers. The House will note the belief of the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) in letting the market rip, especially in a period of shortage or crisis.

Mr. Portillo *indicated assent.*

Mr. Rowlands: We shall take note of the hon. Gentleman's nod of assent and explain nationally that that is the position of Government Back Benchers, and I think that we are entitled to know whether the Government accept that unadulterated view of the market. Certain differences have emerged between the hon. Gentleman's position and that of the Government on certain aspects of the Bill. It will be interesting to know whether the Minister agrees with his hon. Friend.

We ought to know whether, in return for a general assurance of the kind suggested in the letter, the Government have offered the major oil companies a free-for-all in prices, forswearing any intervention on price increases during a period of oil shortage. I hope that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate will at least support me in saying that, in return for these assurances, we should have some knowledge of what is being suggested, and that there will not be a price disclaimer of the kind that was apparently in the BP-Government letter of November 1983.

These are two very important aspects of the so-called informal supply assurances if they are repeated in the other assurances that the Minister has in relation to supply and in relation to a disclaimer of any form of price control, moderation or restraint in times of oil shortage. Is that the combination about which the Minister spoke when he told the House of his front-line defences to ensure the security of our oil supplies?

Towards the end of the letter, I read:

"This letter will cease to have effect upon the expiry of the royalty agreement."

Will the Minister explain that a little more? If it is assured that this is the letter of assurance between BP and the Government, will the Minister say what that sentence means? If the royalty agreement between BP and the Secretary of State includes the right of the company to the automatic sale-back of all royalty oil, is that a part of BP's royalty agreement with the Secretary of State? If it is one of the conditions of the security of suppy assurance and it lapses when the royalty agreement lapses, how does that leave the assurance given to the House by the Minister that the new agency will be entitled to manage and trade every barrel of oil? Does BP's royalty agreement with the Secretary of State give the company the right to the automatic sale-back of royalty oil, and is the assurance made subject to this agreement?

[Mr. Rowlands]

On more than one occasion when we have discussed these issues the Minister has said that the agency will have a free and unfettered right to decide whether to manage and trade in royalty oil as opposed to giving an automatic sale-back provision to the major oil companies. Again, the House has a right to know about these so-called informal assurances.

In the absence of any trading in participation oil by the new agency, because the agency will have only a limited trading role, these assurances play a much greater part than they would have if we had had an agency active in trading in any significant way in crude oil through its participation agreements.

The new clause states that agreements relating to security of supply must be binding, contractual arrangements, not informal letters to civil servants from the managers of an oil company. In other words, they must be contractual agreements having the force of law. While it would be question of negotiations between companies and the Government, the new clause states that security of supply agreement must be specific rather than general. An agreement in the terms of the letter which I have quoted from the *Financial Times* would not do. That is why the new clause says in subsection (2)*(a)* that a company

"shall continue to supply United Kingdom customers with crude oil and petroleum products with at least the quantities supplied over the previous year or contracted to supply over the coming year, and will increase the supply where possible and will use its transportation and distribution system for this purpose".

That would be more specific than the waffly words contained in the BP letter. It goes on to place an onus on oil companies to promote and, where possible, increase supplies to the United Kingdom.

Such obligations on oil companies are not unreasonable, because those companies have major interests in our North sea fields. It would be incomprehensible to the general public if those companies did not respond in the most positive way on behalf of United Kingdom customers at times of shortage. We are not adamant about the wording of the new clause. If the Minister accepted the principle involved, we should be willing to accept an alternative form of words.

The new clause adds in subsection (2)*(b)* that there should not be a free-for-all in the way that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate described, whereby the oil companies would be able to exercise their power over the market and, in times of shortage, rip off the United Kingdom customer. To avoid that situation, we say:

"The Company will make supplies at the prices ruling at the time of request (or as otherwise determined by law and regulations".

No form of words should restrain the Government from being able to intervene, by law or regulations, on prices during a period of shortage.

The new clause would place proper responsibility on oil companies to endeavour to improve the nation's oil supply position in a period of crisis or shortage. Such a responsibility should be on companies because, as I say, the public would find it incomprehensible should the United Kingdom not be in a better position at a time of oil shortage than are other countries that do not have oil supplies off their shores.

Not only will the United Kingdom be in the oil production business for years to come — the oil will decline eventually; we shall discuss that on later amendments — but we still do have a large refining capacity. The public would not understand if the nation, producing more than 2 million barrels a day, did not ensure that major oil companies made a special effort to see that we had adequate supplies during a period of shortage.

Let us not forget that BP, Shell and the other major companies have had their way, as reflected by the Bill. I say that because their thinly disguised desire to have BNOC abolished — to remove BNOC as a major oil trader—is conceded to them in the Bill. Therefore, we are entitled to demand more from those companies by way of security of supply agreements than the untried, untested, waffly, informal assurances at which the Minister is clutching and on which he relied when replying to points made by hon. Members in Committee.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) sometimes worries me. Although some clear lessons are to be learned from the last 10 years, he does not appear to want to learn them. One is that, between 1974 and 1979, Britain and other western countries responded to the 1974 oil crisis by attempting to restrain oil prices. The result was that we had high inflation, we continued to be heavily dependent on oil and we went through a period of world recession.

In 1979, Britain again tried to restrain the prices of oil products. The result was that in Britain there was a shortage of those products, with queues at petrol stations, whereas other European countries which did not operate restraint had plentiful supplies of petrol—and we were a producer of oil, while those other countries were not.

Since 1979, countries have by and large responded to the second oil shock in a completely different way. They have not attempted to restrain oil prices. Hence, since 1979 our dependence on oil has decreased. We have shown greater efficiency in the use of energy, with the result that in the intervening years we have had falling inflation and enjoyed a period of substantial growth. Today, there is a substantial oil surplus throughout the world, and that is attributable to the fact that countries are less dependent on oil. Even the price of oil has fallen considerably because we have not made the error of trying to restrain prices.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney wishes to lead us back to the bad old days when we tried to put the lid on prices and when, ironically, we suffered from precisely what we thought we were avoiding — inflation in general and high oil prices.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I shall be brief and will not, therefore, answer the points that were made by the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), except to comment that I do not accept his account of what occurred either from 1974 to 1979 or for the period since 1979.

I support the new clause, which was moved comprehensively by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). The security of supplies was the major point raised on Second Reading, when the Minister's answers were highly unsatisfactory. Nothing that has happened since then, in Committee and elsewhere, has persuaded me to change my view.

I will not go over the whole question of security of supplies and what might happen when the agreements under the International Energy Agency and Common

Market are activated or what might happen on the activation of participation agreements. That is to be done with such a period of notice that, in terms of meeting a crisis—whether the crisis is beyond or below the trigger point of 7 per cent.—the whole process of reactivating participation agreements is of no relevance.

On Second Reading the Minister described the informal assurances given to the Government by the oil companies. Therefore, he must be embarrassed that the details of at least one of the informal assurances appeared in the *Financial Times* this morning. On Second Reading he said that he could not tell us any more than he had about the arrangements—and that was precious little—because the details were confidential. They were not sufficiently confidential to prevent them from appearing in today's *Financial Times*. I do not know how that happened, but I am delighted that it did. At least we now have information about those informal assurances.

8 pm

We are entitled to answers to a number of questions about the report in the *Financial Times*. Is it accurate? Does it give an accurate account of the letter from BP dated November 1983? As 20 months have passed, is that letter still operative? Is it written in similar terms to letters from other oil companies, or is it a one-off letter? If there are other letters—we must assume that there are, and that they are the substance of the informal assurances received by the Government—are they similar to the letter from BP?

I assume that those letters are not legally binding—they could not be informal if they were. On Second Reading and in Committee the Minister said that there were informal assurances. We are entitled to know how far those assurances are binding in the event of a crisis. Why should there not be legally binding agreements for the oil companies, given the circumstances of our North sea oil production? Why should we rely on informal assurances? If the companies are willing to give informal assurances, they can have no objection to having provisions written into legislation.

I shall listen carefully to the Minister's answers to those questions. However, unless there is a legally binding agreement the protection of our oil supplies will be deficient and defective. We must have legislation to deal with that, which is why we have tabled the new clause.

I fully support the new clause, including subsection 2*(b)* on prices. It is an important part of the new clause. However, if the Government said they were interested in security of supply but that it was not realistic to write a price ruling into legislation that would be fair enough. We could draft another new clause to accommodate that. What is essential is that there should be security of supply and that the Government have legally effective powers to ensure that in times of crisis. Indeed, the ordinary member of the public would find it incomprehensible that, despite our excessive production in the North sea, over our national needs, there should be a shortage in a time of crisis and no binding agreement to ensure security of supply. That would be indefensible.

As BNOC is to be abolished, something must be written into legislation to protect our supplies, and the new clause seeks to do that. If the drafting is not quite right, and if there was an objection to the provision on prices—although I would not necessarily accept the validity of that objection—it would be possible to write something into the legislation in another place to ensure security of supplies. I strongly support the new clause.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The House will appreciate that my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was very much involved in the Committee stage of the Bill and would have been present today had it not been for circumstances of which the House is aware—that his wife gave birth to a daughter last week. She came out of hospital today and my hon. Friend is properly with her, learning how to change his first nappy. I hope that the House will accept me as a substitute.

I am concerned about the implications of the new clause. The Opposition are understandably concerned about security of supply and the lack of legal force within the existing arrangements. However, the clause attempts to lay down specific circumstances for an unforeseen crisis, yet what will be required cannot be predetermined to the extent envisaged by the new clause. If a crisis involved the stoppage of the flow of oil in the world market, we should wish to retain the oil that we export for ourselves. We could deal with that by producing emergency legislation — something with which the House is perfectly capable of dealing in a spirit of all-party co-operation. That would be a more appropriate way to deal with the problem.

Why is it that the United Kingdom, which accounts for about 1·6 per cent. of the world's oil reserves, accounts for 4·5 per cent. of the world's production? What are the implications of that for the future security of supplies? We are producing oil at a rapid rate and selling it abroad. By definition, the oil sold and consumed now will not be available in future. We should concern ourselves with that aspect.

There is a natural instinct in the Labour party for tight regimentation in this matter. The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) put the opposing view, which suggested too much trust in the force of the market to resolve the problem. However, to try to determine something in advance and introduce tight regulation over something that we cannot fully foresee is neither necessary nor likely to be workable.

Subsection 2*(a)* states:

"the company with production from the United Kingdom continental shelf shall continue to supply United Kingdom customers with crude oil and petroleum products with at least the quantities supplied over the previous year."

Some customers might not want or be able to deal with that quantity for internal reasons. The criterion is rigid in the extreme.

Mr. Rowlands: I am sure that the words do not debar the customer from foregoing a supply. Most of the assurances which the Minister is trying to obtain are for times when shortage occurs, but before a crisis. If a customer does not want the oil, the clause does not mean that he must take it.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful for that clarification, but the clause anticipates circumstances which cannot be anticipated. The one merit in the clause is the recognition that securing crude oil is not a requirement. To the extent that the clause addresses itself to that specific, it is an improvement. It recognises that crude oil being available is no darned good without the facilities to process it. In terms of security, the new clause is an improvement on

[Mr. Bruce]

previous agreements and participation agreements which Labour Governments wrote into legislation. I am pleased that we are learning.

To be frank, I think that the new clause is proposed because of an understandable resentment about what the Government have done to the British National Oil Corporation. Once the company had been split, the only logical solution was to do what the Government are doing. We might not have agreed, but the Labour party is resisting the solution for sentimental rather than rational reasons. My colleagues and I will not support the new clause.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): An hon. Member can seek leave of the House to speak twice at this stage in proceedings, so I look forward to what the Minister has to say. I was not on the Committee considering the Bill, for reasons of which my colleagues are aware. I have sat on a number of other Bills on the same subject. When Lord Carrington was Secretary of State for Defence in the Government headed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), he favoured the British National Oil Corporation. That was because he realised from his ministerial experience that it would be impossible to safeguard supplies without some such instrument. That was his view at the time and I do not know whether he has recanted. I think not.

We need to know whether the letter of intent is sufficient. I have two questions to ask about the *Financial Times* article. First, is it satisfactory that a letter from Mr. David Simon, the head of BP's refining and marketing division, to an Under-Secretary in the Department should give such assurances? Surely such assurances should be given at least by the chairman of the company to the Secretary of State. I am not a great one for protocol but that seems an odd way of proceeding.

Secondly, the article states:

"BP makes the above affirmation subject to there being no further governmental constraints on its ability to raise prices as a necessary means of recovering costs."

What exactly is the nature of the quid pro quo?

I have kept my comments short because, after the Minister has replied, some of us might want to ask further questions.

8.15 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): We have debated this subject on Second Reading and in Committee. I have always acknowledged that the subject causes concern. Security of supply is important to the Government, to the House and to the country. In the changes that we made to BNOC and its functions, and in the changes made when Britoil was formed and in abolishing BNOC security of supply has loomed large. That is why I devoted a large part of my Second Reading speech to that aspect and why we debated certain aspects of participation fully in Committee.

We have made changes because circumstances have changed. The situation is not the same as it was in the early 1970s, either in relation to the oil market or to the structure of the oil industry. The Bill is a reflection of the changes. What might have been appropriate 10 years ago is not necessarily appropriate today.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) referred to the *Financial Times* article. I read the article with interest. The article must stand or fall on what it says. The arrangements between the Government and oil companies are confidential and I shall not breach that confidentiality. It is not my place to breach such confidentiality and I do not intend to do so. That would be wrong.

Whatever the source of the article, the information did not come from me. I shall not take any part in breaching confidentiality that would have an effect on that company and on other companies with which agreements have been made.

Mr. Millan: What will the effects be on the other companies and on BP? Everybody has read the article and the information is no longer confidential.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The matter is straightforward. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman, having held a ministerial position, should consider the possibility of discussing confidential matters. If I were to discuss such matters freely in the House and elsewhere, the parties to the agreement would have little confidence in Ministers fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I understand the Minister's difficulty in regard to confidentiality — obviously he does not want to comment in detail on such matters—but he must accept that the terms of the report in the *Financial Times* give us greater cause for misgiving about the secret undertakings. Will the Minister speak in defence of his arrangement, particularly in the light of his charge that it goes less far than we thought when he told us that the assurances were available?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am certainly prepared to comment on some of the general aspects, but I said that I was not prepared to comment on the specific details of the individual agreements with individual companies. For the reasons that I have stated clearly, I am not prepared to do that.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) asked about the form of the assurances. They vary from company to company, and there are no two companies in exactly the same circumstances, so there is no standard form of agreement for all oil companies.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the binding nature of the agreements. He more or less answered his question. Of course they are not legally binding. In 1982, when the matter of the agreements was first made public, it was made clear that the agreements are informal. They are not legally binding, and I have never claimed that they are. Equally, given the relationship that exists over a series of matters between Government and the oil companies, I see no reason and the Government see no reason for believing that in practice those agreements would not be honoured by both parties to them.

I should like to deal a little later with the matter of prices, because it is a fundamental part of the new clause.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney asked about royalties. He would be correct if what is reported in the article to which he referred could be affected by the new arrangements being made as a result of the legislation. I shall turn in a moment to the relevant contribution of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). Circumstances change and, as circumstances change, so may agreements with the oil companies change. If, as a result of the passing of the Bill, there need to be any

changes in the agreements with the oil companies, I shall discuss them with the oil companies. We are dealing with a changing situation. The passage of the Bill will create new circumstances. I assure the House that I shall be flexible and reactive to whatever changes arise as a result of the Bill.

Mr. Rowlands: In reading the terms, it appears to be a condition of giving the assurance that the royalty agreement with BP is signed. As I understand the historic position of royalty agreements between BP and the Government, they are for the automatic sale-back of royalty oil. The Minister says now that, in the light of the assurances he has given us, the agency will not be bound by any automatic sale-back arrangements. Will the royalty agreements require revision, and will the assurance fall if the BP does not get its way in the royalty agreement with the Secretary of State?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I think that I have made my point quite clear. If changes are necessary, or if agreements are affected as a consequence of the passage of the Bill, obviously each agreement will have to be looked at individually, because there are different circumstances in different agreements. I give the House the assurance that I shall look at those agreements to make sure that they are no less effective, following the passage of the Bill, than they are at present.

Mr. Millan: How can the Minister say that, if they are informal agreements and not legally binding? What happens if an oil company refuses to enter into an agreement? Presumably oil companies are free to do that.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is significant that no company has refused to do so. I shall deal shortly with the principle of the matter and with the reason for having informal agreements of the kind that we have, rather than having them in a more legal form, as suggested by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and his hon. Friends. It is a fundamental question that we debated to some extent in Committee and are debating again this evening.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister is always courteous in dealing with interventions. That has been characteristic of the way in which we have conducted our proceedings throughout the Bill. Therefore, I am sure that he will not mind if I intervene again.

The Minister gave an assurance to this House and to the Committee that the new agency will not be bound to give the right of automatic sale-back of oil to any major oil company. It appears from the terms of the assurance that it is tied into a royalty agreement which gives BP the right to an automatic sale-back. Which assurance should we take?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I can only repeat what I have said. If there are changes as a result of the legislation, any changes in the agreements will have to be negotiated with those who are parties to them. That has been the character of participation. For example, where it has been BNOC's responsibility, or in relation to other contracts which BNOC has with a non-participation agreement, where on the specific agreement — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He has referred to a report in a newspaper and asked what would arise in the circumstances mentioned there. I cannot go further than I have already. If circumstances arise which affect agreements, or if any change occurs in relation to a royalty undertaking which has been given, that has to be negotiated with the company concerned.

I do not recommend to the House that there should be a legally binding agreement of the kind suggested in the amendment. The agreement in regard to supply of product and security arrangements is between the government and the oil companies, and not between BNOC and the oil companies. The hon. Gentleman is breaking completely new ground, not only on the formality of the agreement but in regard to the making of an agreement between the agency and the oil company.

Where there is an agreement on security of supply, the Government are the proper custodian of one side of that agreement with the oil company, rather than, as in the past, through BNOC, or in the future through the agency. I shall refer in a moment to why we believe in working on a voluntary basis. It is much more appropriate, in regard to the range and degree of relationship between the Government and the agency, that the responsibility for the agreements on security of supply, whether legally binding or informal, should rest with the Government rather than shifting to the agency.

From a practical aspect, an informal agreement is preferable to a formal one. The hon. Member for Gordon gave the reasons in his speech. All the experience of crises over the past 10 or 15 years shows that it is impossible to predict with any accuracy how a shortage might develop and what our priority needs will be in time of shortage. Therefore, we must have as much flexibility as possible in our understanding with our refiners, so that we ensure that they do everything to supply their customers in the best way possible. It is impossible to write down in a legal form, in the manner suggested by the hon. Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney, the kind of flexibility that is necessary if we are to react properly in a crisis.

8.30 pm

The new clause is a much more rigid approach. Although at first glance it has certain attractions, there could be considerable difficulties if we sought to put it into practice. The provisions might be out of step with the commercial facts of production and distribution. The new clause states:

"the United Kingdom continental shelf shall continue to supply United Kingdom customers . . .with at least the quantities supplied over the previous year".

How could this apply to a licensee with an interest in only one producing field, which had passed its producing peak? Who are the customers of a petrol station? How does one establish the quantities supplied over the previous year? Would there be an obligation to supply someone who had recently changed to another supplier?

Once one follows this rigid approach, attractive though it may seem in some respects, it becomes divorced from the real practice of commerce. It assumes a simpler basis of trading in oil and oil products than is the case in the real world. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) entertained the Committee for a considerable period by following the chain of a cargo of oil from the time it was produced at the wellhead until it passed through the terminal and was loaded. He regaled us with stories of cargoes being traded 10 or 20 times. That does not apply to every cargo. One simply cannot formalise the practice in this new clause. One cannot try to solidify the pattern of trading after the agreement has been triggered. Entering into such contractual provisions — this is my main

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

opposition to the new clause — would entail a considerable loss of flexibility. Above all else, we need flexibility.

The new clause refers to prices and to the oil that may be delivered under the security of supply agreement. It would be difficult for any United Kingdom continental shelf producer to agree to a pricing condition other than one that allowed him to receive the prevailing market price at the time of delivery. Any agreement would have to be made on that basis. Indeed, that principle was followed by the last Labour Government, when they introduced participation agreements on the basis that BNOC's transactions should be at no gain and no loss to the corporation or to producers. It is inappropriate to write into the new clause or into any informal or formal agreement any conditions on prices, other than that they should reflect market conditions.

Mr. Rowlands: That is not what the BP letter says. BP's point is very different. It tries to bind Governments not to apply any legal or Government constraint. It makes it a condition of the assurance that Governments will never try to constrain or moderate prices. That proposition is very different from agreeing to a price of the type laid down in participation agreements.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Labour Government introduced participation agreements on the basis that the transactions should be at no gain and no loss. Obviously, this will reflect market conditions. My hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) pointed out that, when the Labour Government endeavoured to use their powers with respect to price constraints, supplies subsequently dried up. Because the United Kingdom market cannot be isolated from the world market, eventually there were upward prices in line with market conditions. The only effect of Government action in intervening was to cause a delay, which threatened supplies. I hope that my slightly more pragmatic approach, in comparison with that of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, in the light of the Labour Government's experience, shows what can happen. The Labour Government did not have a single supply assurance from a United Kingdom refiner. They relied on participation agreements. When the crisis came, it had no effect on the users of oil products and we suffered from shortages.

Because it is better to act informally rather than formally in giving flexibility and, because of our experience during previous crises, I believe that my approach is better than that of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, and I therefore ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member has spoken once in the debate. Does he have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member may proceed.

Mr. Dalyell: May I repeat the question that was put first by me, secondly by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and thirdly by me again. It is no good simply taking refuge in the confidences in the *Financial Times* article, which states:

"BP makes the above affirmation subject further to there being no legal or governmental constraint on its ability to raise prices as a necessary means of recovering costs."

What is the quid pro quo?

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Minister of State answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I shall put the point simply, as I did earlier. I am not prepared to comment on the particular aspects of agreements with companies as reported in the newspapers. I have pointed out the much broader question of principle — that trying to write in conditions on prices, as the new clause does, has proved in practice to be totally ineffective, especially in the experience of the Labour Government whom the hon. Member for Linlithgow supported.

Mr. Rowlands: We have suffered quite a lot from the Minister's complacency, which he has shown yet again in those remarks. It provides cold comfort to customers or members of the public to realise that when the Minister uses the words "informal" or "flexible", it is ministerial double-think and double-talk, allowing oil companies to get away with wishy-washy assurances of the type that the right hon. Gentleman is clutching — which, when the crunch comes, are scarcely worth the paper on which they are printed. For that reason, I ask my colleagues to join me in the Division Lobby in supporting the new clause, which gives proper and meaningful assurances to customers and to the public in times of oil shortage.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 86, Noes 187.

Division No. 273] **[8.39 pm**

AYES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Hardy, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*

Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. James Hamilton.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. John Major

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

General functions of Agency

Mr. Hardy: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 18, at end insert—

'(1A) In managing on behalf of the Crown pipelines and storage installations the Agency shall prepare a plan to design and construct an onshore crude oil pipeline system to complement the existing system and shall enter into agreements on behalf of the Crown to make the system available to licensees with production from onshore fields on a common carrier basis at a commercial tariff and the system shall include better rail sidings, tank farms and necessary links with offshore producing facilities.'.

This amendment provides for the design and construction of onshore crude pipeline systems, which will complement existing systems and allow the making of agreements with licensees to use the pipelines as common carriers. As the amendment recognises, this would involve rail sidings, tank farms and links with offshore production facilities. It is a sensible amendment; the Minister will recall that it is similar to one that we debated in Committee, although it is not identical. It has more merit than the amendment that we debated in Committee, and the Minister will have had a little more time to consider the wisdom of our proposals.

The amendment is sensible, because it would make a helpful contribution to the nation's transport facilities. The Minister said in Committee that the building of a pipeline can cause some difficulty, and that the several pipelines that had been built in his constituency had caused him concern as a representative of the local people. However, if he has reflected on the matter since Committee, he will have discovered that, after it has been completed, a pipeline causes much less concern than would many vehicles pounding along the roads in his constituency, to the distress of those who might momentarily have had only a little anxiety about the construction of a pipeline.

If the Minister seeks to maintain the Government's policy of extracting oil as fast as possible from onshore as

[Mr. Hardy]

well as offshore fields, he will present serious problems to those who live in the areas affected. On balance, the vast majority of residents in areas where onshore oil has been discovered would wish to swap the prospect of vehicles pounding along their roads for the sensible and peaceful operation of a new pipeline.

I am sorry that the Government have not been more sensitive about such matters. The Minister was hasty in his rejection of our amendment in Committee, and I wish to put this point to him. My constituency is in an area where onshore exploration is proceeding. The Minister will share my view that onshore exploration in such areas is likely to be fruitful. As a Member for one of the large parts of England where oil is likely to be discovered, I would prefer it to be moved by pipeline than on our inadequate roads.

A short time ago, I told another Minister in the Department that I would strongly object to any opencast development in my area, and that I would object even more strongly to attempts to move on the roads in my constituency the material displaced or the coal extracted. Greedy eyes are already considering one site where the roads simply could not tolerate the additional traffic that would be required. If there is opencast development, the material should be moved by rail or by canal, not by road. The same argument applies in the case of the amendment. There is no reason why the roads should be clogged by vehicles moving material extracted from offshore oilfields when we have readily available the silent, efficient and effective pipeline system.

If the Government advise the Oil and Pipelines Agency that it should go ahead with extensions to the pipeline system, this could lead to substantial industrial orders and to many jobs. I hope that that point has not escaped the Minister's attention. The amendment does not state, although perhaps it should have done, that the jobs created would be largely within British industry. We recognise that, at last, the Government have begun to realise the enormity of the unemployment problem in many industrial areas, and such orders would be welcome and timely. There would be substantial benefits in the transportation of the product and, in the long run, for the environment, and the provision of jobs through orders to the steel and engineering industries, at a time when such jobs are needed desperately.

Since, this year, the Government will receive £12,000 million in direct revenues from our oil activities, the Opposition believe that some of that money could be invested in Britain. We would commend such valuable investment. The Government tend to boast that the oil revenues have allowed us to buy substantial assets abroad. Earlier this year, after calculating that we had received £50,000 million in direct revenues from offshore oil, I asked the Prime Minister during Question Time what benefit we had obtained from it. The Prime Minister's response was that we had enormously increased our overseas portfolio. When she was asked a similar question the other day, her answer had shifted a little. It should shift much more, and one way to shift it would be to devote some of the revenues to establishing a pipelines system that could benefit Britain for a long time.

In Committee, the Minister boasted of how much money had been invested in our existing pipelines. Although it is not as colossal a figure as the investment in some of the projects which the House debates from time to time, the sums involved are substantial. In 1980-81, we invested £2·47 million; in 1981-82, it was £1·87 million; in 1982-83, it was £2·6 million; in 1983-84, it was £3·65 million; and in the last full financial year, the figure was £4·32 million. Those substantial sums would provide more benefit if our existing pipelines were complemented by links to the onshore fields. We do not rule out additional links, which are entirely justified, to ensure that the onshore and offshore fields are complementary.

The Minister must recognise the merit of our proposal. It would provide jobs and a cleaner and healthier environment, and it would please the Select Committee. If the Minister recognises the merit of the consideration of the Select Committee, he will realise that the Select Committee appears to be recommending that there should be improved storage facility and investment, and the amendment would certainly fit well with the Select Committee's relatively recent recommendation.

I hope that the Minister will not dismiss as unimportant our concern about unemployment, the environment and transport. He may feel assured that the Government's docile and substantial majority in Parliament will allow him to continue to reject our logical and intelligent pleas with impunity, but I rather think that in another place there will be concern for the environment and employment which adds grace to that establishment, but which, if ignored in this House, is particularly regrettable since we are supposed to be the democratically sensitive establishment. We are perhaps relieved of the problem and responsibility of taking the longer and more relaxed view, which is often the characteristic of their Lordships. Here we are entitled to discuss realities. The reality of the situation is that the sheer common sense of the amendment deserves consideration.

9 pm

It may be that the Government Whips have persuaded their hon. Friends to stay away in order that they shall not be exposed to the sanity of our suggestion. The Minister smiles enigmatically, as is his wont, but I should not be surprised if that were the case. I trust that the shock which we had in Committee when the Minister rejected our argument will not be repeated tonight. The Minister is aware that the private sector recognises merit in the pipeline system and in its extension.

He recognised in Committee, and I hope that he will again tonight, the wisdom of the extension of the link which Mobil is now establishing to the terminal at Wymondham in Norfolk. Mobil was serving Mobil's interests, but in fact it was serving British interests as well because it is much more sensible to invest in this way to make the movement of oil efficient without causing social and economic disadvantage. Now that the Minister has had a few weeks for reflection, I hope that he will realise that the Wymondham development by Mobil is one which should be extensively repeated. We would certainly wish this to be so. In that regard, I remind the Minister that we put this proposal forward as a demonstration not only of our belief in sane arrangements in transport and industry but because we believe that there is a substantial place for co-operation in the economy between the public and private sectors. The example of the Mobil development in Norfolk should be repeated. I think that we can justly

claim that our approach is entirely undogmatic and that, if there is dogma in these matters, it rests firmly wholly on the Government's shoulders.

On this occasion I hope that the Minister, perhaps in preparation for consideration of the Bill in their Lordships' House, will recognise the powerful arguments in support of our amendments and, for a change, will consider accepting them.

Mr. Bruce: I am not sure what the Minister is going to make of this proposal. I yield to nobody in my willingness to resist the Government's economic policy and to criticise many aspects of their oil and gas development policy. I started out on my political career by standing against the Minister, and I like to think that I have done a little better since then.

I do not think that, in the course of trying to be constructively critical of the Government's performance, I can be expected to support what seems to me a barmy idea. I wonder what kind of impetus is coming from within the oil and gas industry to give rise to this kind of proposal. I certainly agree that we want to look for co-ordination of development, and I would welcome proposals to extend that. However, I am puzzled as to how one can integrate the onshore industry with the offshore industry, which is completely different in geography, scale and location; and where the pipeline is going to or from is a mystery to me.

Mr. Hardy: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's difficulties. He is standing in for his hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) at short notice. If he had prepared for the debate, he would have been able to obtain from his hon. Friend the map of the pipeline system. On it, as on the various public documents available, he would have seen where the offshore fields are or are likely to be. He would have noticed that the location of the offshore fields in the area of Wessex is not very far from existing pipelines — perhaps those which have facilities at Hamble. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in Committee, his hon. Friend voted alternately with us and with the Government? My impression is that, having supported the Government on new clause 1, he will support us on amendment No. 1.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I am capable of making up my own mind about the merits of the amendment. I gave way in the hope that he might answer my question. Where is the driving force in the industry about the benefit that it would get from the integrated development that the amendment appears to propose? I still wonder whether it is being suggested that we should pipe oil from Wytch farm to Hound point or even to Sullom Voe.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman does know where the pipeline is.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) is pushing his luck suggesting that an hon. Member from the Aberdeen area who has been connected with the oil industry does not know where the pipelines are. I am well aware of where the onshore pipelines are. It is sensible to co-ordinate development of new pipelines and to take account of our new requirements when giving annex B approval. However, it is extravagant to suggest that the agency must prepare a plan to design and construct an onshore crude oil pipeline system.

British Gas and BP were interested in an integrated gas gathering system. Those of us who supported the system were encouraged because plenty of people who knew a great deal about oil and gas development felt that the project was worth while. Movement came from within the industry rather than at the whim of a political party. The project did not go ahead, but it was always a sensible idea. The Government would not have considered it so closely if they had not recognised its considerable merits. However, I am not aware of any serious suggestion in the industry for an approach such as this.

The Labour party must show that it is not determined to regulate the industry for purely bureaucratic reasons. It must also show that it recognises that people in gas and oil production are professionals with considerable experience and with whom they should work in partnership. I understand that, in spite of the bold words of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), the amendment will not be pursued to a Division. The Labour party would be wise not to press it.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am not aware of any pressure in the industry for this type of pipeline. When considering annex B development plans, I consider the pipeline implications and the terminal implications. Proposals and decisions are commercial, but the structure must be thought out sensibly.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has previously, and generously, acknowledged that I am deeply concerned about the employment potential of our oil industry. He has credited what I have tried to do since coming to this office to ensure that benefits are ploughed back in employment opportunities in the United Kingdom.

Equally, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that offshore fields, to which the amendment refers—I must emphasise that — involve environmental factors. That was one of the major reasons for introducing a new licensing procedure for onshore development and exploration in the past 12 months. No scheme will please everybody, but the new scheme has been generally welcomed by both oil and environmental interests seeking a better balance between the two. I am sensitive to those points.

The amendment concerns crude oil from onshore fields, which, as the hon. Member for Wentworth said, can be transported in a number of ways, one of which is by pipeline. I hate to have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman again, but I question the relevance of the amendment to the Bill. We must remember that the Government's pipeline system was originally constructed to supply military airfields owned by the Government with the materials essential for wartime use. Therefore, the Government did not have then, nor do they now, any strategic interest in crude oil pipelines. I could not see such a pipeline servicing Government-owned establishments, as I am not aware of any that are using crude oil.

Therefore, decisions on how oil is disposed of, or transported from, a particular onshore development are the responsibility, with proper respect for planning and environmental considerations, of those who are concerned with the commercial development of the particular oil accumulation. If the licensees decide that the pipeline is appropriate, it would be for them to construct and operate it. I do not see any justification for involving the public sector, and in particular the Oil and Pipelines Agency, in owning or financing such pipelines.

Those are fundamental objections, but there are some practical ones as well. I endeavour to be practical in

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

dealing with amendments, as I was in Committee. Amendment No. 1 refers to an offshore crude oil pipeline that is complementary to the existing Government pipelines and storage systems. However, as the existing system transports products and the one envisaged by the amendment would convey crude, it is difficult to see how the two could be regarded as complementary. However, if any part of the Government pipeline became redundant and if it appeared that it could be used by the licensee of an onshore oil production field and was appropriate for crude oil, I would expect the agency, as the managing agent of the existing system, to do what it could to facilitate such a change of use.

Despite the speech of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the amendment is not clear about where the pipelines should go once they have left the onshore fields. I imagine that the licensees would want to connect them to existing pipelines, to refineries or to port loading facilities. The amendment suggests that the pipelines should be linked with offshore producing fields. However, as the major onshore fields such as Wytch Farm and Humbly Grove, two of the bigger ones, are in the south of England and the major offshore fields are in the north of Scotland, it is difficult to see what purpose would be served by constructing such an extremely long pipeline.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister of State's Department has produced an attractive document about British onshore reserves. It shows that the prospects for oil extraction in Britain cover not merely the Wessex area but a large part of the area on the western side of the Bristol channel. It is a pity that illustrations cannot be used in the *Official Report*, but this illustration shows that the prospects stretch right up into Lancashire on the western side of the Pennines and include a large part of Lincolnshire stretching right across to Northamptonshire and a considerable part of Yorkshire, stretching to Teeside. This means that the Teeside facilities for the oil industry could link in very well with the extraction of oil from the Yorkshire and Humberside region. We are taking a longer view of oil extraction than the hon. Member for Gordon.

9.15 pm

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman takes such a long-term view, but I hope that he realises that the map he is holding represents what we know on the basis of geological knowledge, not what we know on the basis of drilling. I am referring to the areas where we are producing onshore oil. Many people would like oil to be produced in commercial quantities in some of these other areas too, but where work has taken place the results have not been quite so optimistic as the hon. Gentleman is and as I should like to be. I have to be realistic and to look at these matters in a practical manner.

For these reasons, I am anxious that the Government's pipelines system should be used as sensibly as possible. Again I pay tribute to the British National Oil Corporation for the way it managed the system. In recent years it has increased the commercial use of the pipelines system, but it has always borne in mind the fact that it has a fundamentally strategic use and that its full capacity has not been needed. The agency will, I am sure, encourage the use of the pipelines system for commercial purposes. To try to stretch a crude oil pipeline as opposed to a product pipeline to one that services crude oil from onshore fields is not, attractive though in some respects is the hon. Gentleman's proposition, one that lies properly with the functions of the Government's pipelines system either as it has been in the past, as it was recently under BNOC or as it will be in the future under the agency. For those reasons, I ask the House to reject the amendment.

Mr. Dalyell: I want again to ask for the leave of the House to put a question. I should like to hear what the Minister of State has to say in reply to it. I have to declare a strong constituency interest in the matter, not only because of the experience of Hound point, which was offshore, but because the whole pipe-laying exercise was so traumatic for some of my constituents and caused problems in particular for smallholders. As a Scottish Member of Parliament, the Minister knows about these problems. Furthermore, there are possibly oil deposits in the Bathgate area of Livingston.

In a previous incarnation the Minister had experience of the Scottish Office. To what extent will these be strategic planning matters for Government Departments to what extent will they be left to commercial interests? This is a very important issue. I listened carefully to the Minister and if I have misunderstood him, I apologise. My impression is that these decisions will be made by commercial interests, and hang the rest of us. I hope that that is not true.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I can assure him that nobody is more sensitive than I about the laying of pipelines. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) will bear me out when I say that within its small physical confines my constituency probably contains more pipelines than the constituency of any other hon. Member of Parliament. If, for the sixth time, certain landowners have a pipeline running through their land it can be a very traumatic experience. Both my Department and local authority departments are sensitive about this matter, and I take to heart the hon. Gentleman's point.

All onshore oil exploration and production is subject to the licensing procedure of my Department. As I said earlier, those procedures have recently been totally reviewed and a new system introduced to provide better safeguards. That will be welcomed as an improvement on the situation which existed before. Looking at it from the industrial and economic point of view, ultimate control rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who grants the licences. The exercise of the licensing policy is discussed with my right hon. Friends in other interested Departments and we take a strategic view in relation to it. It is not just a narrow commercial view. The proposals and applications come from commercial interests, but the system is subject to licensing and licensing control, and the performance of the licences is monitored.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister will forgive me for being parochial, but for the Livingston-Bathgate situation may we have an undertaking that at an early stage the two hon. Members concerned—my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and I, and indeed the regional council and the district council—will be taken into the confidence of those doing the strategic planning, because

last time round a great deal of hassle would have been saved if we had been consulted at an early stage, especially in relation to the compensation of some constituents?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As I said to other hon. Members who have an interest in exploration or production licences in their constituencies, I am very happy for them to come and discuss these matters. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to follow that up he may do so, should the appropriate stage arise. As the hon. Gentleman may know, just a few weeks ago I announced under the new procedures the first onshore licensing round. Applications have been invited and that round will close towards the end of September. From then on we shall be examining the applications, and thereafter we shall be making an announcement about the awards. If, when the awards are announced, the hon. Gentleman finds that his constituency or that of his hon. Friend is affected, I shall be happy to meet and discuss with him any aspect he wishes to discuss.

Mr. Dalyell: Thank you very much.

Mr. Hardy: We shall not press this matter to the vote. Before the withdrawal of the amendment, could I say to the Minister that, as a result of his constituency experience, there may well be a stronger case for integration in the development of pipelines than seems to have been the case in his own area? I recently saw a pipeline, not for oil, built through my constituency and it was obvious that we manage things very much better in north Yorkshire than they are managed in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency in Scotland.

One of our major concerns was the position of the smaller companies in the round of licensing to which the Minister has referred. Over the months, if it becomes obvious that, in the national interest or in the interest of the small independents, pipeline facilities should be provided, I hope that the Minister will not, out of a sense of dogma, prevent the Oil and Pipelines Agency from applying its ability and experience in the national interest. I hope that he will recognise that its experience is substantial and should be made available and not denied simply because the Minister has remarkably little faith, even in his own Department's publications, but a great deal of dogma.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2

General Functions of Agency

Mr. Rowlands: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 18 at end insert—

'(1A) Agreements entered into under subsection (1) above shall include the provision that the Agency shall lift royalty oil in the relevant chargeable period or where it is unable to do so no later than the end of the following chargeable period.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 18 at end insert—

'(1A) Agreements entered into under subsection (1) above shall include the provision that, at the request of the Agency, on behalf of the Crown and after consultation with the Secretary of State, the Operator shall reduce production in the field by—

(a) the amount that would otherwise have been supplied to the Agency on behalf of the Crown as royalty oil; and

(b) an equivalent amount of petroleum that would otherwise have been supplied to the licensees

such amounts to be left in the ground and the operator shall not produce such petroleum until requests to do so by the Agency, on behalf of the Crown and after agreement with the Secretary of State.'.

Mr. Rowlands: Although the two amendments are being taken together, the only thing that they have in common is a reference to royalty oil. I divide my contribution into two parts and I hope that the Minister will do the same when he replies. The debate will be better if we do it in that way.

Amendment No. 2 picks up a substantial issue which I raised in Committee and which does not arouse partisan feelings. I drew attention in Committee to the difficulties that the OPA may face in managing royalty-in-kind oil. Provisions governing the collection of royalty oil dictate that the agency must take all its entitlement within each six-month chargeable period. If it does not collect the oil within six months, it forfeits the right to collect, and royalty oil is paid subsequently in cash.

Collecting royalty oil within the chargeable period was a problem even for BNOC. I understand that the lifting of royalty oil is a shambles. Irrespective of our views on other aspects of the Bill, we all wish the agency to be as efficient and effective as possible in managing and trading oil. The problem will arise for the OPA if, in any six-month period, the amount of royalty oil does not justify sending a tanker to collect it. The problem was less serious for BNOC, because it could aggregate royalty oil, participation oil and commercial oil to make up a decent cargo. Therefore, in most cases, it was able to collect the royalty oil on behalf of the state.

The OPA will not have the other sources of oil to make up a decent cargo. We tried to persuade the Minister of State to give the agency a more expansive role and allow it to enter agreements to purchase commercial oil, but the right hon. Gentleman turned his back on that. Therefore, the agency will face difficulties and the shambles involved in collecting royalty oil at present will get worse.

Amendment No. 2 suggests that there should be a rollover period, in which royalty oil that was not collected in one six-month period could be rolled over into the next period and help to make up a decent cargo so that the oil could be delivered to the market efficiently. The amendment proposes a system which I gather is the practice in Norway. It offers a practical solution to what will become an increasingly difficult problem for the agency. How does the Minister think that the agency will be able to handle that problem?

Amendment No. 4 raises a different issue connected with royalty oil. I touched on it briefly in Committee. Amendment No. 4 suggests that we should have the power to bank royalty oil. That is an option which should be available to the Government, especially if trends in the market make it commercially and nationally sensible. Here we could be looking at a different scenario from the one that we discussed earlier or the one that we may discuss on Third reading, when we could be facing oil shortages.

9.30 pm

In the coming months, we could see a dramatic fall, even a free fall, in crude oil prices. It is being talked about widely in oil circles, and the shambles that OPEC is in fuels the speculation that there could be a substantial if not a free fall in prices. If a substantial fall occurs, it will have conflicting impacts on our economy. Many aspects of a

[Mr. Rowlands]

substantial fall in price could help to develop our economy, but they will also raise genuine questions of oil production policy.

In such a case, would it make much sense to drain as rapidly and as rapaciously as possible our largest, cheapest but declining oil supplies from the Ninian, the Brent and the Forties, or would it make more sense to leave the oil in the ground until a better price could be obtained? It might make honest, commercial common sense to bank a percentage of the oil, especially that in the most mature fields in the North sea. It might also serve as a modest form of depletion policy.

Banking our royalty oil in the mature fields would have no consequence for the development of our new fields. It would have little or no major effect on jobs in the exploration for and development of new fields. Therefore, I am interested to know whether the Minister has any thoughts about banking royalty oil.

Since our Committee stage, the issue of banking royalty oil has been raised. I read with interest in the *Daily Telegraph* of 1 July the report of an interview between Mr. Roland Gribben and Mr. Peter Holmes, the new chairman of Shell Transport and Trading. Mr. Holmes said:

> "Lower oil prices are bad news for Britain but if Britain could it should be doing something like banking royalty oil."

We do not necessarily agree with his concept that lower oil prices are bad for Britain. We have heard conflicting views about the impact of lower, stable or higher oil prices on our economic and industrial prospects, but the issue of banking royalty oil will again be raised if we see a substantial fall in prices. Although I do not wholly subscribe to the view of the chairman of Shell Transport and Trading, there may be a case for the Government at least to have the option of banking royalty oil.

If that decision is taken, there may also be a case for saying to the oil companies that if royalty oil is to be banked they, too, must bank oil barrel for barrel. In a period of dramatically falling oil prices, there might be a simple, common-sense, commercial reason for the Government to consider banking royalty oil and asking North sea operations to do the same barrel for barrel.

That is the idea that we float in the amendment. The amendment also gives us the opportunity to ask what powers the Minister already has to bank royalty oil. Would it require new legislation to do it or would it simply be the subject of sensible, commercial negotiation and temporary arrangements between the oil companies and the Government?

Given the speed with which oil markets change and trends in development occur, it might not be a bad idea for the Government to have the option which the amendment would provide and which, to borrow some words from the Minister, would be flexible, pragmatic and sensible.

Mr. Bruce: I intervene briefly, if only in the interest of being even-handed and to let Labour Members know that I do not just have it in for them tonight. There is some merit in the amendment. It is flawed in its drafting, as the hon. Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) acknowledged. He moved it as a constructive contribution to considering how we handle royalty oil in the most flexible way in the national interest.

The amendment raises a wider issue, to which I referred earlier—the extent to which we are overproducing oil, in the sense that the United Kingdom has 1·6 per cent. of the world's reserves and is producing 4·5 per cent. of the world's production. Do we have it wrong, or do others have it wrong?

To the extent, therefore, that the amendment represents a sensible contribution in considering how we might be more flexible in the use of royalty oil, and perhaps help to modify production in a way that is acceptable—we are, after all, referring to the Government's oil—the Minister might consider whether what is proposed, or a variation of it, is worth exploring in terms of an extra option which the Government might wish to employ in future.

Mr. Dalyell: We must be flexible about onshore production. In what was my constituency is the town of Bo'ness, which is a mining area containing a number of shafts where subsidence problems in recent years have proved extremely serious. Houses were built on ground which, because of coal production, has since proved to be unstable.

So much for coal. Some people are concerned about what the extraction of onshore oil may mean in built-up areas, and at this stage I register a constituency concern, though I wish to broaden the consideration of an aspect of oil production.

I heard recently, as did many of my hon. Friends, of worries that had been expressed about one of those great glories of medieval English architecture, Salisbury cathedral. I gather that the great spire of the cathedral is built on a base which, along with the chapter house, has a depth of only 4 ft. It is a marvellous engineering construction. In view of the proposal to extract oil in the Salisbury area, I am told that the friends of Salisbury cathedral believe that there could be sufficent destabilising of the surroundings to render the spire dangerous. I do not wish to exaggerate the point, and I put it no higher than that. Reports are available. Should the Department wish to inquire into the matter, it could undoubtedly obtain more facts.

How flexible are the environmental arrangements if it is found that the extraction of oil would create environmental hazards to what we might call the built-in environment? I do not know whether tonight, in considering this amendment, is the right time to raise this issue. It is clear that a substantial and major problem has arisen and that thought will have to be given to it.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: While the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) acknowledged that the point he raised was not wholly relevant to the amendment, I appreciate its importance. Every aspect of the application for production with which I am concerned is subject to the full rigours of planning conditions, and at that stage the considerations that he mentioned would be taken into account. I will send him information which may help to describe the procedures that must be gone through and which, I hope, provide the necessary safeguards in such a situation.

Mr. Dalyell: It might be found that the geological knowledge was incomplete. In any event, conditions can alter. What would the Government do if permission were given in good faith by all the parties concerned and it was later found that the geological conditions were such that the built-in environment was threatened?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Of course, planning permission can be given subject to certain conditions where special considerations might apply. I shall certainly give the hon. Gentleman more than an outline of the exact procedures involved. I hope that that will be of some reassurance to him, but, if not, he is welcome to come and discuss the general issues with me.

The two amendments are important and interesting, and I do not fault them on any drafting ground. The intention behind them is quite clear. I wish first to deal with amendment No. 2 and then to move on to amendment No. 4, because they raise two separate points.

As background to the matter, it is important to understand the Government's right to take royalty oil, which arises from the conditions of the model clauses under which licences are granted. Therefore, if we wish to change the manner or timing of the taking of royalty oil, it is necessary to amend the appropriate model clauses. It would not be possible to amend the contractual relationship between the Secretary of State and licensees by inserting provisions in an agreement between the Secretary of State and the agency, as the amendments seek to do.

The agency will have no contractual or any other entitlement to lift royalty in kind. It will do so as the Secretary of State's agent. I mention that not in any way to knock down the principles behind the amendments, but because it is important to get that perspective right in relation to their practical application. We discussed the principles underlying amendment No. 2 in Committee on 18 June. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said that there could be problems with roll-over entitlements of royalty going from one chargeable period to another. However, he was wrong to say tonight that the whole of royalty oil is in a shambles —it is not. I acknowledge that there can be problems on roll-over, but not to the extent of disadvantage suggested by the hon. Gentleman. The problem has been with us for some time and BNOC has largely overcome it. I believe that the agency should also be able to overcome it.

In practice, when BNOC has accrued a substantial portion of a cargo of royalty oil near the end of a chargeable period, it has been able to purchase oil from other licensees to make a whole cargo, which it has then been able to lift. There is no reason why part cargoes of royalty in kind should not continue to be aggregated with part cargoes of crude accruing to licensees in the field, either through the agency purchasing the latter—which is why we proposed that the agency should have powers to trade on its own account—or by selling the part cargoes of royalty in kind to the other licensees. There are practical ways in which the agency should be able to deal with that.

It is important to get in perspective the scale of the issue that we are considering. If royalty-in-kind oil could not be aggregated with other oil to make complete cargoes, my Department has made estimates that indicate that royalty in kind oil not lifted would currently be less than 0·4 per cent. of United Kingdom continental shelf production, so the gross scale of the problem should not be all that great.

However, I acknowledge that aggregation has given rise to problems in the past and could give rise to problems in future. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if operational difficulties arise in aggregating part cargoes in the way that I have described, I shall consider the issue again when other changes in the model clauses — which are the correct way to deal with this matter — are next considered. We have no intention that this should be a difficulty, nor do we want it to be a difficulty. There are practical ways around it.

Amendment No. 4 is more fundamental and I cannot accept it. If we have to use the depletion power, the Secretary of State should have the right to use it, not the agency. If it were decided to impose cuts, the responsibility should rest with the Secretary of State.

9.45 pm

It might be helpful if I clarify the Government's depletion policy. The United Kingdom is not able to influence the world oil market through the manipulation of the volume that it produces. We are a medium-sized producer. We produce about 2·6 million barrels a day compared with the United States, which produces 10·5 million barrels, and the Soviet Union, which produces about 12·5 million barrels. We export about 1 million barrels a day net. Any reduction that we made would have little effect on the global oil market.

Anyone who has studied OPEC members or other oil producers will know that any reduction that we made would almost certainly be taken up by others. Any move to cut production would result in clear losses. I am uncertain that we would benefit.

I say that because of the practical and physical nature of our offshore production in the North sea and other areas on the continental shelf. Given the high risk and high cost nature of our production compared with most other offshore areas, and certainly with the big onshore producers, companies would be less inclined to invest in the future if the Government were to restrict production arbitrarily.

One could argue that the arrangement proposed in the amendment puts more of a financial burden on the nation's oil revenues and therefore less on oil companies' returns. However, one must remember that whatever is put in must come out. That applies to any stockpiled commodity. If we are to regain the royalty oil in due course, production would have to be cut to make way for its production. Our production is small in world terms, particularly our production for export. United Kingdom production is soon likely to decline. Our production facilities are designed to produce according to profiles agreed with the Department, and after careful study of the characteristics of the reservoir and other matters. Therefore, any cut in current production would, of its very nature, interfere with those carefully designed plans and could lead to production being prolonged beyond the design life of the facilities, and in those circumstances could be lost for ever. That is a peculiar feature of the offshore developments in the harsh environment that we have. Some of those who talk about depletion sometimes ignore the physical nature of the production from our offshore industry.

I would not, for the reasons that I have given, be happy to accept the amendment, not only for technical reasons but as a matter of principle. For certain fields, the powers that the hon. Gentleman seeks in his amendment would cut across other assurances that have been given, and understandings that have been reached between licensees and my Department during the consideration of development plans. In any case, if we ever wished to restrain production, the necessary powers to do it would be available under the model clauses. Therefore, powers along the lines of the amendment would not be required.

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

I repeat the point with which I opened the debate. If we were contemplating such powers, which we are not, they should be exercised by the Secretary of State and the Government and not by the agency.

I hope that this useful debate has helped to explain Government policy and to put into perspective the reason for the policy. In those circumstances, the hon. Gentleman may not feel it necessary to press the amendment.

Mr. Rowlands: In view of the way that the Minister responded to amendment No. 2, I accept his assurance that he will look closely at the situation as it develops in the practical way that I suggested.

On amendment No. 4, I have a sneaking suspicion that before too long it may be the oil companies themselves that will be coming to the Government to suggest ideas along the lines that I raised. I shall just wait and watch this space.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

9.52 pm

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have had good and long debates on the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee, and tonight on Report. I pay tribute to my hon. Friends who have supported us throughout proceedings on the Bill. I also pay tribute to Opposition Members—particularly those who have led for the Opposition—for a useful series of constructive debates in an important area of our economy and on very important issues. I am grateful for the generally constructive way in which they have approached the subject, although I have not always been able to respond by agreeing with them.

To go back to where we started, what we are doing in the Bill is very much based on a change in the structure of the world's oil market. It is that change in the structure and what is happening in the world of industry, business and commerce that caused my right hon. Friend and myself and the Government to look at the activities of BNOC, and particularly its main activity in the trading of participation oil. We were forced to the conclusion that, because of those changes in the market, the corporation had reached the end of its useful life.

I emphasise that the abolition of the corporation does not represent an application of any degree of dogma to the public sector. Rather, it represents the flexible way in which we have endeavoured to respond to the change in market circumstances. At the same time, it provides for a welcome reduction in the size of the public sector, where interference was not needed, although I think that Opposition Members have acknowledged that I have not sought to make that a major part of my arguments in the debates on the Bill.

This has been a useful debate. We have again debated the question of security of supply in times of shortage, a subject to which I attach great importance. If necessary, the agency can exercise certain powers. In our arrangements in relation to participation agreements, international matters and refineries, we have ensured that we retain all those important powers.

In recent years BNOC has been successful in operating as a pipelines agency. I hope that the work of the Oil and Pipelines Agency will carry on and be commercially successful.

I hope that the agency's work will prosper. BNOC has shed all its pure participation supplies in co-operation with the licensees. It has shed also, with their co-operation part of the supplies that it has been obtaining under long-term contracts. I hope that the remaining suppliers will quickly find satisfactory alternative purchasers. The remaining term supplies which the agency can trade freely are now only one tenth of the level before my statement of 13 March. The price paid by the BNOC is what the corporation can realise in the market. To that extent, BNOC has already detached itself from setting a price. That is a good base on which the agency can start.

I pay tribute to BNOC's staff. Things are now different. I wish the new agency and its staff every success.

9.56 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I thank the Minister of State for his kind words about the way that we have conducted our affairs. He has been unfailingly courteous to the Committee and to all hon. Members who have participated in the debates. I am sorry that we were not able to persuade him that in many ways he is fundamentally wrong. It remains our charge and case that, by abolishing the British National Oil Corporation, our oil supplies will be weakened. We do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman's paper assurances from the oil companies, paper participation agreements, and the stripped-down agency which is set up under the Bill provide an adequate alternative form of security of supply. I have charged the Minister of State more than once with the utter complacency behind the way in which he has argued the case for the Bill and the way in which the Government have chosen to pursue the abolition route—abolishing a successful, vibrant and productive corporation.

I am sorry that, despite our efforts, the agency that will be born in the Bill will be a pathetic stripped-down version of what we need. The new agency will be a declining organisation from the start — trading in declining amounts of royalty oil. I do not believe that the Minister will attract people of the necessary calibre and quality to work in that agency, as opposed to those who might reluctantly be forced to go to it from BNOC.

The agency is basically self-extinguishing, as the right hon. Gentleman said. Already in oil circles the Minister's "GOPA"—Government Oil and Pipelines Agency—has been treated with contempt and derision, because everyone knows that it is not the real thing. We shall therefore vote against the Bill because we know that it is not the real thing. We look forward to the day when a Labour Government will establish a real British National Oil Corporation serving the nation's need and especially the challenge of the North sea in the 1990s.

9.58 pm

Mr. Portillo: I have had a number of opportunities to make known my views on the Bill, and I shall not weary the House by going into them at great length again.

I am disappointed that, when the Government took the opportunity to abolish BNOC, they felt the need to set up an agency in its place. My principal worry is that the setting up of an agency means that the Government will continue to be involved in the oil market. There is still a danger that the Government will be seen as a price setter, although I understand the points made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. There may still be turbulent days ahead in the oil market. In the past, when conditions

on the oil market have become turbulent, someone has taken the blame for unsettling the oil price. As we enter the turbulent days ahead, some countries may again be looking for a scapegoat. I hope that my fears are groundless. Nevertheless, I harbour them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) and I attempted to persuade the Committee of the value of two amendments. One would have paved the way towards the privatisation of the oil pipelines and storage system, but we were unsuccessful in convincing the Committee of the merits of that scheme. I understood my right hon. Friend's argument that the time was not ripe for such a move. I was pleased——

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Oil and Pipelines Bill and the Lords Amendments to the Trustee Savings Banks Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — [*Mr. Michael Neubert.*]

OIL AND PIPELINES BILL

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Portillo: I was pleased to have my right hon. Friend's assurance that that matter could be reviewed from time to time.

I hope that the Bill, which I support, will have a short life as an Act. My right hon. Friend has conducted the proceedings with considerable charm, and I thank him for that. However, he has not succeeded in convincing me that the agency will play a useful role, in particular in enhancing our security of supply. I look forward to the introduction in due course of an oil and gas agency abolition Bill. In November I shall listen extremely carefully to the Queen's Speech to see whether that welcome Bill will be included in next Session's business.

10.1 pm

Mr. Bruce: Today the Government have finished a job which I and the Labour party feel they should not have started. We have reached the point where it is as well to move on to a new policy to confront the changed circumstances. My colleagues and I felt that it was right and proper for the United Kingdom to have an integrated state oil corporation, as the British National Oil Corporation originally was. Its break-up is not in the United Kingdom's interests because it reduces the Government's bargaining power with oil companies. It has not been the Government's most conspicuous performance on privatisation, as many shareholders are discovering. However, it is now as well to finish the business, and for the Government to address themselves to developing an oil and gas policy, which they have not yet done.

We are producing oil at the rate of 1 million barrels of oil a day more than our domestic requirements. There was never any agreement or debate either inside or outside the House that we should move through self-sufficiency to that level of production, but that is what we have done. In reality, the production, pricing and taxation policies of the United Kingdom North sea are determined by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, not the United Kingdom Government, and not in accordance with the British national interest. That happens to suit the Treasury's interests.

The generation to come will wonder why we produced 1 million barrels a day above our requirements, and why we constructed a taxation system that made it attractive for multinational companies to produce British North sea oil rather than oil from other reserves in other parts of the world, especially as that tax structure did not necessarily suit our national interests.

The Labour party's attitude is often rightly suspicious, but wrongly hostile, towards the oil companies. It does not seem to recognise that oil companies have skill and expertise which we use, and from which we have benefited. However, the Government seem not to recognise that the interests of multinational oil companies and the British national interest do not always coincide. There is a need for a much stronger recognition of that by the Government and for a much clearer debate on what our policy should be.

Now that we are to pass this Bill, the Government should consider their policy in a clear environment, because it is high time that we had a sensible policy for the future development of the North sea. The Government's present policy will come home to roost soon, when production and revenue decrease and they realise that they have not provided for that sad and rainy day.

10.4 pm

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The present chairman of Rolls-Royce, Sir Francis Tombs, recently said that decision-making in the private sector tends to be market and profit-related whereas decision-making in the public sector tends to be highly variable, politically influenced and slow. He was speaking from vast experience of private and public sector management, and most Conservative Members would agree with his sentiments. Of course, most Labour Members would disagree with them.

That division of opinion typifies the difference between the Government and the Opposition on the Bill. Arguments have dealt with which functions are best carried out by private industry and which are best carried out in the public sector. The British oil industry is typified by fierce, free competition, and its success in exploiting our national oil resources profitably provides an excellent case history of the benefits of free competition. It is a profitable industry that contributes massively to the public purse. It enjoys no subsidy, it is largely free of oppressive trade unions, and it has learnt the lessons of economic reality — all very different from some other primary energy industries.

Those characteristics of the oil industry are clearly typical of many large commercial organisations. However, we would all agree that some functions are better carried out by state enterprise than by private enterprise.

When I examined the Bill, I could see no problem with participation agreements and with royalties in kind. However, with my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) I had some reservations about pipeline operations. We have 1,000 miles of pipeline and 41 installations established for war. Some strategic use remains, but their commercial use has been overtaken by events. One could argue that private interests would have operated the system more effectively than did the public sector, but against that we must consider the fact that the

[Mr. Mike Woodcock]

principal reason for establishing the pipeline was strategic, that the strategic element remains and that it could increase in the future.

We must come to terms with the fact that the pipeline system is little used in areas with a high defence use, but is used commercially much more in areas with a low defence use. It is difficult to establish suitable terms when defence and commercial considerations mix. However, the commercial users in my constituency at Stanlow, which is served by the pipeline, and the commercial operators in Humberside convinced me that they were happy with the present arrangements and that the management of the pipelines should remain with the state. That is why I concluded that the pipelines would be better managed by the agency.

The Bill is desirable because it renders to the private sector those functions which should be rendered to it, and leaves in the public sector those functions which are best carried out there. I welcome the Bill, which I am sure will contribute to the ever-increasing fortunes of our oil industry.

10.8 pm

Mr. Dalyell: Like several of my colleagues from central Scotland and the senior staff of the BNOC, some of whom are my constituents, nothing will persuade me that that organisation was broken up for any other reason than political dogma. It is a crying shame, and the nation will learn to regret having given up the BNOC. I am sure that it was a mistake.

One question that arose out of the debate has not been answered. Suppose that there is an understanding between British Petroleum and the Government. Is it sensible and right that that understanding should be in the form of a letter from a head of department in BP to a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State? If there are these understandings, without going too much into the heirarchy about it, for heaven's sake, is not the right thing to have it from the chairman of BP to the Secretary of State? If they are so important, why is it done at such a low level?

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 185, Noes 94.

Division No. 274] **[10.10 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fox, Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howells, Geraint
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
Madel, David
Major, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*

Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Trustee Savings Banks Bill

Lords amendments considered.

10.21 pm

Mr. Speaker: Earlier, the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) asked me to consider whether the Bill might be hybrid. I have considered the matter with great care. I must point out that the business before the House is the consideration of Lords amendments. No individual bank or depositor in Scotland is singled out for adverse treatment from among the class of trustee savings banks or depositors in Scotland by these amendments. Therefore, no question of hybridity arises.

Clause 1

PRELIMINARY

Lords amendment: No 1, in page 1, line 9, "banks" insert

"other than Trustee Savings Bank Scotland Limited which is hereby excluded from this Act"

Read a Second time.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I beg to move, amendment *(a)* to the Lords amendment, in line 2, leave out from 'which' to end and add

'shall not be included in this Act unless a majority of depositors of Trustee Savings Bank Scotland have first given their assent in a postal ballot.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendments *(b)* to *(d)*, plus (i) and (ii).

Mr. Wilson: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that ruling. Although I may disagree a little, I acknowledge that your view must prevail in these matters. I am grateful for the attention that you have given to my point of order.

I only wish that it were not necessary for me to move this amendment. If the Government had been prepared to accept the Lords amendment itself, or its spirit, TSB Scotland would have been able to continue its separate existence and I would not be moving the amendment, which suggests that the matter should go to a ballot of the depositors of the company.

I make it clear to those hon. Members who have not followed the debate that has been going on for so long that we are not dealing with a small subsidiary. TSB Scotland is the 11th largest company in Scotland and the most profitable bank by a long way, with £10,500 to £11,000 worth of earnings per employee. That compares with the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland, for which the relevant figure is between £6,500 and £7,500, and the Clydesdale bank at the lower figure of £3,000 per employee. The Lords amendment is right. TSB Scotland is viable in its own right and should be deleted from the Bill. I shall give the reasons in due course.

The directors of the Edinburgh chamber of commerce passed a unanimous motion asking the Government to accept the Lords decision on the grounds that it was important to retain the autonomy of financial institutions in the city of Edinburgh. On 20 April 1985 Mr. Souness, the manager of the Life Association of Scotland and the chairman of the Edinburgh chamber of commerce, referred to the cosmetic formula that had been agreed with Lord Taylor of Gryfe, who a few months ago was instrumental in and deserves credit for derailing the Bill in the House of Lords. He said that the assurance would not count for much and that the issue was about where power lay. Criticism was made of the attitude adopted by the chairman of the Trustee Savings bank's central board, Sir John Read, when he visited Scotland. An editorial in *The Scotsman* described him as holding "the obdurate belief" that he and his fellow directors had got it right.

The Government's compromise in their intended replacement of the first Lords amendment is not worth a row of beads. I described it at the time as a spineless surrender and I do not retract that statement. The various assurances that are to be found in the letter addressed by Sir John Read to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on or about 16 May 1985 amount to very little. Sir John Read tossed to the Scots a string of beads to keep the natives happy.

The compromise suggests that the registered office of the group should be in Scotland. I am not sure what advantage the Government see in that proposal. The headquarters office, where the power lies, where decisions will be taken and where most of the money will be turned over, will be in London, so the conclusion must be that, like the Distillers Company or Burmah Oil, although nominally the registered office will be in Scotland, the real power and the real headquarters will be in London.

It is also suggested that there will be proposals to ensure that all banks in the TSB group remain as separate banks. This was always intended, so I do not know what advantage TSB Scotland, the banking fraternity in Scotland, the customers of TSB Scotland or the financial institutions in Scotland will derive from the proposals.

Another suggestion is that the trustees will be the directors of the new company. No more ridiculous suggestion could be made. The trustees of TSB Scotland have no credibility whatsoever. They cannot be trusted, apparently, to look after the interests of the Scottish bank. They do not intend to allow it to continue to have an independent existence. If that is so, how can they be trusted further?

I must make some comment on the strange ethics of the situation. Having willingly sacrificed themselves to the predator, the TSB Group, they appear willing to remain in the saddle to be appointed directors of the new banking subsidiary in Scotland. I am not sure what remuneration they will receive for that, whether it is 300 or 3,000 or 30,000 pieces of silver for betraying the birthright which should have been theirs after the creation of the trustee savings bank movement in Scotland two centuries ago. That pecuniary interest sits ill with the role of trustees. Even if it had been independent at the outset, the group will retain the veto, which it can exercise over the choice of new trustees. Any initiative which TSB Scotland might have been able to maintain under the new regime, will be killed off over a period if the TSB Group so wishes.

10.30 pm

There are also managerial problems associated with the changes which have been suggested. At present, these directors will not be elected by anyone; they will be appointed, if we agree with Sir John Read, the chairman of the TSB Group, as new directors of the company, without election. They will not be responsible in any way to any independent body of shareholders. Under that kind of regime, TSB Scotland will go into slack and supine

managerial hands. That is because, without responsibility to shareholders, there will be little reason for management to exert itself.

If one looks at the comparison which I gave at the beginning of my remarks between the earning capacity per employee of the Scottish banks, it is noticeable that the one with the lowest figure of £3,000 per employee, is the Clydesdale bank. It is the only Scottish bank which is a fully owned subsidiary of an external bank, the Midland. Much of the profitable work which could be undertaken by the Clydesdale bank goes to the Midland and to its specialist investment companies and merchant banks. The Clydesdale is therefore denuded of some of the more lucrative sections of the market.

Yet this seems to be the area to which we will be condemning TSB Scotland if the House succeeds in overturning the Lords amendment to cut TSB Scotland out of this bad Bill. These directors will be a self-perpetuating oligarchy. They will be appointed by no one, elected by no one and responsible to no one. That is bad in itself. As for the proposal that 75 per cent. of the directors will have to live in Scotland, that is the merest token that could ever have been devised, and in relation to the safeguarding of the net worth, it can be overtaken in the course of time.

We have a thrusting, dynamic bank at present, but the picture will change dramatically if the Lords amendment is over turned. The Government are on very uncertain ground over the Bill. The amendment I have suggested in lieu of the Lords amendment which the Government intend to demolish, is intended to ensure that, before any precipitate or final action is taken, there should be a decision by the depositors of the bank in a ballot. A majority of the depositors should agree to the changes which have been suggested by the TSB. There are specific reasons why that is desirable.

I do not feel it necessary to rehearse some of the background information I gave you, Mr. Speaker, in my point of order earlier today. If one looks at the opinion expressed by Mr. John Murray, QC, to the Trustee Savings bank central board—that is, the London body—one sees the assertion that under Scots law the trustee savings banks in Scotland are owned by the contributors. The contributors are the depositors and the depositors are the members of the bank. Therefore, the ownership of the bank rests with the depositors. If the opinion is correct, they are entitled to the produce, the reserves and assets, of the bank. I should have thought that extending wealth within the community and ensuring the widest possible ownership of the assets of this successful institution would be welcome to the Government. It is surprising that the Treasury was prepared to say in the White Paper that there was doubt about the ownership.

Some of the matters that I raised during the earlier points of order about the information given to the House require answers from the Treasury. Did the Government receive a copy of the opinion? Did they conduct their own legal inquiries into ownership? If the central board had received such an opinion, suggesting that ownership rested with depositors, would not it have been desirable for the bank to go to the Court of Session with an action of declarator asking the court to declare as to ownership, so that that was cleared out of the way at the start?

No attempt has been made by TSB Scotland or by the central board to apprise the depositors, the prima facie owners of the bank, of their rights. It was surely essential that they should have done so. The bank was established for the customers and they have put their faith and money into TSB Scotland. Over successive generations, they have built up a very successful business which is now to be destroyed.

Given the opinion that has been received and the fact that there is to be an action in court tomorrow, it is all the more regrettable that the Government have precipitately determined to drive on regardless. Many people will regard it as legalised theft if, by an Act of Parliament, the ownership and resources of the bank are taken away from the working people for whom it was established and distributed to speculators, which is what will happen if the flotation goes ahead.

Many people in Scotland who have no objection to flotations and joint stock companies feel that this example of exploitation should not be allowed to proceed.

The Government wish to defeat the Lords amendment. My amendment suggests that before any other action takes place, the owners of the bank—the depositors—should be consulted in a postal ballot to get their views. The Government are keen on postal and other ballots in other areas. Before transferring the bank's assets to their friends in the City, they should at least test the strength of their position.

I cannot see what objection there can be to getting the agreement of the depositors. If the depositors, deemed the owners, agree to the demutualisation, if that is the correct term, of the company, at least TSB Scotland, the TSB Group and the Government will be on far stronger ground. That will be the result of a majority vote in favour. It is incumbent on the Government to tell the House whether they will accept the amendment which I have tabled. If they do not respond and if they fail to say yes, I hope that they will explain why insufficient information about this sordid affair has been placed before the House.

We are dealing with an important Scottish company. When I started my opposition to the Bill, I did so primarily on the basis that it would be a loss to the Scottish economy and the financial scene if this huge unit were to be taken out of our control. Its removal would inflict considerable damage on us.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I am following the hon. Gentleman closely. He is making a strong plea for the bank to be left in Scottish control. However, earlier in his remarks he was critical of those in control of the bank's affairs for apparently selling out. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Wilson: Indeed I can have it both ways. I usually do, and I am usually right. I have explained that my objection to the Bill at the outset was based on the economic and financial loss that the Scottish economy would face. However, we have run into a more fundamental issue, which is whether such a company, which has had successful mutual control in the past, should have that form of control unilaterally dismantled without the consent of the depositors, who I believe to be the true owners of the bank.

We in Scotland have had successful mutual companies in the insurance section which have done very well. I would not trust the trustees as directors in controlling the future of TSB Scotland, especially if they are answerable to no one—except ultimately, I suppose, the TSB central board. I accept that the bank has built up extremely well in recent years, has served its customers and

[Mr. Wilson]

expanded its services. One can recognise work well done of that sort but it is still possible to criticise the trustees of TSB Scotland for their ultimate lack of vision. It appears that they have close sight but no long sight of the future.

Many Scottish companies have been taken over in the past and when that has happened the vitality has often seeped out of them and has not been replaced. Eventually these companies have either been entirely absorbed—that happened to many individual insurance companies which were based in Scotland—or closed, with job losses and a loss of leadership in the Scottish community.

If the Government insist on opposing Lords amendment No. 1, which I consider to offer the best solution, they should consider the formula which I have outlined in amendment (a) which provides that, before TSB Scotland is included in their proposals, consent should be obtained from the depositors by way of a postal ballot. In that way the Government would emerge with great credit. It is still open to them to take that course rather than to find that they have disappointed the Scottish community in the unfortunate way in which the Bill has been prepared.

I could accept from the Minister the view that he has asserted in the past that the Bill is not one in which the Government have a pecuniary interest and that he is acting as agent for the TSB Group and, through that, TSB Scotland, but an agent is responsible to a principal. In this case, the principal is not necessarily the TSB trustees but the owners of the bank, the depositors. If that is so, the Minister would be acting in dereliction of his duty as agent if he accepted instructions from the wrong principal.

Now that he has the information and opinion that I have supplied, I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that the Government should not wish to be involved in a scandal of this sort and, even now, will accept a solution which would remove them from the hook on which they have been placed.

10.45 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The new TSB's difficult birth is being attended with much doubt and uncertainty. I have no wish, in what I thought optimistically would be a short debate, to rehearse the whole history of the affair. The central issue with which we are concerned in this group of amendments is whether the exclusion of TSB Scotland from the Bill, as brought forward in another place, should survive and whether, if it does not survive, how adequate will be the Government's replacement provisions.

The debate in the other place represented an interesting episode. Lord Taylor of Gryfe apparently has an unbounded enthusiasm for devolution in the world of banking, though that enthusiasm does not have a wider application, if I remember the noble Lord's history.

I do not go all the way with the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) or with the depositors in writing off as totally worthless the concessions that have been extracted. In one of the depositors' circulars, those concessions were described as an insult to the intelligence of the Scottish electorate. While that was an overstatement, a number of questions need answering about those concessions and I hope that the Minister will provide the answers.

I am sure that I speak for many hon. Members when I say that we have no enthusiasm for the self-perpetuating board, as envisaged. The board of TSB Scotland will renew itself. It is the equivalent in the world of nature of the amoeba in the sense that it is self-generating, needing no outside help, although there is a negative check in the approval of the main board. I did not have the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee, but I expect that there was an explanation of whether they would be executive directors and whether they would be part-time or full-time. The Minister might wish to clear that up.

More helpful is the fact that the chairman and chief executive of each subsidiary bank will serve on the main board and that there will be no reduction in the worth of the bank without the consent of two thirds of that subsidiary bank's board of directors, although a cynic might ask what the worth of that is, given their silence on present events.

The real question concerns the value of the safeguards. The Minister said that there would be no vesting order until all the alternations in the articles of association had been made and the promised safeguards were in position. However, articles of association can be altered at a later date. The trouble is that the safeguards offered are immediate and there is no guarantee that they will stand the test of time. The Minister may wish to comment on that important matter, especially when we consider the adequacy or otherwise of what he proposes to put in place of the Lords amendment.

It is difficult to be objective about these issues. As we contemplate the scene, one can hear the creaks of bandwagons rumbling, and certain sections of the SNP—I am careful to say "certain sections"—have been shamelessly jumping aboard. Last week it was wreaths in memory of the Labour party at the Royal High building; this week it is the Trustee Savings bank. Goodness knows what it will be next week. We must look at the arguments. There are two main areas of contention—one is the form of ownership proposed for the new organisation and the second is the loss of Scottish identity subsumed in the larger United Kingdom organisation.

I am not convinced by some of the rather romantic visions of the TSB as presently constituted, which have been used to buttress some of the debates during the course of the Bill. I do not want to go back to the philosophy of the Rev. Henry Duncan of Ruthwell and his famous strongbox with its three separate locks. However, I must tell the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), whose peon of praise for the good cleric I read with interest, that he is a rather unlikely hero for a Conservative Member because his other characteristic was a decision to defy an interdict from the Court of Session during the famous legal proceedings in the Strathbogie case running up to the disruption. I would have thought that that would not have commended itself to Conservatives.

In any event whatever the Rev. Henry Duncan may or may not have done, there is a somewhat rosy coloured glow as people look at how the status of depositors has developed during the course of the TSB movement. I remember an interesting chapter in Olive Checkland's book "Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland", which deals with this at some length. I recommend it to anyone who is interested. I shall weary the House with only one sentence, which is:

"The concept of trusteeship was an elitist notion: depositors had no voice in the management of the Savings Banks."

That holds true today, even as it did in the days of Victorian philanthropy that are sometimes beloved of Government Back Benchers.

I am confident that the average depositor—one of the nameless 1·25 million, of whom there are several on the Benches behind me—thinks that he has a substantial stake in the management of the TSB as presently constituted. However, it is fair to concede that there is a big difference between management and ownership. Whatever the position of the depositors in terms of management, they have a special position in the bank that is not fully recognised in the scheme embodied in this legislation.

There has been a great deal of talk about the Page committee. The findings on ownership were quoted effectively by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on Second Reading. The House will remember that when that committee considered something very much like the solution that has now been adopted, it reached the conclusion that it was neither practical nor desirable.

There is also the open question whether the bank is or is not, in the law of Scotland, owned by its depositors. The hon. Member for Dundee, East quoted the opinion of a well-known Queen's counsel at the Scottish Bar, Mr. John Murray. We are led to understand—and I have not seen a copy of the document—that his view was that, as an unincorporated body, it was owned by the depositors. Of course, that is not the law of the land. It is an educated guess about what the courts might find if they were invited to consider that question. But it underlines that we are in a peculiar position tonight because we are all aware that there is an action pending in the courts—an application for interdict—that is likely to be heard tomorrow. None of us know the outcome of that. It will be strange if the Court of Session says tomorrow that ownership is with the depositors and grant an interdict on that basis.

Perhaps the Minister can tell us the Government's view of the effect of such an interdict. If he has doubts, he can obtain an instant opinion from another QC sitting on his left—the Solicitor-General for Scotland.

Will Parliament override the court and make the interdict useless? What will be the effect of that interdict? What will happen to depositors who have been established in ownership and have a tangible right, which we are alienating, who will have no rights in the courts because Parliament is legislating to destroy their right to pursue their claim? That raises interesting questions which are not academic and which might become horribly relevant tomorrow.

I hope that the Minister will give us the benefit of his thoughts on the matter. If he cannot do that, I hope that we shall hear from the Solicitor-General for Scotland.

The Page committee, the opinion of counsel and the atmosphere of the trustee savings bank movement has been referred to. I believe that a substantial shift is envisaged in the Bill. It is not a matter that involves only a technical reconstruction of company status.

Leaving aside the question whether the bank is thrusting and dynamic, the TSB has served its depositors and its existence is based upon offering certain services. No one apart from salaried professionals, makes a profit or obtains a fee.

Under the new arrangement trustees will have a different remit. They will be bound by the Companies Act. Their job will be to maximise profits for the benefit of a different body of people—the shareholders. There might be an overlap. They will do that by extracting profit from the depositors. That will create a different atmosphere.

The important position now held by depositors was recognised by the Minister in his recent letter to Mr. R. A. G. Bennett of the depositors' association when he said that the preferential share option scheme was a recognition of the special place of the depositors in the TSB set-up.

Depositors are in a special position. The evidence for that is contained not only in the Page report, but in the way that the bank has been operating. To that we want to add the Scottish dimension. Scotland has a long and distinguished involvement and a well-developed network. Central funds have been gathered there. We have come a long way since the Rev. Henry Duncan's banks were established to

"ameliorate the conditions of the lower orders"

in Scotland.

I am told that 3,000 employees are involved, that the operating profit is £32 million, that there are 2 million accounts and 1·5 million depositors. There is no doubt that the Scottish bank would be a substantial entity if it existed in its own right. That was tacitly admitted by an authority that might appeal at least to Conservative Members—Lord Bruce-Gardyne—who said on 16 April 1985 that TBS Scotland would be well able to stand on its own two feet. I do not think that there would be any argument about that.

I do not want to argue that case at this stage at any length, but there is an understandable anxiety. It was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock on Second Reading, when she pointed out that there was a danger of the bank, weak in the south, using the vast majority of its resources over the opening years to try to cover the areas where it had not a long and well-established tradition. She rightly said that that should not be at the expense of Scotland and the north.

11 pm

We have here a fair amendment that calls for consultation. There is clearly a case for that consultation, based on the Scottish experience. There may be an argument about whether it is right to go ahead on the present arrangements, but that should be tested. I hope that I have established that the depositors are people who have a particular interest and should be consulted.

I have no doubt that substantial arguments can be put forward by the promoters of the scheme. They can argue that the employees are, as I understand, largely in favour of the reorganisation going ahead. They can talk about a better service for the customer from a commercial bank with a more competitive system. They can argue that the depositors' association is unrepresentative. It has not hidden the fact that it came late in the field and has only about 200 members out of the 1,250,000 depositors. The promoters can argue that an independent bank would be open to a substantial possibility of takeovers and would be in a weak position. There are all sorts of arguments, and it is not for us tonight to come to a conclusion on them.

I have tried to put some arguments and the hon. Member for Dundee, East has done the same. On both sides there are arguments that should be decided by the depositors, and they should be consulted before we come to a final conclusion on the matter. The very fact that they are entitled to preferential treatment perhaps underlines the case for consultation of the kind that I have mentioned.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

I am a member of a building society. I was surprised to discover that I am a member because I have only a few pounds in an ordinary share account. A couple of days ago I received a voting slip, because the building society is about to amalgamate. It is asking me to vote on whether I want that amalgamation to go ahead. I accept that a building society has a very different structure from that of a trustee savings bank, but it is thought not inappropriate that everyone who has a deposit in the building society should be allowed to vote on whether the Alliance should join with the Leicester. All we are asking is for the same sort of basic right for the depositors in the TSB.

I hope that the Government will look sympathetically at the amendments. I hope that they will accept that there is a case for consultation, given the Scottish dimension that we have been talking about and given the undoubted change in the status of depositors that would result from the Bill. If the Minister will accept the amendment, or one of them, we can proceed with harmony and consent and there need be no further delay. If he cannot, I believe that we should divide the House upon it and, if we are unsuccessful, mark our disapproval by dividing also on the main Question.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask your advice on the important issue that we are considering? Various privileges are to be conferred by the Bill on depositors with the Trustee Savings Bank. There will be hon. Members in the House this evening who may be intending to vote and who may have accounts and be depositors with the Trustee Savings Bank.

I have an account with the Trustee Savings Bank which contains 81p, but the principle goes beyond that. In view of the lucrative offers that are being patronisingly placed before depositors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you advise me —and perhaps the House as well—as to the position of hon. Members if as depositors they were to find themselves in the Division Lobbies this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The practice of the House is clear. Any hon. Member who has a pecuniary interest in the matter being debated and who is participating in the debate should declare that pecuniary interest. All hon. Members may vote on a matter of public interest. I hope that that is clear.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am sure that Dr. Henry Duncan would be surprised that, 175 years after founding the savings bank movement, his name has been trotted about the Floor of the House at 11 pm. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) thought that it was unlikely that I would support Dr. Duncan, but I do. He set a fine example of sticking by one's principles over the disruption. At least a fine monument was erected in memory of his good work. This is unlikely to be reciprocated in the streets of Garscadden.

I think that Dr. Duncan would want the House to bear in mind that he spent much of his time promoting the savings bank movement in England and Wales. He was internationally minded and outward looking—very far removed from the narrow internal views of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson).

It is important to delve into the history not of the distant past but of the past two or three months. I should like my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to marry Government amendment (d) with the important letter from Sir John Read, the TSB chairman, which was printed in detail in the other place on 4 July in reply to a written question by Lord Taylor of Gryfe to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. How binding is the letter? How tied into the legislation is the assurance that in Scotland we will have the many factors set out in the letter, especially in relation to

"an independently managed Scottish bank"—*[Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 July 1985; Vol. 465, c. 1394.]

which is registered in Scotland—I think that this is covered by deed—the issues relative to the charitable foundations under paragraph 4 (iii) and the membership of the Scottish board under paragraph 4(v)?

If my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary spells out in detail how he sees the arrangements for conducting the business of the Trustee Savings bank—both the United Kingdom and the Scottish groups—and how they tie together, that may well go a long way towards alleviating the concern in some parts of Scotland. This concern has not been reciprocated by the staff of the TSB nor originally by the trustees when the Bill came before us on Second Reading.

All of us who live in Scotland, who are interested in the bank's success and who realise that a large part of the bank's success in Scotland will go towards making it a great successor in the United Kingdom—*[Interruption.]* Why does the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) laugh at that? Is he not proud that the Scottish bank can take the lead in the United Kingdom? Should he not be pleased, rather than sit there girning away?

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Surely the hon. Gentleman is aware from his experience that that is not the way the scenario will operate. The bank will simply become a branch office without any power.

Sir Hector Monro: Despite all the years that the right hon. Gentleman has served in the House his mind never broadens or becomes more up to date. In some years' time he will realise that tonight he witnessed the passage of legislation that greatly enhanced the prestige of the TSB in Scotland.

I hope that when my hon. Friend replies to the debate, which is broadly similar to the Second Reading debate in the other place, he will spell out how the letter from Sir John Read is tied into legislation. We want an assurance that what Sir John Read said will take place, and is bound as far as possible by legislation.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that we were in a peculiar position. Indeed, we are, because we are dealing with a peculiar Bill. On Second Reading I declared an interest as a depositor in the Trustee Savings bank, and, as hon. Members know, I opposed Second Reading.

In the other place Lord Gowrie said that the Government could not allow the Bill to proceed to Royal Assent with clause 3. The Bill should not be enacted. Therefore, I would not be unhappy if the Government's motion, that we disagree with the Lords, were refused. It is becoming increasingly evident that serious questions about the ownership of the bank, if not in England and Wales, certainly in Scotland, have not been adequately resolved.

The group of amendments arises from an amendment of Lord Taylor of Gryfe, which succeeded on Report in another place. That amendment, which aroused a great deal of interest in Scotland, revealed the extent to which Edinburgh's financial establishment had been sleeping because it came some time after this House had given the Bill a Second Reading. It does not instil me with much confidence in Edinburgh as the second financial centre in the United Kingdom that Edinburgh took so long to wake up to what was going on.

It is more than anecdotal——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but an unreasonable volume of noise is coming from the vicinity of the Bar of the House. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be given the opportunity to deliver his speech without too much background noise.

Mr. Craigen: It has been suggested to me that Lord Taylor's amendment might not have been passed in the other place if the President of Malawi had not been visiting the United Kingdom. There was a big dinner in his honour at Windsor Castle and, therefore, many on the Government side in the other place were absent. I am sure that Dr. Banda, who resided in and was educated in Scotland, would have a good old chuckle at that.

The more serious aspect was the flaw in Lord Taylor's amendment. Reference was made to the letter from the chairman of the central board. All hon. Members may not share the simplistic confidence exuded by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), but it seems an eggshell of a scheme. The first tap of a wooden spoon would give us a smack of what the scheme amounts to.

We have been told that the head office of TSB Scotland will be in Scotland, and that the TSB Group's registered office will be in Edinburgh. I understand that the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) has already said that it wants the entire operation to be located in Edinburgh. The shareholders' annual general meeting will be in Edinburgh, no doubt at the time of the Edinburgh festival.

11.15 pm

Those assurances, and the supposed safeguards about residential qualification for the directors of the new TSB in Scotland, do not amount to much. They certainly do not overcome the basic problem of ownership, which the Government have not fully resolved, and the question whether it is right for the Government to consent to the flotation of TSB on the stock market.

Lord Taylor in another place said that the concessions that had been agreed with the chairman of the central board of the TSB were more than half a loaf. However, having examined the concessions closely, it seems to me that they are little more than a handful of grain. They provide some managerial assurances, not proprietorial safeguards, because they do not alter the effect of the change in control.

This might be a convenient moment to say why I tabled amendment (ii), which calls for consultative arrangements with depositors. Although the Government are likely to have their way this evening, I believe that there should be adequate arrangements to ensure that the depositors with the TSB have a voice in the new set-up. It is clear from Sir John Read's letter that he envisages that no more than about one tenth of the depositors will become shareholders of the new TSB. We have been told all along that it is desirable to have shareholders because we wish to involve many more people in the running of the bank, yet it is explicitly acknowledged in the letter that not many more than one tenth of the depositors are likely to become shareholders.

Therefore, it is all the more important that some mechanism is written into the Bill so that the other nine tenths of depositors can have some machinery by which their views and complaints can be made known to the board. That should not be left to the whim of the chairman or the board. Since the TSB wished to be different and to involve more people than do the clearing banks, I should have thought that it would have wanted to have some customer representation within the established arrangements. That is why it was important to table the amendment.

Some reference has been made to mutuality. A depositors' association has been set up. Irrespective of whether it has 230 or 250 members so far, the fact is that there must be some recognition of depositors' rights in this exercise.

I noticed with interest that, in the letter which the Treasury Minister sent to the chairman of the Scottish TSB Depositors' Association on 4 July 1985, the Government made their position quite clear on the matter of mutuality. Copies of the letter were issued as a parliamentary answer. The Minister said:

> "I agree of course that there are successful mutual financial institutions. But it is one thing to allow long-established mutuals to continue in business in their traditional fields of activity and quite another to set up brand-new mutual arrangements in modern circumstances."

The Government effectively appear to be trumpeting a new arrangement that organisations will be either private or public. In the Government's scheme of fiscal and economic affairs, it seems that there will be no encouragement and precious little assistance to mutuality as a concept. I wonder whether that is entirely desirable.

Many hon. Members have experience of mutuality in other areas. The TSB is not strictly a mutual, but I see no reason why it could not have moved towards the concept of mutuality. I think that the TSB could raise the capital for which it is looking, had it had shares which could be indexed and interest paid. I do not think that it needs to float an unknown business on the stock exchange to raise the capital which it says is necessary for many of these developments.

When the Minister tells the House why we should accept the Government proposal and disagree with the Lords amendment, I should like him to say whether the Government, had they known counsel's opinion, which was apparently given to the TSB in April 1979, would have come forward with a Bill, or would have left it entirely to the Trustee Savings bank to introduce a private Bill.

On Second Reading, I described the measure as closet privatisation. I want to know where the Treasury stands in all this. Many questions have been unanswered in the conduct of this highly undesirable plan to sell off the TSB.

As I said before, it will be a highly lucrative exercise. Those who buy will not be risking anything in the way that they would be in buying equities in a business. The reserves of the TSB are such that it will be an Aladdin's cave. I am not sure whether the Minister is Ali Baba or one of the 40 thieves, but I think it is important that the Treasury should spell out precisely where it stands, given the knowledge that the House now has.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I declare an interest. I am, or was, a depositor in the Edinburgh savings bank, and discovered, following the publication of the Bill, that my account, which stood at £1 10s 6d, is now worth £2·68 28 years later. I do not know whether that is in favour of or against the present structure of the bank, but that is the extent of my interest. No doubt I will be one of the thieves of whom the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) has just spoken, because I would be entitled to shares if the matter goes forward to flotation.

Several matters of important principle are raised. It is obvious that no hon. Member—and it is not yet settled in the courts—is certain about the legal constitution of the organisation of the Trustee Savings bank. Without wishing to give a firm opinion, I would say that the Bill would turn a non-profit-making association into a profit-making company. If I am right, the distinction is that the original association had, under the trusts legislation—that is why it is called a trustee savings bank—a duty to maximise the benefits of the depositors. That is why the name was changed from the Edinburgh savings bank or any other bank to the Trustee Savings bank. Those who were in charge of it therefore had a duty to maximise the benefits of the beneficiaries—the depositors.

The new company has a completely different duty. It is exempted from, even if it is not precisely under, the requirements of trusts legislation, to maximise profits as a commercial organisation. Such a company has an utterly different structure in law in Scotland and in understanding as an organisation. The Government are merely the agent, runner or duty doer for the board of the TSB in putting forward the Bill. I do not believe that the Government would ever have done that if they had conceived of the legal structure of the bank.

We do not know what the legal structure of the bank is. The Court of Session will begin to decide that tomorrow. We know however, that it was called the Trustee Savings bank because it was believed to be such an organisation. It would have been a contravention of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 if anybody had called it that and it had not been a trustee savings bank.

I do not wish to judge something which, if it is not sub judice, is very nearly sub judice. Let us assume that, as I have proposed, the court decides that the organisation comes under the umbrella of trusts legislation and has a duty to provide for the maximisation of the benefit of the beneficiaries — the depositors. Then the Bill will supravene abante the rights of the beneficiaries. It will be taking a trust and making it into a commercial enterprise without the consent of the beneficiaries, contrary to the duties of the trustees.

11.30 pm

We can take it the other way. The case may go to the first division and then to the other place, so it may be a long process. I am not looking into the motivation of those who raised the action but into the rights and wrongs of the matter. Supposing that the courts decide the other way. Then, have not the depositors, all these years, been misled as to their rights, and the duties of the directors?

I know that there are political motives. I know that there are those who say that anything that is Scottish must remain Scottish, and those who want to know whether the ban will be more Scottish if Sir John Read's letter is implemented than ever it was before. I am unimpressed by either the one side or the other. I am impressed by the fact that the defensive letter of Sir John Read has no force in statute and that any allegation that it is an earnest of eternal will has no force.

I am certain of various matters that concern me. The directors sought the opinion of counsel, which they were always entitled to reject, and which has regrettably—because it is a confidential matter—been revealed. It has been revealed, and we understand that they were informed and did not challenge that information, that the bank belonged to the depositors and that they were trustees for the beneficiaries. The directors then came to the Government to ask them to derogate their duty and later the function of that charity—trusts are charities. That raises serious poblems. If we are then told that the same adviser is advising them on the matters in which they are trying to reverse his opinion, that also raises serious matters.

We are told that Lord Taylor of Gryfe in the other place acts for Morgan Grenfell, which is, after all, acting with Noble Grossart in the Bell's whisky deal. The day after Lord Taylor accepted the advice, who was it that Sir John Read said would be a satisfactory director? It was Angus Grossart, of Noble Grossart. That raises other matters.

I am not, and hope will never be, able to understand anything about finance. I hate alligators, and I hate predators, and I hate everything about finance. However, if the financial institutions of Scotland are to be run on the basis that the TSB gets the advice of top counsel, hides that advice from the Government and asks the Government to bring in a Bill that contradicts it, then asks the same counsel to advise it in the opposite direction, and then in the other place the Government accept a compromise from a noble Lord who is in the financial institution of Morgan Grenfell, and the bank of Morgan Grenfell, in league with Noble Grossart says that the safeguard is to appoint one of their directors, all I can say is that the scepticism of a natural Jacobite Episcopalian is confirmed .

I am not a little Scotlander, but I am a little depositor in Trustee Savings Bank Scotland. I am very sceptical about constitutional arrangements whereby a trust becomes a public company when the question whether or not it is a trust has yet to be decided by the courts. The principles I have raised tonight ought to give a great deal of thought to a great number of people.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although I am not an accountant, a Scot or even a Pict, I have listened with great interest to this debate and have become increasingly disturbed by the points about interest that have been raised. I am a partner in a firm that is a substantial customer of the Trustee Savings bank. Originally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you made a distinction between declaring an interest and speaking and then voting on a matter of public interest. I am not entirely certain about the distinction between the public interests and the private interests of a firm like mine. If this flotation takes place, my firm and I, as a partner in that firm, will have a substantial interest in it. I should welcome a ruling about how you make a distinction between public and private interests in a matter of this nature. At the moment I am reluctant either to speak or eventually to vote upon it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has taken such a close interest in this matter, since I have been disturbed by the unreasonable

noises that have been disrupting the debate from below the Gangway. I doubt whether I can usefully add to my earlier ruling that all hon. Members have a right and a responsibility, in accordance with the practice of the House, to declare any pecuniary interests that they may have in the subject under debate.

Mr. Porter: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On behalf of my hon. Friends the Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) I apologise for the noise that they have been creating, but I have been seeking their advice. I am no wiser, nor am I much better informed about the distinction between public and private interests. Therefore in accordance with my conscience I declare an interest. It would be quite wrong of me to vote on this matter.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): This has been a strange debate. The Bill has followed a very unexpected course. When the Government first introduced it, the matters that have become so controversial tonight, at a late stage in the proceedings on the Bill, appear not to have ruffled the feathers of those who are alleged to be most at risk from the proposals of the trustees of the Trustee Savings bank Scotland.

There has been a penumbra of criticism throughout the debate of the motivation of the trustees in suggesting this flotation and of the Bill that the Government have adopted —a penumbra that became rather more solid when the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) spoke. He implied a somewhat sleazy motivation. It is going slightly beyond what is strictly necessary to impute improper motives to those who have been putting forward these proposals since August 1982. There has been singularly little criticism of these proposals, either from the depositors or from the commercial rivals of the Trustee Savings bank Scotland, or from anyone who might have been thought to be adversely affected by the proposals.

Mr. Fairbairn: I did not say that the motivation of those who proposed this matter was in any way sleazy. I said that once the matter had been proposed and difficulties arose, what happened thereafter might be subject to close scrutiny.

Mr. Maclennan: The House has been subjecting this Bill to ever closer scrutiny, and no doubt will properly continue to do so for a little time yet. What has come out at this late stage in the Bill is that the proposed shape of the new bank is thought in some way to provide less protection for depositors than previously existed.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) has taken a close interest on the Opposition side of the House in this matter for a long time. He complained that there might be under-representation in the new structure because only 10 per cent. of the depositors will be in the shareholding body. But that will be 10 per cent. more than has been represented in management decisions or in the decision-making process of the bank at any stage in its history. It is at least plausible to argue that the principal concern of the trustees in moving towards this new shape for the bank is the interests of the depositors. One must assume from their silence that the depositors have consented to what has been done. Over a period of three years, they have had plenty of opportunity to raise this matter.

For the bank to be organised as a public limited company would be in the interests of depositors. The bank has increasingly become comparable to a clearing bank and has ceased to be primarily a savings institution. It operates in the hight street like other banks and operates accounts that can be drawn upon. I doubt whether depositors really view it as being, in important respects, very different from, shall we say, the Royal bank or the Bank of Scotland. The operations have become very difficult to distinguish for the ordinary depositor who uses the services of the bank.

These facts have been somewhat lost sight of in the understandable and wholly legitimate controversy that has arisen about whether the Trustee Savings bank Scotland should be operated as a Scottish bank in Scotland with all the benefits that might bring to a strenghtened Scottish financial sector. There was a singular lack of criticism from those who have been concerned to see some strengthening of the Scottish financial sector. I suppose that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross believes that that is because they were in some way competitors and might not be interested in making that case. There were certainly others who, for political or other motives, might have thought it appropriate to boost the case for the independence of the Trustee Savings bank.

I need not go over the facts about the strength of the Trustee Savings bank Scotland. The statistics were cited by the hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) earlier in the debate. It is perfectly clear that the Trustee Savings bank Scotland is by far the strongest part of the whole trustee savings bank coterie. It could have stood on its own feet and I regret that is not what was proposed, because it would have been extremely sensible and we would have given it our support. They said to the Government, "Let us join this new United Kingdom organisation and let us do so without any protection of the separate Scottish interest." That was the point that the Bill had reached when the hon. Member for Dundee, East moved his famous amendment. There are many more hon. Members in the Chamber tonight than there were on that occasion. To give the hon. Gentleman credit, it must be said that he has taken a consistent line on the matter and has pushed the issue further.

11.45 pm

The hon. Member for Dundee, East had only 29 votes for his amendment and the matter appeared to have been lost. It was revived only when my noble Friend Lord Taylor of Gryfe moved an amendment in another place that was given all-party backing, including support from the Labour party in the unexpected person of Lord Stoddart of Swindon and reluctant support from Lord Ross of Marnock. Even at that late stage, they sought to extract a new structure for the Scottish side of the TSB.

It was too late to rewrite the Bill. It would have been desirable for TSB Scotland to be established separately, and that could have been done, but it was not open to another place to unravel the Bill. The political reality was that the Government, with their substantial majority in this House, could have overridden any amendment and left the Bill in its original form. It would have had the wholehearted support of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) in that. He was utterly contemptuous of the amendment of the hon. Member for Dundee, East and he

[Mr. Maclennan]

suggested that the hon. Gentleman knew nothing about Scottish banking. Events have proved the hon. Member for Dumfries wrong.

The agreement that followed consideration of the Bill in another place has resulted in some important changes. I hope that the Minister will say something about the extent to which those changes can be made to stick. They are consensual and are not written into the Bill. They appear to rest on the somewhat shaky foundations of the articles of association of the new company.

However, the changes that were agreed and are set out in Sir John Read's letter are not insubstantial. They show that it is at least the present intention of the TSB to establish a separate Scottish management, located in Scotland and with its registered headquarters in Scotland. The board will appoint its own members and they will not be appointed by the central board in London, although the members will be subject to the board's approval. There will also be a right of representation on the main board.

The provision that 75 per cent. of the Scottish board should be resident in Scotland is not a nugatory provision. It is a practical way of ensuring that the management of the board remains in Scotland.

Like the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, I am interested in the matters that are to be considered in the court in Scotland. However, whatever the findings, proceedings have begun too late. There can be no question of the legislative process being held up by that late decision to raise these issues in the court. The very tardiness with which that matter has been pursued raises the question whether the issues are so pressing and whether there is the threat to depositors' interests that is suggested may be implicit in what is being done, or in the action that is being recommended by the trustees.

I do not feel that Sir John Read has proposed an ideal compromise and I do not regard the guarantees as copper-bottomed. However, at this late stage I do not think that there is an alternative to accepting them. They go a great deal further than the Scottish Members were prepared to go prior to the vote in another place, which was an extremely valuable step in stopping the Bill reaching the statute book without effective consideration of what might be done to safeguard the Scottish dimension of the bank.

The Bill will be seen to have justified the scrutiny role of another place. Those who would wish to see that role eliminated might think fit to read the reports of its debates and consider how effective it has been.

The Government have, for the most part, tried to play the part of an honest broker. When it came to the crunch, I am glad that they were prepared to put some pressure upon Sir John and his colleagues to produce an end result which, though far short of what we would have wished originally, is a great deal better than the Bill as it first appeared before us. I regret very much that TSB Scotland will not, in its new life, be continuing entirely on its Scottish feet.

Mr. Archie Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am pleased to be able to take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I accept entirely the analysis that he has deployed, but I shall take the issue to a slightly more fundamental level.

It is true that the management of the TSB, in its own terms and within its own lights, has acted perfectly properly. It has acted efficiently and prospered in the best interests of the business as it sees them. The Government have probably acted according to their best lights as an honest broker in a difficult situation in their promotion of the Bill. The scrutiny that was given to the Bill in this place and in another place has revealed some difficulties which some of us—I include myself in the number—did not anticipate would emerge. From an operational, pragmatic and commercial point of view, everything that was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland was right, but I am deeply uneasy about the fundamental principles of Scotts law that are at stake.

I followed carefully the interesting speech of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). First, a trustee savings bank is an unusual institution, and that presents us with a difficulty. If the Government had thought more carefully about that, they may have prevented us from having to face the problem before us.

The duty placed on the trustees of the original TSB institutions was totally different from that described by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross. My interpretation of their duty is that it was to promote savings, no more and no less. In other words, in small rural areas and in the high streets of small Scottish towns they tried to engender the ethic of thrift. If that was their function, and if they had no similiarity to a company limited by shares under the Companies Act, they were —and, therefore, still are—in a unique position. They do not have a joint stock bank structure, which is what the Bill sets out to achieve. The difference is that the trustees had the duty to promote savings, whereas a joint stock bank is established to make profit for the benefit of the shareholders. The two are totally different and no amount of legislative magic can translate the TSB into a joint stock banking company without considering who owns the assets of between £600 million and £700 million.

The bank has plans to continue, and I have no doubt that the TSB would prosper, if it were permitted to continue as it is. The depositors would benefit from that. While I would not go all the way with the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), especially in some of the language that he used, there is a danger that the House may be asked to put constitutional clothing on what is, in effect, an act of appropriation of the worst sort. That makes me uneasy about the whole process.

A small number of depositors have argued for a greater say, but I should have been happier if more of them had backed up the lead that was given by some of their number. While, therefore, the issue can be considered on a commercial or organisation level, on the one hand, it can be considered on a political level, on the other. It can be considered on the level of decentralisation and devolution to Scotland in terms of the amendment, and I join those who say that there is a cogent argument to be made for decentralising the bank and making it an exclusively Scottish institution—a point that I made on Report.

Now that the Government have had time to look at all the ramifications, and now that the Minister has heard the legal opinion, I should be interested to know the Government's attitude, although I have been a solicitor for long enough to know that one should not believe everything in an opinion. What is the Government's

solution to how to bridge the gap between the present association and the joint stock bank being created by the Bill?

12 midnight

My only suggestion—and I realise that it is fraught with practical difficulties—is that some way, somehow, the depositors' opinion must be tested. They must be brought into the process. I would feel deeply restive and uneasy going through the Lobbies to support a measure with which in all other respects I agree, but where the legal questions are of fundamental importance to me as a Scots lawyer.

Mr. Craigen: Does that mean that the hon. Gentleman will support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and my amendment which deals specifically with consultation with the depositors?

Mr. Kirkwood: I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech, and he has made one or two perceptive speeches on this matter. I want to hear the Minister before I decide how to vote. I support the hon. Gentleman's case, but I want the Government to address themselves to the fundamental legal question about the ownership of the assets of the bank.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I have spoken during every stage of the Bill. Unlike the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who asked what could be done at this late stage, I believe that the Government could withdraw the Bill. Quite simply, irrespective of whether the Government accept the Lords amendment or whether any of the amendments being debated are carried. I believe that we will still be left with a bad Bill. It would be best if the Government withdrew the Bill.

The advertisements of the TSB on television show what it has achieved, so it is hard to believe that it desperately needs the Bill to be passed now. We should allow more time for more thought and come back with a better Bill next year. We should not speed through the Bill when the TSB advertisements show its success over recent years. Rapid progress is not essential. Unlike other privatisations, the Government have no financial gain from this Bill. Any money resulting from the sale of shares will remain with the TSB.

We do not have to accept the proposals for Scotland. We should wait to see what is determined in the court. The amendments on consultation are exceptionally important. Unless the TSB Scotland is very different from the English regional banks, there has not been any consultation with its customers. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland mentioned that the Bill has been under discussion for three years. Therefore, when they have been sending statements to customers, I cannot understand why the TSB in Scotland or any of the regions has not carried out a consultation exercise and informed its customers of its proposals and why it wants to carry them out, and sought their views.

Customers and depositors should be able to express their view. Tomorrow the court will decide whom the trustees represent. If the trustees are acting in the best interests of depositors, they should have the confidence to consult them and see what they want to do.

I support the amendment to the Lords amendment. If it is not accepted I shall support several other amendments, but the best solution is for the Government to withdraw the Bill to allow proper consultation. The Government are acting as agent, so the legislation is not essential to them. Let the Government withdraw the legislation. Let us give the matter a year's thought and introduce a better Bill in the next Session.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): Any Minister called upon to take through the House a Bill relating to a body with no owners of its assets has a formidable task. I am convinced that the Government were right to think most carefully about the basis on which they should legislate. Throughout proceedings I have tried to keep in mind the origins of my family in the manse and to have a generous, liberal-minded approach, particularly to the Scottish question.

The Scottish question has two parts. The first is the question of independence and the operation of TSB Scotland as a bank with a Scottish identity managed and run in Scotland. The second question is about the constitution, the way in which that bank should be accountable and whether depositors should have a different constitutional position. The Lords amendments are also relevant.

Before embarking upon the legislation, the Government considered the legal position carefully. We were satisfied that there was no element of expropriation in the Bill. The contents of Mr. Murray's opinion were known to us at all material times. I am advised that Mr. Murray's opinion was not the only opinion obtained by the trustees of the Scottish trustee savings banks. Before proposals were discussed with the Government, they had considered advice. It would be wrong for us to advise the House to delay consideration of the measure pending the outcome of an action which is taking place at a late stage in the Bill's progress.

Mr. Dewar: There was an intervention from the Government Benches below the Gangway from a certain solicitor. Perhaps I should have said—although I do not think it amounts to an interest—that I am a partner in a law firm which no doubt on occasion has contact with the Trustee Savings bank.

Will the Minister say a word or two about the effect of an interdict, if there were to be such a happening in the courts, based upon a finding that ownership rested with the depositors? What would be the impact of that and what would be the effect on the Government's plans?

Mr. Stewart: If the pursuer—I understand that is the correct term for an appellant in a Scottish court—in this case, contrary to the advice that the Government have received, were to succeed in obtaining a judgment against the trustees of TSB Scotland, we would, of course, consider our subsequent action in the light of that judgment. *[Interruption.]* As I have already said, it would be wrong for us to defer consideration of the Bill at this stage.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): May I help my hon. Friend and other colleagues in the House? A similar occurrence took place about there years ago during the passage of a Bill of considerably greater constitutional significance than this one—the Canada Bill. An action was started very late in the courts in an attempt to delay the Bill. The Lord Chancellor in another place ruled that Parliament should not — indeed, could not — have its

[Mr. Eric Cockeram]

business put aside because a citizen or a group of citizens had started an action in the courts, and that Parliament must proceed with its business. Furthermore, he ruled that it would be wrong for Parliament to bow to such actions. Otherwise, any citizen or group of citizens could delay Parliament's business on any Bill passing through the House.

Mr. Stewart: That is a helpful contribution. *[Interruption.]* I am surprised that Opposition Members should find amusement in such sensible comments as I have made. I suppose they would wish me to say that the Government would not consider their subsequent action in the light of such a judgment.

Mr. Craigen: Returning to the assurance that the Minister gave earlier as to what would happen if the declarator were to fall the other way and not the way that the Government expect, will he give an assurance that the Bill will not be sent for Royal Assent until the matter of the court judgment is resolved?

Mr. Stewart: I do not propose to give any specific assurances about the outcome of any action which has not yet been heard. It would be irresponsible of me to do so. I have given the House a reasonable assurance on the point raised with me by the hon. Gentleman. I gave way to him because of the long and close interest that he has had in the Bill. I compliment him on the consistency with which he has put his case. But I think that he and all hon. Members should recognise that there has been a very long period during which it has been open to any depositor to challenge the TSBs on the point of ownership.

The present legal framework of the TSBs goes back to the Labour Government's Trustee Savings Bank Act 1976. The current proposals which are now contained in the Bill were first put forward three years ago in a statement by the TSBs which received extensive press coverage and which was reflected in the annual report of each TSB at that time and subsequently. Details were then spelt out in the Government's own White Paper last December, and the Bill has proceeded through its various stages in the Commons and in another place during the past six months. At no point during that time did any depositor see fit to challenge the legal basis on which the proposals were made, and we consider the present action to be misconceived.

Mr. Wilson: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the TSB movement made no attempt to contact its depositors to tell them what was happening, let alone to find out whether they would approve such changes?

12.15 am

Mr. Stewart: I am coming to the matter of consultation with the TSB depositors, and I shall take account of the hon. Gentleman's point.

The difficulty with the TSB's constitutional position is that, contrary to what the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) said, the depositors are not the owners. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) said that the TSB is not strictly mutual. In fact, it is not mutual at all. Had it been mutual, the task of producing a Bill for the future of the TSBs would have been a great deal easier. No legal ownership makes it extremely complicated.

The question of depositors being consulted lies at the heart of the amendments proposed by the hon. Member for Dundee, East and by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). In 1976, the Government introduced a provision that 25 per cent. of the trustees of each TSB should be elected by the depositors. Those elections took place, but in almost every case they were not contested. Between 1976 and last year, only two elections were contested. In both cases, the same person contested the elections, and was heavily defeated. That does not seem to demonstrate a great fever of depositor interest in the conduct of the TSBs. In many ways, it would have been healthier if more depositors had taken the opportunity of putting forward and supporting candidates, but in 1976 it was felt that this was a means of allowing some form of participation by the depositors. In practice, the depositors have greeted that provision with comprehensive apathy. That is not a basis on which we could say that the constitutional arrangements for the TSBs should be overturned or qualified in a way that would suddenly give the depositors a decisive part to play by a ballot, as the hon. Member for Dundee, East proposed, or by some other means of consultation.

Mr. Fairbairn: Under the provisions of the 1976 Act no one has ever invited me as a depositor to vote for a person who wished to be a trustee. Surely I am not expected to put forward my own candidates and propose my own ballot. As a depositor, I should have been asked. I assure my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary that I have not been asked, and I do not know of any other depositor who ever has been.

Mr. Stewart: I do not know whether all the depositors in TSBs in Scotland are as active and enthusiastic as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). I understood that he had a deposit of £2·68, which he had allowed to sit in the TSB without paying much attention to it. Had he gone to the TSB, he would have seen that notices are put up in the branches about elections. Had he been a keen depositor, he would have asked for a copy of the TSB's annual report and accounts and would have found full details of all these proposals. I do not want to point the finger only at my hon. and learned Friend, because that would be unfair. I was about to say that there are a million or more people like my hon. and learned Friend, but perhaps that would not be credible, and I should say that there are a million or more depositors with TSB Scotland, who are like my hon. and learned Friend in that they have taken no part in the operation and activities of the TSB with which they deposit their money. Faced with such a lack of enthusiasm from depositors, it would not be right at this late stage to introduce half-baked procedures for consultation with depositors who have not taken advantage of the statutory provisions, which were specifically inserted into the 1976 legislation to give them an opportunity to express their opinions.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the somewhat nonchalant way in which the Minister dismissed his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), will he explain where in his argument there is anything consistent with the Government's recent attitude to trade union ballots?

Mr. Stewart: There is a slight difference between trade unions and TSBs, which resides in the fact that trade unions have members and TSBs do not. Earlier I explained

how difficult it was to deal with a body which had no ownership or members, because it was not a mutual organisation. TSBs are certainly not constitutionally like trade unions.

I said that the question related to two aspects. The second is that, of the Scottish identity of TSB Scotland. The hon. Member for Dundee, East said that if we did not reject the Lords amendment, we would allow TSB Scotland to continue a separate existence, but that is exactly the opposite of the case. The Bill would then repeal the existing legislation under which TSB Scotland is constituted, and would not provide for it under the new legislation. TSB Scotland would, therefore, have no position in law, be unable to gain recognition as a bank, and presumably, therefore, have to cease business.

The Government have followed a much more constructive approach. Following the proceedings in another place we have endeavoured to ensure that in its final form the Bill will reflect the interests of the TSBs —the management and depositors—be soundly based in law, and reasonably take account of the anxieties expressed in Parliament during the Bill's passage. That is why amendments *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* seek to introduce a specific provision—the concept of eligibility to succeed —whereby a separate new banking company will be registered in each territory and will take over the assets and business of the previous TSB in that country or territory.

The fact that we must move to disagree with the Lords amendment, and that I must suggest that these amendments should replace it, is purely because of the procedure in another place which meant that these amendments could not technically be tabled there on Third Reading. Therefore, they must be considered by this House.

In addition to the amendment that makes it plain that successor banks will have a separate identity closely related to their country, many hon. Members have drawn attention to the contents of Sir John Read's letter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which is printed in the *Official Report* of 4 July. We should recall the undertakings given in that letter: first, that the head office and registered office of each bank should be in its country; secondly, that each bank's board should appoint its members and that they should not be London nominees; thirdly, that 75 per cent. of the directors should be normally resident in that country; fourthly, that the chairman and chief executive of the banks in England and Scotland should be appointed to the group board; and, finally, and importantly, that the holding company should not be able to reduce the net worth or set the dividend policy of the subsidiary banks without the agreement of two thirds of their directors.

As the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said, they are important changes. He said that they were not all he wanted, but he fairly recognised that they constituted an important safeguard for the Scottish identity of TSB Scotland in the future. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) asked how independent the bank would be. All that I can say is that, whereas at present the trustees of any bank can merge it with another without an Act of Parliament, after the Bill is passed they could not do so without returning to the House with a private Bill. If this evening's proceedings are anything to go by, they might have great difficulty in gaining the approval of the House.

Mr. Craigen: The Minister mentioned depositor apathy in elections. Will he spell out what accountability there will be in the elections by new shareholders of the directors of banks?

Mr. Stewart: The new shareholders will have a direct say in the nomination and re-election of directors in the group parent bank. They will have no such say in relation to the subsidiaries. It is correct to say that the boards of the subsidiaries will appoint further directors in due course, but that is the normal pattern with subsidiary companies in groups. In this case, there will be greater assurance of the independence of those boards because of the provisions that I have just mentioned. It will be impossible for the parent company to nominate directors to the subsidiary boards of TSB Scotland or any other TSB. Those are important changes.

I accept fully that, although the amendments passed in the other place caused extensive reconsideration, they have resulted in important improvements in the basis on which the Bill will proceed. I willingly acknowledge that all those who have put forward ideas on Scottish independence have played their part in bringing that about. I hope that most hon. Members will accept that, having reached this stage, the Bill reflects most of the concerns that were expressed during its passage. Therefore, I hope that they will support the Government's amendments.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I have felt like an intruder during much of the debate, because despite the way in which some people interpret my surname, I have no connection with Scotland — [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I have connections with a better place.

The Minister referred to the legal position, and insisted that there was no need to delay the Bill pending the legal action. One can understand his point. However, it was entirely unsatisfactory to say that, if the judgment went against the Government, he would merely consider subsequent amendment. He did not consider the possibility that if the judgment went against the Government, it would mean that the depositors' accounts had been expropriated. Therefore, the Government would have to consider the matter seriously and the Bill would not receive its Royal Assent.

12.30 am

Secondly, the Minister referred to the letter from the chairman, which was published in the *Official Report* of 4 July. Once again, we find that some of the main commitments are in the articles of association. We had to make the point frequently in discussion of the Bill on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report that those articles of association could be changed, provided that 51 per cent. of the shareholders agreed. As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) pointed out at one stage, given that shareholders are to be limited by the articles of association to 50 per cent., one need only envisage 11 institutions which hold 5 per cent. of the shares getting together to be able to change the articles of association.

Thirdly, the Minister said that the depositors were not owners and therefore should not be consulted. Even so, that does not give a strong enough reason for refusing consultation because the depositors, after all, occupy rather a special position as regards the TSB Scotland. If one in four in Scotland are depositors with the TSB Scotland, this should be an important consideration.

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

In all the debates, we have emphasised very much the special character of the TSB in Scotland. While one might say that the depositors are not owners and therefore have no right to be consulted, if we accepted the Minister's argument, we could still go on to say that, although they may have no legal right to be consulted, it would be quite in keeping with the whole tradition of the TSB Scotland to consult them.

Finally, the Minister accused the depositors of comprehensive apathy, and gave that as a reason for not allowing them to be consulted at this important stage of the change in status, however ill-defined, of the TSB, and particularly of the TSB Scotland. Like Viscount Whitelaw, the Minister seems to believe that one should not go round the country stirring up what he is pleased to call apathy. The Opposition believe that it would be quite proper to stir up the depositors' apathy on this occasion, and to allow them to be consulted before this important change takes place.

The Minister's replies have been very weak, and he has not given us any of the guarantees which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) requested. We shall vote accordingly.

Mr. Wilson: With regard to the legal side, as the Minister put it, I have rarely come across such a brazen attitude as that adopted by the Minister. He discards an opinion which states that the ownership of the bank lies with the depositors. He says that the Government took other legal advice, and has given no indication of what that might be. I find that remarkable.

In relation to the amendment, he has not convinced me that the provisions are other than minimal, and they will do very little to safeguard the independence of the Trustee Savings bank.

In summary, there has been breach of trust, in my opinion. There has also been breach of ownership, in my opinion. Having heard the Minister, I think that there has been a breach of the Government's credibility.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 69, Noes 139.

Division No. 275] **[12.34 am**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Robertson, George
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wainwright, R.

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon Wilson and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood

NOES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*

Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tony Durant

Question accordingly negatived.

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 138, Noes 57.

Division No. 276] **[12.45 am**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David John
Madel, David
Major, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Robert
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Robertson, George
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. John Maxton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments made to the Bill in lieu of Lords amendment No. 1 disagreed to: (b), in page 2, line 11, leave out from 'and' to end of line 13 and insert 'eligible to succeed them'.

(c), in page 2, line 30, after 'business', insert 'and eligible to succeed it'.

(d), in page 2, line 35, at end insert—

'( ) For a company to be "eligible to succeed" an existing bank it must have been, immediately before the vesting day, a subsidiary of the Central Board or the existing holding company and it must—

(a) in the case of the company which is to succeed the existing bank for England and Wales, be registered (and accordingly have its registered office) in England and Wales;

(b) in the case of the company which is to succeed the existing bank for Scotland, be registered (and accordingly have its registered office) in Scotland;

(c) in the case of the company which is to succeed the existing bank for Northern Ireland, be registered (and accordingly have its registered office) in Northern Ireland; and

(d) in the case of the company which is to succeed the existing bank for the Channel Islands, be incorporated (and accordingly have its registered office) in any of the Channel Islands.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Lords amendment No. 2: after clause 1, insert the following new clause — *Share holdings for deposit holders and employees*

" . From the vesting day 25 per cent. of the shares in the TSB Group shall be held in trust for holders of deposits in the TSB Group and employees of the TSB Group, the trustees being elected annually in equal numbers by appropriate Associations of both groups."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Dr. McDonald: The point of principle involved in the amendment was debated on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report. We support the Lords amendment which proposes that, in order to preserve the traditional character of the TSB, 25 per cent. of shares should be assigned to depositors and employees.

The employees are particularly keen that the amendment should be accepted, because it would give them more weight in their negotiations with the employers. Throughout the discussions about the future of the TSB, the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union has pressed for the flotation of shares to resemble the British Telecom flotation in which a proportion of shares were set aside for employees.

The objection from the TSB and the Government is that the bank hopes to get more than 1 million shareholders, but that seems to be an arbitrarily selected figure and a piece of window-dressing by the TSB management to make its flotation and plans for the future of the bank look more attractive to the Government. We need not take that figure seriously.

On Report we debated an amendment proposing that 50 per cent. of shares should be set aside for staff and depositors. The Economic Secretary to the Treasury said that he would

"like to see a substantial proportion of the shares of the issue being so allocated." —[*Official Report*, 20 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 1129.]

It seems to us that 25 per cent. is a substantial proportion and, in view of the Economic Secretary's comment, the Lords amendment should be accepted.

Mr. Kirkwood: Having lost the earlier argument on the ownership of the TSB, we should note that an amendment calling for 49 per cent. of shares to be assigned in the manner proposed by Lords amendment No. 2 was moved by my noble Friend Lord Taylor of Gryfe. That proposed proportion of ownership having been lost, my noble Friend Lord Banks moved an amendment that proposed 25 per cent. ownership which was tested and fell, but it is wrong for the Government to overturn the amendment which was successfully moved by Lord Banks.

1 am

The Government are pressing for wider participation and there is a case for a much broader basis of ownership than the Bill would provide without the amendment. All that it is offering is priority for depositors and staff in the purchase of shares. The amendment would leave 25 per cent. in trust for depositors and employees, with 12·5 per cent. each.

The Minister, Lord Gowrie, considered some objections against the amendment and raised them, but they were all dealt with effectively by Lord Banks when he spoke of the difficulties that were perceived by the Government in having a structure that provided for 25 per cent. to be in trust for depositors and staff. It was made clear in another place that it is possible for commercial operations to survive and prosper with a proportion of a company's shares held in such a way. The John Lewis partnership was cited as an example, where 100 per cent. of the shares are held by employees. That is a very successful commercial operation and there is no reason why a similar procedure should not operate for depositors, especially in an organisation with the tradition of the TSB.

A series of further questions were put to Lord Banks in another place and they were all dealt with effectively and I do not believe that the Government have a case. It is wrong for them to deny the staff and depositors an element of future interest in the TSB as a whole. It is wrong also for the Government to seek to overturn the amendment that was made in another place.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) has referred to the debates that took place in another place. I do not think that we need to rehearse all the arguments again. He referred to the John Lewis partnership, which has a trust for 30,000 staff. There is a difference here, because we are talking about many millions of depositors.

The central question is whether the TSBs should be mutuals or in Companies Act form. I do not believe that there should be a half-way house, a sort of pseudo mutuality, for part of the capital of the TSBs. If 25 per cent. of the capital were put in trust in the way that is proposed, in addition to the 5 per cent. for charities, that would create a block of 30 per cent. of the share capital, which would dominate the direct shareholding of depositors and other small shareholders. It would cut across the intention of the TSBs to obtain a large number of depositors and other small shareholders. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) poured scorn on the figure of 1 million, but that is the TSB's objective. If we were to accept the Lords amendment, we would make it much more difficult for the TSBs to achieve their goal.

There are great difficulties in practical terms. The two reasons most strongly in favour of a Companies Act constitution are, first, the need for accountability to shareholders, which would be overborne by the combination of the charity holding and the 25 per cent. depositor trust, and secondly, and more importantly perhaps, access to capital. If 30 per cent. of the capital were held in a restricted way, it would be impossible to raise capital from the other shareholders without giving the same increase in capital to the trust, and the trust would not have sufficient resources to respond. It would seriously hamper the activities of the TSBs without giving them the other compensating advantages of a different structure.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 132, Noes 62.

Division No. 277] **[1.08 am**

AYES

Amess, David	Browne, John
Ancram, Michael	Bruinvels, Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Buck, Sir Antony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Budgen, Nick
Bellingham, Henry	Burt, Alistair
Benyon, William	Butterfill, John
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Bigge-Davison, Sir John	Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Blackburn, John	Cash, William
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Chope, Christopher
Bottomley, Peter	Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Cockeram, Eric
Bright, Graham	Coombs, Simon
Brinton, Tim	Cope, John
Brooke, Hon Peter	Couchman, James
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Egger, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Major and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Eadie, Alex
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Robertson, George
Rowlands, Ted
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. Gordon Wilson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos 3 to 8 agreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up a Reason to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to one of their amendments to the Bill: Mr. Barry Henderson, Mr. John Major, Dr. Oonagh McDonald, Mr. John Maxton, Mr. Ian Stewart; Three be the quorum.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

To withdraw immediately.

Reason for disagreeing to one of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Nicholas Soames be discharged from the Select Committee on European Legislation and Mr. William Cash be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Teachers (Pay)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

1.17 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I am glad to have the opportunity to discuss the current teachers' pay dispute. I am a former polytechnic lecturer, married to a college lecturer who comes from a family of teachers, so the continuation of the pay dispute causes me concern. It must be in our interests to create the best education system possible. One of the ways to do that is to attract to the teaching profession the best qualified and most able teachers to teach our children.

The profession must be presented as an attractive vocation. Little can be more important if we are to nurture and develop the seed corn of tomorrow's Britain. The future is in our hands. We must have the best teachers available at our disposal.

We must consider the problem in the light of the society that we want for the future. As information technology and technology generally advances we shall need to provide people with higher qualifications who can cope with the jobs created by that technology.

We shall see a society in which there will be fewer hours of work, in which people will retire earlier, and in which they will stay at school longer. They will have to learn at school how to cope with the increased leisure that such a society will provide.

The second function of the future education system will be to provide the necessary training for the skills that will be required for the jobs of the future. We are effectively facing a social revolution, and the main function of the education system will be to enable people to adjust to it. It is for that reason that many of us in this House are very concerned to get the best teachers that we possibly can.

The main reason for the present teaching dispute is the reduction since 1979 by about 1 million of the number of children in our schools. It has had a number of important effects on the teaching profession. The number of posts available for promotion is becoming much more limited. A considerable number of teachers are now stuck on scales 1 and 2. There is no movement and very few senior teacher posts are being created.

Would-be teachers are being required to stay at school for an extra two years to do A-levels, to take degree courses and B.Ed. courses. Many of the honours graduates go on to obtain teaching certificates. They do not go into a job until they are 21 or 22. Those extra years at school or university have to be rewarded by proper terms and conditions of service and a decent salary when they enter the teaching profession. This House should help towards the creation of attractive terms and conditions for the teachers who come into our schools.

At the age of 21 or 22, on a salary of £8,500 at the top of scale 1, and with very little chance of promotion, the job of a teacher is not a very attractive proposition. A scale 1 or 2 teacher today is earning the average wage, not of an accountant, lawyer or bank manager; his wages are on a par with those of a gas fitter, deck hands on ships, crane drivers and machine minders. In some cases, people in those other occupations are doing financially better than our teachers.

The top of the pay scale of a head teacher in a primary school is about £13,500. That teacher can be responsible for upwards of 300 primary schoolchildren between the ages of five and 11. The pay scale is in no way commensurate with the responsibility that a head teacher carries.

In secondary education, £22,500 is the maximum for head teachers with 2,000 pupils, including fairly large sixth forms. Their pay is not commensurate with that of industrial managers, senior officers in the Army and senior officials in local government and central government. Today on page 3 *The Times* pointed out that, over the past ten years, the wage levels of head teachers in secondary schools have been severely eroded compared with those other posts. Local education authorities have reduced staff levels as schools have shrunk.

Morale is at an all-time record low. What can we do to deal with this? The symptoms have been the annual pay round and the inevitable arguments about pay levels, followed by industrial action and arbitration. I doubt whether many hon. Members agree with the teachers' industrial action. I reject it. There can be no forgiveness for those teachers who put children's education in danger. Many of us understand the frustration that leads teachers to take industrial action, but, if the teaching profession is to prove its dedication and professionalism, it will not be done by acting in this way. I and many of my colleagues have pointed out to teachers that, if they want to improve their terms and conditions, by acting in this way they are not impressing those whom they need to influence—the parents, Members of Parliament and the Government. They are going down the wrong road.

We must see an end to the annual pay round and the disputes cycle. In an early-day motion I and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) urged all parties in the dispute to negotiate in a spirit of goodwill for a long-term solution.

Some of those who represent the teachers at high levels, especially in certain unions, do not negotiate in a spirit of good will. This has been shown by offers by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to meet the union leaders. They refused to negotiate over the 1986-87 pay settlement, even though in October we shall be finalising the rate support grant for that financial year. Many Conservative Members must suspect that the leaders of certain trade unions, in the interests perhaps of the main Opposition party, are using the dispute to discredit the Government. They are interested, not in the profession as a whole, but in making political points. Perhaps Mr. Jarvis and some of the leaders of the NUT at national level have been reading Trotsky carefully and taking to heart his advice that demands should be made on the capitalist system which it is known it cannot meet. Teachers would do well to look at the motives of some of the union leadership.

I and the majority of my colleagues do not believe that the teaching profession is full of Left-wing activists. Teachers as a whole are eminently sensible people who realise the position that they are in. They want to settle the matter. We should be giving them the opportunity to do so. We should be talking about teachers in the way that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and other Ministers talks about the police and the way that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services talks about nurses, to emphasise the value of the teaching profession to the nation and to make it clear that we support that attitude and value them as a section of the community.

It is important for Conservative Members and the Government to make teachers realise that we care about their future and the future of education. It may be worth mentioning that the Opposition Benches are empty, and that the 32 Labour Members who are members of the National Union of Teachers are conspicuous by their absence, together with alliance Members, who have constantly wooed teachers. Where are they tonight? Not one is present.

In future we must look for a long-term solution. We must see an end to the annual pay round and its associated disputes because not only teachers and parents, but everyone, is fed up with it, and want it ended. To end it, our approach to the problem must be realistic. Teachers must realise that although they have a great deal of support and sympathy for their case in the House, the dispute must be settled in a climate of economic reality. They must realise that states are like individuals in that there are cash limits on what they can afford.

I advocate that any settlement must include the assessment of teachers' performance. I appreciate that that is disputed, but from my conversations with teachers I know that they are not afraid of assessment. They say, "We are good teachers. We are not afraid of it." It will give excellent teachers an opportunity to shine, and it will resolve the problems relating to out-of-school activities, school lunch hour supervision periods, and the other parts of a teacher's daily life.

We should consider restructuring the pay scales. The teaching profession must recognise that unless we attract mathematic and science graduates and computer scientists into the profession we shall not be able to create the technologists and scientists of the future, who will be important to the development of Britain. We shall not attract them to teaching unless they are paid adequate wage levels, commensurate with industry. Clearly, British Telecom, Plessey and the big corporations can exceed some of the salaries at present offered to young scale 1 and 2 teachers.

A complete restructuring is required. To return to Houghton in 1974 is a waste of time, because too much water has passed under the bridge since then. We must regard the appropriate levels of remuneration on the Clegg review of 1981 as a base from which to work. If we are to give teachers' pay increases we should consider a long-term pay settlement, for example, spread over three years, including assessment and conditions of employment. We should guarantee them an inflation13Acc-proof rise over and above an equalisation rise to represent the erosion in their pay levels, which has clearly occurred between 1981 and 1984. We could begin to achieve that by repealing the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965, which set up the Burnham and CLEA/ST committees. It is a nonsense to negotiate on pay in one committee and on terms and conditions in another. We should merge the two committees. In 1981, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), who was then Secretary of State for Education and Science, told the House that it was the Government's intention to amend the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 to bring pay and conditions of service within the scope of

"a single negotiating body."

That is sound sense, but there are still two committees. Instead of discussing pay in one committee and conditions of service in another, they should be discussed together.

If we repeal that Act, there may be an alteration in the union representation on the newly constituted body, which will truly reflect the membership of the unions in the teaching profession. They have changed greatly, especially recently. Many teachers have left the large unions and joined smaller ones because they will not go on strike. In west Lancashire, teachers undertook some industrial action at the beginning, but they have now rejected it. They have been reasonable in all discussions about this matter, and they have consistently declared their desire to talk to the Government and move towards a long-term solution wherever possible. The spirit of west Lancashire teachers should prevail throughout the country.

A settlement of the long-term problems must include assessment of teachers and — I am sure the general public would welcome this — a no-strike agreement, so that parents can guarantee their children's teaching.

As matters stand, there will be no resolution of the problem. I urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to do everything that he can to give the teachers a reasonable working wage and to undertake the restructuring of their contracts. I am aware of the Department's desire to settle the matter. Perhaps my hon. Friend can persuade the Department to reach a settlement, which can be put to the Cabinet, so that resources can be made available for the future and so that there is an end to the constant rounds of negotiations.

I await with interest the views of my hon. Friend the Minister, who should be aware that I speak not only for myself but for many Conservative Members who believe that we should put this problem behind us. The only way in which we can run our education system is to have vision and ideals as to the direction in which it should go. The moment we lose sight of our ideals, we shall lose our way. Let us develop the best education system that we can obtain. The best way to start doing that is to solve the teachers' pay dispute on a long-term basis.

1.40 am

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on behalf of the House for having introduced this subject on the Adjournment. I should like to say how much I agree with him.

We are faced with a difficult situation, with which my hon. Friend has dealt fairly and responsibly, in which we accept the particular difficulties of the Government. I urge that our concentration should be on the problems of those teachers on scales 1 and 2. We need a new deal for the profession. Can we not forget the problems of the past, the difficulties we had with the teaching unions, and look for a moment to the future and try to build a teaching profession which will be worthy of the children and their parents for the future of the nation? Surely there are answers to the questions posed by my hon. Friend.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science will respond to the questions. It is a question not simply of resources, but of will, and whether it is our desire that we have a teaching profession which is worthy of the children and parents of this country and are prepared to provide the means to do that. That is the question for the House tonight.

1.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) for raising this subject and acknowledge the support given to his views by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James).

The debate is on an important matter which is of concern to all of us in the House and, indeed, to parents, children, and other members of the public throughout the country. The teachers' industrial action has disrupted our schools for virtually the whole of the spring and summer terms, and that must be a matter of considerable anxiety to us all.

As the House will know, the unions' response to my right hon. Friend's constant encouragement to negotiate reforms which would benefit education standards and the teachers themselves has been far from positive. First, they began to back-pedal in the talks which, until last summer, had appeared to be making progress. As I said, they broke off discussions last December, and have refused to resume them. More recently, they have refused even to address the Government's offer of additional resources next year if acceptable reforms can be agreed until they have achieved what they consider to be an acceptable settlement of their 1985 pay claim.

In saying that, I wish to emphasise at the same time that the Government and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State do not undervalue teachers. They fully recognise both the importance of the job that they do and the skill and dedication with which the great majority perform their difficult task. They also recognise that career prospects for capable and effective teachers are much diminished. We firmly believe that the Government's offer of additional resources next year, subject to agreement on reforms, can provide the means both to achieve progress towards further improvement in the standard of education provided in schools, and to begin to meet the genuine concerns of teachers about their pay prospects. I urge the unions not to squander another opportunity to achieve real and lasting improvements to their members' position.

My right hon. Friend has made it clear that further agreement in principle must be reached by October if more resources are to be made available next year. That is a genuine deadline, because at that point decisions have to be taken on the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87. Already nearly two months have passed since the Government's offer was made. Time is fast running out. This represents the only way forward to more money for teachers' pay. It is of paramount importance to the health of the education service that the unions face up to economic reality and begin to negotiate constructively and realistically on the basis of the Government's offer. I am sure that my hon. Friends the Members for Lancashire, West, for Cambridge and for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), who is also with us, support that view.

We must acknowledge that time is fast running out. If we are to progress in the light of the Government's offer, the unions must take advantage of the opportunity to make progress in a spirit of moderation and co-operation, which will be presented by the resumption of discussions in the Burnham committee tomorrow. I am sure that the House hopes that that opportunity will not be lost. Both sides know exactly where they stand. The Government's position has been made clear in the letters of 21 May, 2 July and 9 July. It would be the height of folly if either side were to delude itself into thinking that the Government could be persuaded to change their stance.

We are fully cognisant of the fears and anxieties of teachers who genuinely wish to make a full and effective career in teaching at a time of falling rolls and school closures. I listened with interest to, and shall bring to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, what my two hon. Friends have said in this important debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 16 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Monday 22 July at Seven o'clock.

EAST LOTHIAN DISTRICT COUNCIL (MUSSELBURGH LINKS ETC.) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Care in the Community

1. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people he estimates have or will come out of long-stay sub-normality hospitals under the care in the community policy in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): There were 31,500 discharges of people from mental handicap hospitals and units during 1983, the latest year for which figures are available. However, 27,500 of the discharges followed periods in hospital of less than one month. Only 1,800 followed periods of two or more years and, within this figure, 760 patients had been in hospital for over 15 years. Figures for 1984 should be available in September. We cannot yet make estimates for future years.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister confirm that in many authorities the funds are not available to provide the full range of community care that is needed by those who have been in hospital for a long time? Will he speak to the Secretary of State for the Environment and ask for a 100 per cent. disregard for such funds, or will the Government continue to penalise local authorities which are trying to provide the services which these people so desperately need?

Mr. Clarke: Many of the services for discharged patients who have been long-term stayers in hospitals are provided by health authorities, which are substantially increasing their spending in this area. Local social service departments throughout the country have increased their spending on social services as a whole by 17 per cent. over and above inflation over the past five years, and many are making good progress. I do not believe that local authorities which are making a proper choice of priorities are inhibited from joining in the care in the community policy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is widespread concern about the many children who continue to be admitted to long-stay sub-normality hospitals?

Mr. Clarke: I share my hon. Friend's concern. I am glad to say that the number of mentally handicapped children in hospital has dropped by 50 per cent. during the Government's period in office, but we would like to see them all out of hospital. That is why we have allocated so much money for that purpose. I hope that all admissions will stop soon.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the Minister consider the problem that arises from the effect of tapering on joint funding in the discharge of long-term patients? Will he take into account especially the problems that are faced by Prestwich?

Mr. Clarke: The rules on disregarding joint finance for local government spending purposes have been eased slightly, but the joint finance was always intended to taper after the requisite period. We have given new powers so that health authorities can provide funds without any time limit where it is intended to move long-stay patients out of hospitals.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will the Minister make himself fully and urgently aware of the compelling case put to the all-party disablement group about children in mental hospitals when Peggy Jay and her colleagues from Exodus came to address the group earlier this month? Is he aware that there are still 450 children in such hospitals and that four more have been added this year? If some regional health authorities can tackle the problem positively, why not all of them?

Mr. Clarke: I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) when I expressed the wish that all admissions could now cease. The fact that only four have taken place this year shows that we are near the end of the problem. The number of children in those long-stay wards dropped by over a half. We have provided money to enable health authorities to get the remainder out. I share the all-party group's aims, and I hope that we shall soon realise them.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that MIND on Merseyside has reached an agreement with the health authority by which the health authority will pay £14,000 a year for every person taken out of institutions in that area? If he believes that to be good practice, will he commend it to other health authorities?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly, I shall. Almost all health authorities now have some variant of those arrangements. It is important that they should all have plans whereby they can obtain the better services required for those patients by paying the correct sum to other health authorities, if

they are to take over the obligation, to local authorities or to voluntary bodies, including those such as MIND, which have a good record.

Private Mental Health Facilities

2. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the criteria for registering private mental health facilities with the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The criteria for registering a private mental nursing home are for the district health authority in whose area the home is located to determine, having regard to the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984, the Nursing Homes and Mental Nursing Homes Regulations 1984 and the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that existing codes of practice are of a sufficiently high standard, without being too strict, and that they can be enforced without new legislation?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am. If there is a dispute between a proprietor and a local health authority the matter can be determined on appeal to the registered homes tribunal, which the Government set up under the legislation that I have just set out.

"The Reform of Social Security"

3. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further representations he has received regarding the Green Paper "The Reform of Social Security".

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): By today some 450 representations have been received about the Government's proposals for the reform of social security.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that of the many welcome aspects of these proposals one of the most important is the arrangement whereby benefit will be withdrawn on a tapering basis in relation to net rather than gross income? Is he further aware that many employers in my constituency have drawn attention to further examples of how the present system acts as a disincentive to people seeking jobs?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That change will mean that we can tackle the unemployment and poverty traps in a way that has not been possible until now.

Mr. Hugh Brown: Many of my constituents are, unfortunately, in receipt of supplementary benefit. When shall I be able to advise these practical people whether they will be better or worse off after the reviews?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of our proposals in the Green Paper. In the White Paper we shall put forward illustrative figures, but, of course, ultimately he will have to await the uprating in April 1987 to know the exact rates.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is no way in which he or anyone else can solve the unemployment or the poverty traps unless tax is brought into the equation? So long as tax and social security are kept separate, there is no way in which the poverty or unemployment traps will be solved.

Mr. Fowler: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. In the Green Paper he will have seen a number of ways in which the two sytems are moving closer together. He will also be aware that in the autumn my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making his personal taxation proposals.

Nurses (Pay)

4. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on nurses' pay and the representations made to him on the recent proposals of Her Majesty's Government in response to the review body's recommendations.

Mr. Fowler: Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement on nurses' pay on 6 June, we have received a number of letters. Most have concerned the staging of the award and its funding. Agreement has now been reached with the staff side on all the new salary scales, which were notified to health authorities on 1 July.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Secretary of State aware that anyone interested in the Health Service was appalled by the miserable ministerial speeches made in yesterday's debate? Does he recognise that for every percentage point over 3 per cent. paid to nurses and others there will be a diminution in the standard of service to patients, because of the tight cash limits imposed on the local health authorities? Does he further recognise that even with the 5·6 per cent. increase that is to be given to nurses—those dedicated people—between now and February they will have to suffer a reduction in their standard of living?

Mr. Fowler: I do not agree with anything that the hon. Gentleman has said, including his comments on the outstanding speeches made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. Since 1979, nurses' pay has gone up by 23 per cent. above inflation. After the review pay award, their pay will have increased by between 25 and 30 per cent. The Government set up the independent pay review body which the nurses wanted, a desire which the Labour party ignored.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend recognise the unique importance of midwives, even if the pay review does not? Will he ensure that in the final recommendation midwives' pay is related to their contemporaries who remain in nursing or who progress to health visiting?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that the review body will take that into account. We recognise the great importance of midwives in the Health Service.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the pay award was, on average, 8·5 per cent., possibly rising to 14 per cent. for some grades, but that in the year 1985-86 nurses will receive an average of 5·6 per cent.? Will he now look at another problem that he has not solved —that of bottle-necks? Is he aware that in hospitals near here there is such a shortage of neonatal nurses that, although there is sufficient cash, the service is run in a way that is hazardous to the health of patients? Is he further aware that there is a shortage of theatre sisters and sister tutors?

Mr. Fowler: I shall examine any specific issue that the hon. Gentleman wishes to draw to my attention. The

review body recommendations mean that nurses' pay will increase from between 4·1 and 14·3 per cent., and for professions auxiliary to medicine by up to 16·6 per cent. The award has to be staged, but by the beginning of the new financial year all those changes will be in place. This is an outstanding award for the nurses and it would do the hon. Gentleman more credit if he recognised it.

Mr. Marlow: Why, when the Northampton district area health authority, which is one of the most economic and efficient health authorities in the country, can provide for nurses' pay without a cut in services, do the more profligate authorities seem to have a problem? Is it that the Labour party wants a propaganda weapon with which to beat the Government over the head, when, in fact, the health authorities could do the job properly?

Mr. Fowler: Few health authorities are complaining that they are unable to manage. One or two of those that are complaining are the ones which complain about virtually everything. At the beginning of this year we provided £500 million more cash for health authorities in England. The stage award that we have announced for this year can be afforded out of that.

Mr. Kennedy: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the reported response by Mr. Trevor Clay of the Royal College of Nursing to the speech made by the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security yesterday? If so, what is the Secretary of State's response?

Mr. Fowler: I have seen the letter that Mr. Clay wrote to *The Times* this morning, if that is what the hon. Gentleman is talking about. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to talk about nurses' pay, he should check with Mr. Clay whether he and the RCN supported the setting up of an independent pay review body. This Government have achieved that. The Labour Government ignored the problem.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Secretary of State seen the *Nursing Mirror* survey, which reveals that 90 per cent. of all nurses believe that their wards are dangerously understaffed, and shows that trainee nurses are responsible for the manning of wards at night? Is that fair, and how does the Secretary of State justify that? The voice of the profession demands action.

Mr. Fowler: That question is not fair, because the Government have put more money and resources into the Health Service than the Labour Government did. Above all, we have put more money into the Health Service capital building programme. The hon. Gentleman's question reveals that he is unaware that the last Labour Government cut the capital programme.

Single Homeless Persons

5. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the provisions for the single homeless in west central Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Provision for the single homeless is primarily for local authorities to determine. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has, however, a responsibility to provide temporary places for people without a settled way of life. In west central Scotland, the Department currently runs the Bishopbriggs resettlement unit for this purpose. As my hon. Friend is aware, it is our policy progressively to close these units, in parallel with measures to develop more appropriate alternative provision. In the case of Bishopbriggs, our aim is to close it within the next three years, and a review team chaired by the Department and including representatives of the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless and local housing interests is currently, through a process of consultation, assessing the needs of the single homeless in the area and considering proposals for alternative facilities. My hon. Friend has written to me about the matter, as has the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and one member of the public.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that there is considerable concern in west central Scotland about the Department's proposal to close the resettlement unit at Bishopbriggs, which has in the past provided a refuge for single homeless people? Is he prepared to extend the consultation period, and will he give a commitment to retain the unit if the consultations show a pressing need for it?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows that we are determined that this shall be part of a programme of ensuring proper alternative provision. In that spirit, I am happy to say that I would be willing to extend the consultation period to the end of this year. The same will apply to the other seven units which we have in mind for relatively early closure.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister take an early opportunity to visit the Bishopbriggs resettlement unit and talk to the staff about the excellent work that they have been doing? What voluntary services will take on the work of that unit, when others in the west of Scotland say that at present they could not take on its role? Rather than simply extending the consultation period, will he make it clear that the Bishopbriggs resettlement unit will be kept open?

Mr. Newton: The purpose of the consultation period—the consultations involve some distinguished people, including the former chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission and representatives of the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless—is to establish what the possibilities are for alternative provision. I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's request for me to visit the unit. I am due to visit some resettlement units in the next few months, though I cannot make him an absolute promise to visit that one.

Limited List Prescribing

6. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made in setting up the review committee on the selected list of National Health Services drugs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We announced details of the advisory committee on NHS drugs on 12 July. The committee's first meeting is to be held on 23 July.

Mr. Latham: As the doctors do not want a personal appeal system, may we now be assured that the new review committee will get on quickly with the job of reviewing the list, because there seem to be about a dozen drugs which doctors and patients believe should be restored to the list as soon as possible?

Mr. Clarke: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall ask the committee to get on with its task as quickly as possible. I cannot guarantee that it will admit to the list all the drugs to which my hon. Friend referred. There are genuine divisions of clinical opinion, and all of those that have been excluded so far have been excluded on the unanimous opinion of a group of experts who said that there was no scientific or medical need for them.

Mr. Park: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman still prepared to consider specific cases where a medication is seen by the medical profession to be the only one?

Mr. Clarke: There are no drugs seen by the medical profession to be the only available drugs and which have been excluded from the NHS. We still get some individual complaints, but, as I say, the best advice that we could gather was that there was no medical or scientific need for the drugs that are now excluded. However, the new committee will look at individual products, at the request of doctors and manufacturers, and consider whether anything should be restored to the NHS list.

Dame Jill Knight: Why does my right hon. and learned Friend think that the BMA refused the appeal machinery offered by the Government? Could it have been because of the minuscule number of complaints about drugs that had been received?

Mr. Clarke: It would not be wise for me to try to speak on behalf of the BMA on all these matters. There was a division of opinion before it was decided to decline the offer that we made. I agree with my hon. Friend that the number of difficulties turned out to be remarkably small and that many doctors no longer perceived a need for the individual appeal mechanism about which we were once talking.

Mr. Howard: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the drug Mucodyne is drawn to the attention of the review body at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Clarke: It will be considered by the committee at its first meeting.

Drug Misuse

7. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is yet in a position to formulate a national policy for the prevention of drug misuse.

Mr. Fowler: Prevention is one of the key elements in the Government's overall strategy for dealing with this problem. We set out our policies in the document "Tackling Drug Misuse", which was published last March.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments and congratulate him on his efforts in this difficult matter. Will he consider directing more attention towards educating parents and teachers about the problems of drug misuse, so that those problems can be detected at an early stage?

Mr. Fowler: Both aspects are important. We have instituted an advertising campaign, and the Department of Education and Science is also taking action. One of the aims of both campaigns is to give more information to parents and teachers.

Mr. Kirkwood: Has the Secretary of State had time yet to study the report on this important and vexed question by the Select Committee on Social Services, which was published on 20 June? Will the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that, in view of the public disquiet about the escalating problems of drug abuse, he will expedite the Government's response to the report and proceed to implement some of its conclusions?

Mr. Fowler: We shall give urgent attention to that report. I share the concern of the hon. Gentleman and the Select Committee about the problem.

Mr. Harris: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his task and that of his ministerial colleague in the Home Office with responsibility for warning people about the misuse of drugs is made more difficult by certain books, especially one by Harold Robbins called "Descent from Xanadu" which glamorises drug taking among tycoons? I do not ask my right hon. Friend to read this trash; I simply draw his attention to it.

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that the whole House deplores any publication that seeks to glamorise drug taking.

Mr. Dobson: Has the Secretary of State read his Department's report entitled, "Drug Misuse: Prevalence and Service Provision"? If so, does he agree that he is bound to conclude that there is much more "prevalence" than "service provision" and that fewer than a quarter of the district health authorities have received any help from his Government to set up rehabilitation clinics?

Mr. Fowler: We are rapidly expanding the rehabilitation units. Spending has increased to £11·5 million—almost double. The hon. Gentleman may want to claim that more needs to be done. I agree, but I hope he will recognise the initiatives which the Government have taken to deal with this serious problem.

Mental Health Act 1983

8. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on progress in implementing the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Implementation of the Mental Health Act is continuing satisfactorily.

Mr. Proctor: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that people involved in mental health matters are concerned that the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work is adopting a negative attitude towards the training of approved social workers under the Act? Is he confident that there will be sufficient approved social workers to fulfill the functions of the Act later in the year?

Mr. Clarke: With respect, I think that my hon. Friend's criticisms should be directed not at CCETSW but at WALCO, which is still continuing the ridiculous boycott of the courses that had been arranged for approved mental health workers. I hope that the union will soon end its unhelpful attitude. It is rejecting a policy that had all-party support and preventing the building up of a cadre of professionally trained people.

Mr. Eastham: Does the Mental Health Act 1983 contain provisions covering people serving in prisons? At Strangeways prison 12 prisoners are designated as mentally ill. When I visited the prison last Friday, I heard of one prisoner who was partially sighted and mentally inadequate and on remand on a charge involving about £6. It is costing about £250 a week to keep him in prison.

Mr. Clarke: We are desperately anxious to end this problem of people in prison who are mentally ill and require treatment. I am glad that their numbers are decreasing. This is however, a long-standing problem. New powers have been brought into effect whereby prisoners can be remanded to mental hospitals for reports. That, I hope, has helped to alleviate some of the problems. I am sorry that it has not been used in the case to which the hon Gentleman referred.

Children in Care

9. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to seek to reduce the need to receive children into care.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): We support the growing emphasis on preventive measures and policies in child care. Indeed, the number of children in local authority care has been decreasing. It is for local authorities to provide services for children in need, whether to keep them with their families or, in the interests of the children, to provide alternative arrangements for their care.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that every year 500 children are received into care by local authority social service departments because of homelessness? Will he accept that the policy of selling council houses and cutting back on the construction of new council houses makes this problem far worse, and is likely to increase the number of children taken into care due to homelessness? Does he not think that he ought to give the House a statement on what he intends to do to improve the housing stock of the worst-off people in the country, so that children are not brought into care?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is well beyond the Minister's responsibilities.

Mr. Patten: As you say, Mr. Speaker, it is well beyond my responsibilities. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's views about homelessness, because in Islington there is a considerable amount of homelessness. I also recognise that in Islington there are a considerable number of children in care. However, the numbers of children in care have been decreasing nationally. Most children go into care for a range of reasons. Homelessness might be one of the reasons that cause children to go into care.

Mr. Hayes: Despite welcome modifications in the law brought in by my hon. Friend, does he accept that there is still a long way to go to achieve a balance between, on the one hand, of protecting the child who needs protection, and on the other of looking after the interests and rights of the parents?

Mr. Patten: It is a difficult balance to strike, and social workers have a difficult job in trying to strike that balance. I pay tribute to the work they do. In any case where a child is placed into care, it is the welfare of the child that has to be paramount, and the future of the child that has to be considered above all else.

Ms. Harman: Does the Minister recognise that children in care are largely the children of the poor, and that high levels of unemployment, his Government's policies of undermining wages councils and planned cuts in benefits—which mean that more families will not be able to make ends meet—will result in more children being split apart from their families and having to be fostered, adopted or put into children's homes? Is this not the very opposite of being the party of the family, in that the Government are providing for the splitting apart of families?

Mr. Patten: Once again some of the hon. Lady's questions go beyond my departmental responsibilities. The numbers of children in care are reducing. Those who look after children in care have a responsible and difficult job. That is why I hope that the hon. Lady, who has been uncharacteristically silent for some time about problems affecting children's homes in her constituency in the London borough of Southwark, will back me at the meeting of the London borough of Southwark's full council tomorrow in a call for a full investigation of all homes over which doubts have been cast.

Homeless Families

10. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last visited a bed-and-breakfast establishment used for homeless families.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): In recent months I have visited a number of board and lodging establishments catering for single people and for families.

Mr. Brown: Will the Minister come and visit the people who are living in tents opposite the metro station by the Newcastle Haymarket, and will he explain to them the Government's response to the report of the British Association of Social Workers "Housing in social work", which sets out the fact that it costs the Government twice as much to provide bed-and-breakfast accommodation as it would cost the state to provide decent council housing?

Mr. Whitney: I shall happily look at any particular problems in Newcastle that the hon. Gentleman wishes to bring to my attention, but I hope he will understand that the measures we have taken are a sensible use of the social security budget.

Mr. Fallon: Is my hon. Friend aware that on Tyneside alone there are 5,500 empty council houses, a quarter of which have been empty for more than a year? Will he consider telling these hypocritical Labour councils to allow homeless couples homesteading rights on any council houses that are empty?

Mr. Whitney: I take note of the important point that my hon. Friend makes, but, of course, he is taking me into realms beyond my responsibilities.

Mr. Conlan: When will the Minister stop the rip-off imposed on public funds by the owners of these so-called bed-and-breakfast establishments?

Mr. Whitney: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for the measures introduced by my right hon. Friend some months ago.

Mr. Holt: While my hon. Friend is looking at Newcastle, will he also look at the fact that that city has banned the use of Noddy and Babar the Elephant books because of the racist overtones?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether that has anything to do with bed and breakfast.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I, too, was confused. It may have something to do with bed, but nothing to do with breakfast.

Mr. Meacher: On a more relevant point, is the Minister aware that in a study undertaken by the citizens advice bureaux into board and lodging restrictions affecting young unemployed persons in Stoke it was found that in two thirds of cases return to the parental household was impossible because of divorce, sexual abuse or parental refusal, and that in another one fifth of cases the DHSS was apparently quite unaware of grounds for exemption? Does that not show how utterly unjust these regulations are? When will the Government accept that the real answer to this problem is not to force young people into wandering round the country like nomads, but to restart the housebuilding programme and to provide adequate rented accommodation in the public sector?

Mr. Whitney: As the hon. Gentleman knows, our original proposals established very important exemption categories, and local DHSS officers are under clear instructions to make those exemption categories widely known. The studies that we have had so far, and the feedback from local social security offices, suggests that the regulations now in place are effective and helpful.

Ambulance Services, Merseyside

11. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning cuts in ambulance services on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received no such representations. The Mersey regional health authority has consulted widely on proposals to reorganise the emergency service provided by the metropolitan ambulance service. The proposals were drawn up following a study on accident and emergency cover in the Mersey metropolitan area.

We cannot comment at this stage on the likely outcome of local consultation, which will not be completed until 31 July. Hon. Members whose constituencies lie in the metropolitan area were sent copies of the consultation document.

Mr. Parry: The Minister will be aware of early-day motion No. 771, which has been supported by 38 hon. Members. I have received representation from the public, patients and NUPE, who are objecting to the reduction of five ambulances in a fleet of 30. Will the Minister have words with the regional health authority, given the possibility of a catastrophe in Liverpool, when lives and limbs could be at stake? Will he make sure that essential services in the city are maintained?

Mr. Patten: I am, of course, aware of the early-day motion, and I shall pass the hon. Gentleman's comments on to the chairman of the regional health authority, Mr. Don Wilson. However, I understand that the proposals involve no loss of service and no loss of jobs. I also understand that the ambulance service in Merseyside is an expanding service, with an 8 per cent. growth in jobs over the past eight years and a further 10 per cent. growth in the next decade.

Unemployed Persons

13. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he estimates that the relative financial position of the unemployed will improve in the two years after the implementation of the social security review.

Mr. Newton: A firm estimate of the effects cannot be made until benefit rates are set within any new structure of social security benefits which may be settled following the current consultation on the Green Paper proposals.

Mr. Cohen: Is not the Minister's answer a cover-up of the truth? Will not the financial position of the unemployed drastically deteriorate after the implementation of the review, as a result of which the unemployed will be impoverished? Is not the Government's message to the unemployed and those who become unemployed that they will be made financially and socially insecure?

Mr. Newton: All that the hon. Gentleman has done is to convey the impression that he has not even read the Green Paper. One of the major causes of concern has been the position of families with children, whether unemployed or in low-paid work. It is clear from the Green Paper that that is a group to which the Government wish to give greater emphasis.

Mr. McCrindle: In any consideration of the effect on the unemployed of the proposals in the social security reviews, is it not wise to take into account the fact that encouraging people who may be discouraged at the moment from taking a job is a positive step in the interests of those who are unemployed?

Mr. Newton: That is correct, and the effect on both the poverty and unemployment traps, especially the latter, is one of the major advantages of our structural proposals, as is the improved earnings rule for those who have been out of work for a long time.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Minister aware that those who lose service through unemployment will be most disadvantaged by the abolition of SERPS? Does he recall that when the Secretary of State announced that abolition he told the House that it was the result of unexpected and unforeseen developments and that those developments had come to light during the reviews? In the light of the statement in the last few days that these matters were not discussed, and in the light of the Government Actuary's statement that costs were not unforeseen and that what has changed is the Government's willingness to meet the costs, will the Minister now tell us whether his right hon. Friend intends to apologise to the House? *[Interruption.]* Further, will he tell us the real reason for the abolition?

Mr. Newton: I am in some difficulty about replying to the hon. Lady, because I heard only about half the question. I can say, however, that it is quite clear from the additional analysis, including work relating to the 1981 census carried out for the review, that the prospective cost of SERPS is significantly greater than was fully appreciated by those who made the decisions at the time.

Mr. Favell: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that many people take low-paid employment out of a sense of pride? They find it enormously difficult to make ends meet.

Mr. Newton: Yes. Not the least of the failures of our social security system is that we have put many people in

low-paid work in the intolerable position of knowing they would be better off out of work. We intend to put a stop to that.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that all the cuts, as opposed to the restructuring in the Green Paper, the abolition of SERPS, the requirement on the poorest families to pay at least 20 per cent. of their rates, the removal of mortgage interest payment relief from those on the dole for the first six months, were not recommended by the review committees and imposed only on the personal decision of the Secretary of State? What other decisions, what other cuts, did he impose which were not recommended by his own review committees? Will he now publish all the review committee reports so that we can judge how much he has deviated from his own advisory review committees to impose cuts?

Mr. Newton: It was made absolutely clear throughout that the Government would be taking decisions and putting forward proposals as Government decisions after taking account of the work of the various teams which were set up. What I would like to know from the hon. Gentleman is when we shall know whether his proposals about mortgage interest are the policies of the Leader of the Oppostion and the Labour Party.

Limited List Prescribing

14. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet received the reply of the British Medical Association to his proposals for an appeals procedure on the limited list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, Sir. The general medical services committee of the British Medical Association has now formally declined our proposals for a local appeal mechanism for the selected list of drugs.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Would support from general practitioners wishing to implement such an appeal system be sufficient for the Minister to implement it for them unilaterally?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It would be very difficult to implement a scheme without the co-operation of the people who originally asked for it. We have gone through the process of having this mechanism asked for by the BMA. We then negotiated with BMA representatives to their satisfaction. Eventually, our proposal was rejected by the conference of local medical committees. As I said earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), what has happened is that, in practice, the need for such a mechanism has turned out to be insufficient.

Dr. Mawhinney: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that is an unacceptable decision by the medical profession? Bearing in mind that he regarded such an appeal mechanism as important for patients when he established the system, will he pursue the proposal, preferably with the help of the medical profession? If that is not possible, will he seek some other way to set up such a mechanism?

Mr. Clarke: The decision was taken on the advice of the conference of local medical committees, a body fairly representative of general practitioners. The history of the matter is that the mechanism was called for before we introduced the selected list system, when there were exaggerated fears about the likely effect on patients. In practice, the need for such a mechanism has diminished and we are getting along well without it, but if the BMA or the medical profession changes its mind we shall, of course, consider the matter again.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not go straight to the general practitioners themselves? He does not need to have the support of every GP, but if a sufficient number will follow the scheme they will be able to carry out their main purpose of pursuing the best interests of their patients. Why does he not go straight to the GPs and let them work the scheme?

Mr. Clarke: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, who has been a general practitioner, I do not think that a sufficient number of GPs are challenging the decision of their own local medical committees. The present system is working reasonably well, and now that we have set up a new review committee to keep the list up to date it is unlikely that there will be any major difficulties in practice.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Holt** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, apart from the lunatic fringe on the Opposition Benches, the vast majority of people in this country and in the world will be heartened by her strong and robust words yesterday on the subject of terrorism? Will she re-emphasise those words today and at every opportunity, especially to the justices of this country and to others responsible for sentencing policy, so that not only terrorists but all who are involved in vicious crime are brought to book and receive long sentences?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that most people share the views that I put across on the need for maximum co-operation between countries on terrorism and the need for very severe sentences of imprisonment for those convicted of crimes of violence.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: What does the Prime Minister intend to do to prevent a repetition of the disastrous effect of the exchange rate on British industry in 1981?

The Prime Minister: I have no reason to think that the present exchange rate is adverse to British industry. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, when the pound is higher against the dollar we can get raw materials and semi-fabricated components at a lower price. When the pound is lower against the dollar exports become more competitive, but it is not advisable to rely on the exchange rate for competitiveness.

Mr. Cowans: Will the Prime Minister take time out to visit Trinity House and take the Secretary of State for Transport with her—even if he has to be taken on a lead—and discuss the efforts being made by Trinity

House to have lighthouse tender ships built in this country? Is she aware that she is being asked merely to match the offer and to repay the efforts of the shipbuilders on Tyneside who built the Endeavour for the Falklands campaign as well as the Ark Royal, but who for their pains now see ships for Britain being built in Korea? Will she show some compassion? Will she show the kind of woman she is and repay the people who work for us? They are British.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the gap between the price quoted in Korea and that quoted by British Shipbuilders was too great to be bridged by subsidies under the intervention system. The hon. Gentleman knows that we subsidise the business, but if we are to get business we must be able to match competitiveness and efficiency.

Q2. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a substantial reduction in interest rates would be much to the advantage of British industry and therefore outweigh any disadvantage to the value of the pound? Will she therefore have a word with the Bank of England and get the British banking system to act in the interests of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: Many interests have to be considered in the determination of interest rates. My hon. Friend is aware that, when the value of the pound went down seriously, that was extremely damaging to the reputation of Britain, to British industry and bad for inflation. My hon. Friend is aware that we shall keep interest rates at whatever level is needed to maintain downward pressure on inflation, but no higher than that.

Mr. Kinnock: May I join the Prime Minister in her praise for the performers and contributors to Live Aid? As she said, it was humanity in action. By the same token, is it not inhumanity in action when a Government cut 18 per cent. off an aid budget in real terms in five years, when that same Government reduce the aid budget by 3 per cent. in real terms—£40 million just in this year—and when that Government, despite the emergency in Sudan and Ethiopia during the past two years, have not added one penny to the aid budget, except for the Hercules services, which they are now thinking of withdrawing? With a record such as that, what price the brotherhood of man?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is comparing the taxpayers' aid with voluntary aid. There has always been a place for voluntary aid. Voluntary services have done a great deal. For example, Christian Aid, Oxfam, War on Want and Save the Children have always been extremely active in this area and the new Live Aid was an extremely welcome addition. As for what we have done for Ethiopia and Sudan, in 1984 we provided £266 million, of which £248 million went to sub-Saharan countries, including £234 million for long-term development. In the year to March 1985 we spent £95 million on famine relief operations in Africa. This year we expect to spend at least £60 million. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is now in Ethiopia and considering the needs for future months, especially the need to keep going with the Hercules.

Mr. Kinnock: I am more than prepared to compare Government aid — taxpayers' aid — with the charitable contributions made freely by people in Britain. When I do, I see that in the past year, a year in which the Government took £40 million off aid, the people were prepared to subscribe £67 million in aid—[HON. MEMBERS: "What is wrong with that?"] Well, why do we not have it all together, public and private? I also see that the Government have cut an amount equivalent to 10 times that which has been subscibed in the wake of the Live Aid concert. In any case, is the Prime Minister not ashamed of the fact — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] — that the only way in which she is prepared to provide short-term aid to the starving is by robbing the hungry of the world as she shuffles round the aid budget? Will she do three things? First, will she reverse this disastrous and cruel cut in aid policy? Secondly, will she make a contribution — *[Interruption.]* I can understand the irritation, embarrassment and shame of Conservative Members. Secondly, will she make a contribution to the international food and agricultural development fund, which helps poor farmers in Africa? Thirdly, will she give us a guarantee now that the essential Hercules service will continue—and not be withdrawn — for as long at the need for it exists in Ethiopia?

The Prime Minister: First, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, the majority of general aid is spent on capital long-term projects of the sort that he proposes should take place, that is on the development of food resources in Africa. Secondly, I am extremely proud of the Government's record on aid to Ethiopia and the Sudan. We were the first to respond, and that is what the right hon. Gentleman cannot stand. As he knows, within the aid budget there is always a certain amount both for disaster and famine relief and for contingencies. The right hon. Gentleman is well aware that the Government were the first to respond to the need in Ethiopia, and quick to respond in Sudan. We were the first to respond to the need for transport to take food to its destination. Yesterday, in response to a serious shortage of transport, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced further assistance of £2 million to help with the purchase of transport.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend seek time this afternoon to drop a congratulatory note to Bob Geldhardt —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Interruptions take up the time of the House.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend seek time this afternoon to drop a congratulatory note to Bob Geldof— *[Interruption.]*—and will she thank him for raising £50 million to be sent to Ethiopia? Will she remind him that young people, far from being hooligans on the football terraces, are as compassionate and caring as any people in the world?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, I sent a letter to Mr. Geldof before the concert congratulating him on the idea. We are all delighted that it had such a magnificent result.

We congratulate him not only on the result, but on the leadership that he gave to young people and to humanity everywhere.

Q3. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Prime Minister condemn the monstrous murder in Ilford of Mrs. Kassam, who was eight months pregnant, and her three children in what was almost certainly a racial attack? Does that not highlight the need for tougher laws against racial attacks and harassment, such as I shall introduce tomorrow? Will the Prime Minister give a pledge to introduce such legislation at the earliest opportunity and to end her Government's failure to act in the face of an increase in racial attacks?

The Prime Minister: I am not yet convinced that we need any changes in the law. It would be premature to embark on legislation before the Home Office has received the Commission for Racial Equality's proposals for amending the Race Relations Act 1976 following its review of that legislation. One wholly and utterly condemns that terrible attack, which had such terrible consequences for the Kassam family.

Q4. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. McCurley: In the light of the optimistic economic forecast made today by the chairman of the British Steel Corporation, will my right hon. Friend comment on the future of Ravenscraig and on the fact that those on the Left who are the most vociferous in howling for its retention were the ones who were prepared to make it the sacrificial baa lamb during the miners' strike?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. The results announced by the British Steel Corporation are the best for 10 years, although the steel industry lost £180 million because of the miners' strike. But for the effect of the strike on steel, it would have been in profit to the extent of about £40 million. It is an extremely good result. I agree with my hon. Friend about Ravenscraig. The people who work there struggled nobly and successfully to keep it going. Those who are now pleading for more for Ravenscraig are the very people who were anxious to close it during last year's coal strike.

Mr. Dormand: Will the Prime Minister give some thought today and, indeed, every day, to the plight of the long-term unemployed? Will she examine some of the studies that have been made of people who have been without work for a long time, to see the devastating effects of long-term unemployment? Does she sometimes have qualms of conscience about the catastrophic effect of long-term unemployment on families? Is it not the biggest single indictment of her economic policies?

The Prime Minister: It is because we are so very much aware of the catastrophic effect of long-term unemployment on the morale of people and their families that, in the Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced nearly a doubling of the community programme and a substantial increase in jobs so that the long-term unemployed can have a chance of a worthwhile job after their periods of unemployment. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has seen a document from Europe, published today, which shows that the numbers in employment in Europe are increasing, and that the increase in jobs in Britain during the past year is greater than that in all the other European countries put together.

Mr. Golding: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of questions. Can you ask the Government Whips whether, when they are planting out, they could choose more fertile ground and occasionally water the plants?

Mr. Speaker: I have no responsibility for the Whips.

"Lifting the Burden"

3.31 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): I wish to make a statement on the White Paper "Lifting the Burden".

One of the major objectives of this Government is to make sure that the right conditions exist for enterprise to flourish. This is essential for the creation of jobs and wealth. The country needs more jobs and we need more wealth to pay for all the socially desirable things we expect to be provided—such as pensions, the Health Service and education.

For far too long, successive Governments — albeit with good intentions — have tended to stifle much-needed enterprise with restriction and regulation. Today, we are publishing a White Paper called "Lifting the Burden", which sets out to put that situation right.

As the House will recall, in March of this year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry published a report entitled "Burdens on Business". This showed that Government requirements constitute a major drain on business—particularly small business—in terms of direct cost and of management time.

"Lifting the Burden" is the result of the Government's consideration of the recommendations in that report and of looking more widely at the scope for change. It also reflects the widespread representations on the report which the Government have received.

The White Paper is the first major step in a continuing programme of removing unnecessary regulations. It refers to about 80 measures covering a wide range of initiatives in a number of areas, including planning, tax and social security, employment protection, and trade and industry — some of which have already been undertaken and some of which are for the future. Each is designed to allow firms to divert scarce resources away from complying with bureaucratic requirements and towards developing and expanding their business.

This is but the beginning of the process, for one of the most important elements in the White Paper is the setting up of a new system within Government to assess proposed and existing regulations from the point of view of the burden the may impose on business. The primary responsibility for this must be within the appropriate Department, but a Central Task Force is being set up, within the Enterprise Unit in the Cabinet Office, to assist Departments in their consideration of how the burden on business of regulations can be minimised.

I should emphasise to the House that we are not seeking to remove all regulations. Essential protection for workers, consumers and the general public must be maintained. And we must protect our quality of life. The Government have sought to strike the right balance between liberty and licence. The White Paper adopts a balanced approach. It represents a major step forward in giving businesses the freedom to flourish and grow. I commend it to the attention of the House.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): It is obviously not possible to give a detailed response at this stage, but we hope that there will be a full debate on the White Paper in due course. In general terms, we would, of course, support the abolition of unnecessary bureaucracy in the interests of small businesses, but the test that will be applied to the White Paper is whether it deals with the real problems of the economy and unemployment or whether it is just another Government gimmick designed to distract attention, and in particular whether we are talking about cutting unnecessary bureaucracy or about subordinating vital protections for the consumers and employees in the interests of ideological obsession with deregulation.

Turning to the substance of the White Paper, why do the Government identify the one major problem of regulation and then proceed to deal only with the minor ones? Is it not the case that the only area of regulation mentioned by more than one in five of the Department's own survey was value added tax? Is not that the main problem faced by small businesses? Is it not correct that the White Paper proposes no new action of any substance on that? Why, in particular, did the Government block Opposition amendments to the Finance Bill that would have eased the bad debt relief on small firms?

Secondly, will the Minister undertake that there will be no less environmental protection from the changes in planning procedure? Will he tell us why they are given such prominence when only a minute percentage of his survey said that they were a major factor?

Thirdly, any loss of standards — and I think there may be — in fire regulations or health and safety regulations would be a wholly unacceptable and wrong price to pay. How on earth can it be right for the Government to impose different rights and duties in regard to safety for the public and employees based on the size of the firm? Is the Minister saying that the risk of mishap is less with small businesses? If so, may I tell him that all the evidence indicates the contrary, and that small businesses give rise to the most safety risks?

We shall oppose vigorously the suggestions about unfair dismissal law and wages councils. What philosophy is it that says that fair play and fair rights of employment are a constraint on proper business activity?

Many of the proposals seem to have been derived not from business experience but from political doctrine. Why is it that the scrutiny which gave rise to the White Paper received views from the organisations representing employers but not from a single organisation representing employees? Why were the Institute of Directors and the Adam Smith Institute so closely involved with the proposal? Is it not the case, as the survey itself found, that "most small businesses see problems with finance and sales as more serious than problems with compliance costs"? The same survey said:

"The main reasons for business being good are individual effort and good demand."

If those are the main problems, why have not the Government dealt with them? Why create an agency to cut red tape but not agencies for industrial development? Why do we end planning protections but cut back on local authority initiatives which would create more jobs? Why do we cut back on unfair dismissal but not give proper training in the face of skill shortage? Why do we worry about the cost of meeting health and safety regulations but decline to lower interest rates?

At first blush, the White Paper is a shabby and irrelevant document from a Government whose ideology is unable to solve the real problems of our economy. Will a single job be created by the scheme? If not, of what use is it?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, has

clearly not benefited from the opportunity to read the White Paper. I accept and understand that we have had rhetoric and dogma in the extreme as opposed to the Government's attempt to respond to the "Burdens on Business" study, which sought to ask business what would be helpful in improving opportunities for employment——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Shocking!

Mr. Moore: It is fascinating that as soon as there is an attempt——

Mr. Faulds: Tatty!

Mr. Moore: The patience of the Government is as long, if not longer, than the time taken by sedentary interruptions from the Opposition Back Benches. As soon as there is a serious attempt by the Government, as there is in this instance, to address many of the problems that business identifies in an endeavour to create jobs, we have ribald cat-calling from the Opposition that does so much harm to the House, and certainly to the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield talked of rhetoric. I know that hon. Members generally have not had an opportunity to study the White Paper. I respond to the hon. Gentleman's first point by saying that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was present throughout his comments, and I am sure that he will have noted the hon. Gentleman's request for a full debate. Paragraph 1.1 of the White Paper states:

"This paper is about one important aspect of helping enterprise to grow—by reducing burdens imposed on business by administrative and legislative regulations."

The White Paper is related specifically to that.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield spoke about VAT. The Government, through the Budget and in considering the Finance Bill in Committee, have relieved a substantial burden of bad debt by introducing £25 million worth of relief. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who I imagine speaks with some knowledge of industry and business, is not aware of the degree to which planning procedures have inhibited the growth and development of jobs. The matters to which the White Paper addresses itself in pages 10 to 16 are critical.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield asked about health and safety. Those of my hon. Friends who have not had the opportunity to read the White Paper in detail will be reassured — the hon. Gentleman made an assertion which, if true, would be difficult to argue with — by paragraph 5.6 on page 22 of the White Paper. The last sentence states:

"The Government are committed to maintaining necessary protection and have no intention of down-grading health & safety standards either generally or in relation to small firms."

The hon. Gentleman's next question was directed specifically to jobs. I refer to paragraph 1.16 on page 4 of the White Paper. Research Associates examined 200 businesses as part of the "Burdens on Business" report. It was clear that there was a cumulative job loss of 200 within that net of 200 firms. That might be an indication of the burden that has been carried by the 1·6 million businesses in Britain and the job losses within them. It is clear from business surveys that jobs are lost in consequence of regulations. It is clear also that the removal of the regulations is a major first step in the Government's attempt to help in this area.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): If it is necessary for the Government to take 80 separate measures to help small businesses, it is a wonder that they have been able to survive at all. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on bringing, belatedly, these measures into existence. Is there anything in them that will raise the level at which VAT is to be paid and the level at which corporation tax is to be paid by small businesses? Is anything to be done about the wages councils?

Mr. Moore: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. The White Paper relates to business as a whole, not just to small businesses, which are especially burdened by regulations and legislation.

I should have responded to one of the points made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield by drawing attention to the reference to the VAT threshold on page 17 in paragraph 4.2. It states:

"This threshold below which firms are exempted from having to charge VAT is the maximum permitted under EC law. The Government believe that Member States should have more flexibility to raise their VAT threshold if they wish. This goal is being pursued through the initiative launched by the Prime Minister at the European Council meeting in March this year."

That is a clear commitment to action which has already been initiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. There are no references in the White Paper to corporation tax threshold.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Minister aware that the main burden which needs lifting from British industry is the burden of the present Government and their restrictive policies? Is he aware that it is a complete illusion to think that the current mass unemployment has anything to do with the trivia mentioned in the White Paper, including the attack on the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974? If he believes all this stuff, will he give the House an estimate of how many more jobs will be created as a result of the proposals in the White Paper?

Mr. Moore: I have already tried to illustrate, by referring to page 4 of the White Paper, the problems that business encounters in relation to the inhibition of employment through regulations and legislation. I tried to show how it could be quantified. Hon. Members might like to interest themselves in the White Paper. I appreciate that they have not had time to read it, and I accept that difficulty. However, I hope that when the hon. Gentleman, who is a fair man, reads it he will recognise that, while at other times we may be discussing the Government's fundamental economic policy, here we are discussing an equally important set of policies which relate to the removal of the kind of supply side rigidities that have so inhibited the development of jobs and employment.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my hon. Friend accept that all men and women, regardless of party, who believe in freedom and enterprise will welcome the statement as pure music? They will see it as a bold, imaginative and, above all, co-ordinated attempt by the Government to remove bureaucratic burdens from employment. However, will he assure the House that he will introduce measures to ensure that protection is given to the green belt and to ensure the abolition of wages councils?

Mr. Moore: I am not sure that I fit the bill for introducing music, but I am pleased that my hon. Friend noticed the degree of co-ordination represented by the

[Mr. Moore]

White Paper. My noble Friend in another place has been responsible for introducing the degree of co-ordination that the Government need. The debate is about the difference between licence and liberty. As my hon. Friend is plainly seriously interested in the issue, I draw his attention to page 10 of the White Paper which is entitled "Planning and Enterprise".

My hon. Friend asked about the green belt. The planning aspects are clearly identified in paragraphs 3·2 and 3·3. They make it clear that

"The Government's policy is to simplify the system and improve its efficiency . . . An efficient and simple system can speed the planning process and facilitate much needed development which helps create jobs — in construction, in commerce and industry, and in small firms."

The White Paper then makes this important point:

"The Government is equally concerned to protect"——

[Interruption.] This may not be important to Opposition Members, but I know that it is important to people outside the House—

"and enhance the environment in town and country, to preserve our heritage of historic buildings and rural landscape, to conserve good agricultural land and maintain the green belts."

I am sure that that statement is welcome.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Does the Minister realise that the greatest service the Government could render industry would be to ensure that the terms of trade between this country and other countries are fair and equal? Why does he not propose to do something about discriminatory tariffs and the differences in fuel and energy costs? Why does he continue to levy on motor vehicles a tax which is not applied to any other commodity in this country? Those are some of the measures that would lift the burdens from industry.

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is making legitimate points about questions that are probably better addressed at other times. He will be particularly interested in page 29 of the White Paper, which illustrates the actions that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others are leading within the European Community to try to ensure that the regulatory burden that emanates from Europe, as well as that from within the country, is reduced.

Sir Reginald Eyre (Birmingham, Hall Green): Is my hon. Friend aware that, despite the surprisingly ill-informed reaction of Labour Members, the White Paper's approach is very much to be welcomed, particularly the proposals relating to the simplified planning zones? These could be helpful in contributing to the solution of the problems of the inner city areas, and would help to attract developments into those areas, where unemployment is worse. When will legislation be introduced on this? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that in the meantime he will encourage local authorities to prepare their plans and to make applications for this beneficial form of zoning?

Mr. Moore: I appreciate my hon. Friend's remarks. I know his long experience in this sector and I enormously respect the expertise that he brings to bear. I no longer express surprise at Labour Members' reactions. I know that my hon. Friend will be particularly pleased to study with care page 11 of the White Paper which, in paragraph 3.6 (i), goes into considerable details about the important — *[Interruption.]* Labour Members may be unaware, until they go back to their constituencies, of the importance of simplified planning zones. They will find that it arouses considerable interest in their local authorities.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre), with his considerable experience, will particularly appreciate what is said in the section on simplified planning zones in the White Paper. The White Paper says:

"It is proposed to introduce new legislation".

I hope that that will be very soon.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): As the Minister will know, the alliance has supported the Government's attempts to try to lift the burdens on small businesses where those are sensible and responsible. Therefore, we welcome the general direction of the White Paper, even though it appears at first sight to be somewhat long on rhetoric and short on specific measures.

I have three questions. First, would not a full day's debate on this matter be useful? Secondly, would it not be highly inappropriate to shift the burdens from the small business men if they were to be shifted to small business employees, resulting in extra exploitation and reduced conditions of work? Thirdly, will the members of the Central Task Force include representatives of both small businesses and small business employees?

Mr. Moore: I unreservedly thank the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the basic thrust of the White Paper. I find his welcome a little jaundiced by his suggestion that it is long on rhetoric. We have not had to conspire with the hon. Gentleman's party in this and he will find on closer examination that there are many specific details.

I cannot comment further than I have already about the possibility of a debate. That is up to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who is still here and has heard the hon. Gentleman's comments. Because of the excellent material within the White Paper, I can see no reason why the Government would not welcome such a debate.

The hon. Gentleman is right. This is an attempt to shift the burden of regulation and legislation from where it is unnecessary, and from employer and employee alike. We do not intend to shift the burden from one to the other. It is envisaged that the small Central Task Force will have representatives from the outside world, and I am sure that my noble Friend Lord Young will concern himself with ensuring that small business men are included in the brief. I shall make sure that I put the hon. Gentleman's points to my noble Friend.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the United States the creation of jobs in deregulated industries has been twice as fast as that in other industries? Therefore, the major advance that has been announced today in freeing owner-managed businesses from destructive bureaucracy is very much to be welcomed. Can we expect to receive yearly White Papers to describe progress on the deregulation programme so that the House of Commons may measure how fast we are moving?

Mr. Moore: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome of the White Paper. I should like to see action flowing from the recommendations rather than a whole series of White Papers. My hon. Friend is right in the major thrust of what he said in relation to the United States. We mention the matter on page 3 of the White Paper. He is right to mention aspects of the way in which deregulation

in the United States has not only enhanced job creation but reduced massively costs to business and industry and to the taxpayer. It has been successful all round.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): As the name of the Secretary of State for Scotland does not appear on the White Paper, will the Financial Secretary tell the House whether the White Paper relates to Scotland as well? If it does, what is the position in relation to simplified planning zones? Does not the Minister regard it as very dangerous that a private developer will have the right, under the proposals in the White Paper, more or less to ask the Secretary of State to instruct a local authority to proceed with a planning application under the simplified planning zone procedure? Is not that highly dangerous, coming from a House of Commons where so many private developers are represented through the voices of Conservative Members?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw our attention to the different planning position in Scotland. It is referred to in the White Paper. Obviously the hon. Gentleman has not had time to read it, which I appreciate——

Mr. Ewing: I have.

Mr. Moore: I am sorry. I should like to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to page 10, paragraph 3·5, which states:

"The Secretary of State for Scotland is also issuing a new circular on development control priorities and procedures in which these principles will be drawn to the attention of Scottish planning authorities."

I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's additional points to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I shall be happy to ask him to answer the hon. Gentleman's specific points.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I welcome the White Paper, but can my hon. Friend tell us whether we shall change the accounting procedures with regard to auditing, because many small companies are treated by the Revenue as if they were ICI? Will that be incorporated in the simplification of the whole revenue procedure?

Mr. Moore: There is a study of specific accounting points that are referred to in parts of the White Paper and details in regard to accounting procedures. That study is due to report in the autumn—in September, I think—but most of the detailed improvements relating to accounting are separate from the particular proposals that are likely to be in the taxation Green Paper, which relates to non-cumulation and the possibility of the combination of tax and social security and tax and NIC.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the hon. Gentleman look at page 11, paragraph 3.6(i), which states that local authorities

"will also be required to consider proposals for the establishment of SPZs initiated by private developers"?

Does that mean that every local authority will, as a matter of law, have to consider every plan that is put forward by a private developer? That is what it says. Has it occurred to the Government how many staff will be involved and the sheer cost of that? Is not this in fact a private developers' charter?

Mr. Moore: With respect, I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the beginning of that paragraph, which states that new legislation will be introduced. It will be possible at that time to discuss the details that the hon. Gentleman is talking about. The central point is in the next sentence, which says:

"This will enable the local planning authority to specify types of development allowed in an area, so that developers can then carry out development that conforms to the scheme without the need for a planning application and the related fee. Planning permission for other types of development can be applied for in the normal way."

That is the central theme. I know that the hon. Gentleman will wish to address the additional points on the introduction of the legislation.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The White Paper clearly shows that the Government agree with the vast majority of people in this country that reducing unemployment is the main social and political priority. Does not my hon. Friend agree that those who seek to preserve the regulations that so often are a disincentive to employment should justify that as a higher priority than increasing employment?

Mr. Moore: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is it not a fact that the White Paper will do nothing to lift the burden of mass unemployment from 5 million people in this country—*[Interruption.]*—but, rather, will increase the rate of exploitation of workers, particularly youngsters, women workers and the 9 million low paid? Is the Minister aware that paragraph 5.10 of the White Paper represents a continuation of the Government's idea that lads and lasses working in hairdressing, on a £33.40 minimum wage, are responsible for the mass unemployment? Where do the Government get the idea that 2·75 million young workers who come under wages councils are responsible for the mass unemployment that we have in Britain?

Mr. Moore: To bring a semblance of reality back to the debate——

Mr. Nellist: Unemployment is real for those without work.

Mr. Moore: —paragraph 5.10 points out, among other things, the unnecessary restrictions that relate to women's hours of work. At present, technically, women cannot do more than six hours' overtime and, unless exemption is granted, women cannot work shifts. The proposed legislation will remove those outdated constraints. I should have thought that hon. Members on both sides of the House would welcome the way in which the basic rights of such people are still protected and would welcome the removal of discrimination against women.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): In view of the fact that between 1980 and 1984 140,000 net new businesses wer set up, does my hon. Friend agree that the lifting of burdens is bound to accelerate the rate at which businesses are established? In view of the EEC regulations on VAT, may we have more flexibility in the threshold of £19,500, at any rate for new businesses, even if that means increasing the threshold for new businesses for the first few years of their existence?

Mr. Moore: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments about the generation of new businesses, which is critical to creating employment. I referred earlier to paragraph 4.2, which gives the Government's position on the threshold, and I have taken careful note of my hon. Friend's remarks about the threshold and new businesses.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why do small business men in my constituency always tell me that they do far better under Labour Governments than they do under Conservative Governments? Could it possibly be because the monetary stance of Labour is more helpful to them? Is the Minister aware that his statement will do nothing to deal with the monetary stance of the Conservatives, which is at the heart of the problem?

Mr. Moore: Much as I personally like the hon. Gentleman, I could not for a moment begin to deny what people would say to him, knowing his particularly delightful, aggressive personality.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my hon. Friend aware that an increasing number of people who have established small businesses in recent years have been looking forward to the day when there would be a bonfire of unnecessary regulations and that they will, therefore, welcome his announcement today? I have not had a chance to read the White Paper. Does it deal with finance? If not, will my hon. Friend have a word with the chairmen of the clearing banks because greater flexibility on their part would go a long way towards encouraging small businesses?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is well informed on these issues. He may not recall that earlier I mentioned the way in which the White Paper referred to one important aspect of helping enterprises to grow—by reducing the burdens imposed on business by administrative and legislative regulations. I am aware that my hon. Friend raises a point about which we hear in other parts of Government, and I shall make sure that the Chancellor and my other colleagues are informed about what he has said.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I welcome the proposals in this comprehensive White Paper, but is my hon. Friend aware that perhaps the most important point to small businesses is the need to raise the VAT threshold? Is he aware how vital it is for us to press that point in the Community and to achieve progress, with a VAT threshold of perhaps £50,000, as soon as possible?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend reiterates a point that has been made three times. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not only welcome his support for the relevant part of the White Paper but will have heard his comments.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister should stop trying to pull the wool over people's eyes. Is it not a fact that the Tories' macro-economic policy of the last six years has resulted in more than 100,000 small and larger companies going under, with each year more bankruptcies and company liquidations occurring that in the preceding year? That process has continued throughout the reign of the Tories. How on earth can our problems be solved by the Government simply allocating clever little titles such as "Lifting the Burden" and how can micro solutions conceal the fact that the economic stranglehold of the Tories prevents companies from recovering?

When will the Minister offer a decent solution—for example, by telling small companies to go to the Governor of the Bank of England and say, "We would like to be treated in the same way as Johnson Matthey. We are a small firm, but we are employing some people. Why cannot we be treated in the same way as the City crooks?" Why do the Government have double standards—one for the their friends, and one for those whom they are prepared to cast into the gutter?

Mr. Moore: I was waiting eagerly for the subject of Johnson Matthey Bankers to be introduced into this micro debate. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate—because occasionally he tries to embrace facts—that the net increase in the number of small businesses in the past five years has been about 140,000. There has been a net increase at the micro level. He might care to give the House the benefit of his Socialist form of macro-economic policy when we next have a major economic debate. I am sure that that would be fascinating to the country at large.

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): I welcome the White Paper, which is clearly good for employment. My hon. Friend said that every Department would have to carry out an exercise on compliance costs. May we be assured that the results of that exercise will be published on the face of Bills and regulations? The House as well as Ministers should understand the cost of regulations that are being introduced.

Mr. Moore: I am not sure that publishing all attempts at achieving a more effective cost analysis within Departments with every proposal is necessarily the best way of ensuring that the proposal sees the light of day. However, I shall consider the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I welcome any effort by the Government to remove burdens on businesses, but is the Minister aware that many people will be puzzled about why it has taken the Government six years to take the initiative that he has announced this afternoon? If he is serious when he says that essential protection for workers, consumers and the general public must be mantained, will he explain how the essential protection for workers will be maintained in view of the proposed changes affecting wages councils, particularly in respect of statutory sick pay and improving industrial tribunal procedures?

Mr. Moore: The answer to that part of the hon. Gentleman's question concerning the time involved is that the Prime Minister, in August of last year, in response to suggestions from the Department of Trade and Industry that there was considerable concern about the pressure of regulations on businesses, set up a committee which reported to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in March 1985, and in the three and a half months since that date the White Paper has been produced. I should have thought that, in Government terms, that was very fast indeed.

I feel sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish to address his other questions about wages councils and protection to the Secretary of State for Employment. I urge him to look with care at the section in the White Paper which relates to sickness pay, because the position and rights of workers, as dealt with in the White Paper, are carefully protected while the issue goes for further consultation.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I draw my hon. Friend's attention to paragraph 3.15 of the White Paper. If it is true that the deregulation of new rents is beneficial to employment, why should it not be done now, by backing the legislation that my hon. Friend is to introduce?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend's voice will obviously be added to the pressures which the Government always bear in mind when trying to decide at what point to do those things that they consider it right to do.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): What consultation did the Minister have with the various employees' organisations, including the trade unions, and to what extent will employees be represented on the Central Task Force?

Mr. Moore: My noble Friend said in his statement in another place about the "Burdens on Business" study that an invitation had gone out to all in the outside world to give advice and to make a contribution. To the extent to which they did that, or ignored that advice, I cannot force trade unions or any organisations to contribute to any debate. The report has benefited from considerable outside debate.

I cannot specifically say who will be in the task force, but it will be composed essentially of civil servants and some people from outside the Civil Service. I shall address my hon. Friend's point about representative employees as opposed to small businesses to my noble Friend in the other place.

Mr. Michael Howard (Folkestone and Hythe): I welcome the White Paper's proposals as they affect the operation of the planning system. Does my hon. Friend agree that the balance which the planning system exists to strike is not identical in a period of relatively high unemployment as in a period of relatively full employment? Does he share my hope that the White Paper's proposals will lead to increased recognition of this fact by local planning authorities?

Mr. Moore: I particularly welcome that point. I should have thought that all who were concerned about unemployment would seek to make that point. I draw my hon. and learned Friend's attention to paragraph 3.13 on page 15 which states:

"the twin priorities of generating jobs and providing sufficient land for housing have not been reflected fully or quickly enough in structure plans and the planning decisions of local authorities."

We must ensure that this important point is put across in our debates.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend ensure that a VAT inspector who examines the books of a business and finds that they are in order signs a statement to that effect so that another VAT inspector who disagrees with his findings cannot announce that he was wrong and try to collect many years of back duty?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend's suggestion seems on the surface to be so eminently sensible that I cannot see why I cannot simply say yes. I shall carefully consider his point and write to him about it.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Although I welcome the proposals in the White Paper as far as they go, does my hon. Friend accept that matters such as interest rates, energy costs, fair trading conditions and rates probably impose a greater burden on small businesses than any of the aspects to which the White Paper referred? Will my hon. Friend therefore direct the Treasury's attention to those matters? I welcome the planning proposals in the White Paper, especially as Carswells Transport Limited which has a head office in my constituency, is likely to have to make 600 people redundant because of a decision by the Tewkesbury district council.

Mr. Moore: I am glad that my hon. Friend has illustrated so graphically an aspect of the planning implications for jobs which might be in jeopardy. There are many aspects of business beyond the particular burdens imposed by administrative and legislative regulation. The White Paper addresses that problem. I am delighted to have my hon. Friend's support in our attempt to face these difficulties.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): As one who has been involved in a comparatively small business, I know that the White Paper will be warmly welcomed by people in business, provided that the Government get on with it. The White Paper states that the task force will be set up for three years. Will it really take three years? I hope that the task force will have something to show for its work if not this Guy Fawkes' day then by 5 November 1986. Will my hon. Friend take account of the fact that "Burdens on Business", which was issued by the Department of Trade and Industry, came out in March? The Cabinet task force should direct its attention to that report on which there has not yet been any action.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will be delighted to know that this White Paper is the action that flows from the "Burdens on Business" report. I draw the attention of the House to the relative position of that three-year rule in relation to the task force. Paragraph 8.7 on page 35 states:

"In order to prevent the setting up of permanent machinery which may outlive its usefulness—and to serve as an example to others—the Government have decided that the life of the task force should be limited to about three years, in the first instance, at which stage there will be a review of its performance".

I reassure my hon. Friend that the three-year period has nothing to do with the desire to implement the actions in this document immediately.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As it appears that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary is about to establish a splendid platoon of civil servants——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Section.

Mr. Marlow: —section of civil servants to scrutinise any regulations that might threaten to drown our small businesses in a sea of paper work or to throttle them with red tape, will my hon. Friend say that, as the greatest threat to the life and sanity of any small business comes from regulations defined by the megabureaucrats in Brussels, those regulations will be subject to the same scrutiny by the same committee?

Mr. Moore: I know that my hon. Friend, who has been corrected on his infantry advice—10 is nearer a section than a platoon—will be pleased to look at paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 on page 29. They bring out the ways in which the Government's initiatives in Brussels will ensure that the same type of unit is created there so that the same attempt is made to reduce the regulations and the excessive burdens on the bureaucrats. We have already pressed in Brussels for a review of all existing and proposed legislation and for the establishment of a permanent procedure to vet permanent and future proposals with respect to their impact on business.

The Government have undertaken a review and have put to the Commission and other member states an initial list of 40 directives or regulations which have been

[Mr. Moore]

adopted or are in the pipeline and which we regard as excessively burdensome. My hon. Friend will be happy to know that action is already in train.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the White Paper is most welcome because, irrespective of individual items, its net effect will be to promote the creation of jobs, except perhaps for members of the Opposition Front Bench? I reiterate my concern that two of the most enticing measures—raising the VAT threshold, and deregulating new private lettings—do not have a timetable set for their implementation.

Mr. Moore: I thought that I had made clear the Government's strong position on the first matter. I recognise that my hon. Friend is adding to the support for both items to ensure that there is a greater sense of urgency.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the most irksome burdens on small businesses is the preparation and completion of quarterly VAT returns? When reviewing the VAT threshold, will my hon. Friend consider the possibility of smaller businesses paying VAT on an estimated basis during three quarters with full annual accounting once a year?

Mr. Moore: I shall certainly look carefully at that proposal.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my hon. Friend agree that the reaction of the Opposition Front Bench, especially of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), reflects the fact that Labour Members do not understand how new jobs will be created through small businesses? Does that mean that the Labour party is basically unqualified to take office? Does my hon. Friend agree that any self-respecting business has long since ignored trivia, much of which is included in the White Paper, but welcomes their exemption? Will my hon. Friend pay attention in his Department to a long-seen need to simplify methods and encourage low interest rates to obtain venture capital for more small business start-ups?

Mr. Moore: I hear what my hon. Friend says in his latter point, but I know that he will welcome the extraordinary success of the business expansion scheme and the way in which many regard the opportunities available through the business expansion and loan guarantee schemes as being much more attractive than investing in many other parts of the world.

On my hon. Friend's first point, I can happily leave the absence of the Opposition's qualifications to the electorate.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is my hon. Friend aware that the White Paper will be warmly welcomed in the north-east where the biggest burdens on business are the Labour councils which frustrate planning applications, refuse to sell industrial land freehold and seem hell-bent on establishing business-free zones? Will my hon. Friend draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to the need to allow the industrial companies that want to expand the right to buy land freehold from public authorities?

Mr. Moore: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to that point. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. His description of business-free zones, in comparison with the attempt to introduce simplified planning zones, perfectly illustrates the difference between the Government's attempts to give practical help and the Opposition's posturing.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that many small businesses and entrepreneurs in west Norfolk will welcome these proposals? Obviously judgment cannot be passed until action is taken, and I urge the Government to get on and take that action. Is it not time that the small firm was totally exempted from the requirements of the annual audit?

Mr. Moore: In the White Paper, there is a reference to a discussion in relation to the potential exemption of the small firm from the annual audit. With regard to the first point, my right hon. and noble Friend in another place will be leading this activity within Government with his normal sense of aggression. I am sure that, through his leadership, we will have action in this area.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I welcome the broad thrust of the White Paper but notice that some Departments appear to have contributed rather more wholeheartedly than others to the work of Lord Young. I am sure that Thanet farmers will be pleased to know that

> "The Agricultural Departments take action whenever possible to ease the burdens on agricultural, horticultural, fisheries and food sector businesses imposed by domestic legislation".

May we therefore look forward to the early abolition of the Potato Marketing Board?

Mr. Moore: I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks about the Potato Marketing Board to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my hon. Friend feel that this welcome White Paper goes far enough in helping to create new jobs? If he is suggesting that 1·6 million new jobs could be created, are we doing enough to get rid of Socialist red tape?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a first step, it is an important beginning, but it is a critical step in the long-term direction of removing the burdens which restrain business from creating new job opportunities.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Is my hon. Friend aware of studies showing that in the United States a remarkably high proportion of existing businesses were originally started in their founders' homes? Will he comment on those findings? Does he agree that any measures that the Government may be able to take to make it easier for somebody to start a business in his or her own home in this country could be of significant benefit in reducing unemployment?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right about the American studies. I have some experience of that side of the Atlantic. He will be interested to know that the Government have considered this matter in the White Paper at pages 12 and 13 in section 3.6, paragraph (vii) (a), (b) and (c). I know that he will be particularly pleased with what the White Paper says on this issue.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I welcome my hon. Friend's spirited response to my hon. Friend the Member

for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) when he said that he would put maximum pressure on Ministers to implement these proposals. Does he expect to get more co-operation from them on deregulation than the Treasury has had on containing public expenditure?

Mr. Moore: I shall try to ignore the potential twist in that tail and simply say that the product is here. There has clearly been a major effort by all Departments of Government to ensure that within three and a half months there is a comprehensive attempt to lift the burdens on business.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my hon. Friend agree that rural unemployment is a particular problem, not so much because people in villages experience difficulty in finding jobs but because they have to go to towns to get them? This is in no small way due to the controls which central Government and local government have piled on village industry.

What will the task force be doing to encourage people to set up industries in their own homes, given that most new businesses are clean and efficient? In particular, will my hon. Friend encourage the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to go rather further? According to paragraph 5.29, its only contribution so far has been to free "certain aspects of trade in cattle semen".

Mr. Moore: I think that my hon. Friend will know that the Ministry does go a little further. The planning regulations applicable to rural areas emanate in most cases from the Department of the Environment. I know that he will be pleased when he reads the White Paper with more care because he has argued so vigorously for many of the proposals in it. I will certainly press my right hon. Friend the Minister to consider what other contribution he can make to this aspect of deregulation.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My hon. Friend has made great play of the deregulation side of the White Paper. Is he aware of my early-day motion on impediments to free ports? It concerns a series of regulations being brought forward by Customs and Excise, and, if ever there was a case for deregulation, it is within the free ports area.

Mr. Moore: I am aware of my hon. Friend's early-day motion. I will certainly examine that matter again with Customs and Excise.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Road Traffic (Production of Documents) Act 1985.
2. Gaming (Bingo) Act 1985.
3. Agricultural Training Board Act 1985.
4. Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985.
5. Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985.
6. Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Act 1985.
7. Licensing (Amendment) Act 1985.
8. Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Act 1985.
9. Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985.
10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.
11. Sexual Offences Act 1985.
12. Charter Trustees Act 1985.
13. Insurance (Fees) Act 1985.
14. Further Education Act 1985.
15. Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.
16. Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985.
17. Representation of the People Act 1985.
18. Local Government Act 1985.
19. Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Act 1985.
20. Streatham Park Cemetery Act 1985.
21. Harrogate Stray Act 1985.
22. Alexandra Park and Palace Act 1985.
23. C-Poultry Company Limited Act 1985.
24. Plymouth Marine Events Base Act 1985.
25. Greater London Council (Money) Act 1985.

Lorries (GLC Ban)

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall be grateful if you will confirm that it is impossible to discuss the arrogant bungling of the Secretary of State for Transport since he has appealed to the courts in the matter of the Greater London Council ban on lorries. Is that the case?

Mr. Speaker: That is the case. I understand that the right hon. Gentleman has lodged an appeal today so that the matter is sub judice.

BILL PRESENTED

International Fair Trading

Mr. Michael Latham, supported by Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Peter Thomas, Mr. Robert C. Brown, Mr. Geraint Howells, Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth, Mr. Roy Beggs, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Mr. Ian Mikardo, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Dr. M. S. Miller and Sir John Biggs-Davison, presented a Bill to make further provision regarding fair international trade between the United Kingdom and certain countries outside Her Majesty's dominions, with particular reference to the trade boycott of the state of Isreal by members of the League of Arab States: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday and to be printed. [Bill 194.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Fishing and Fishing Methods) (Scotland) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 962) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. —*[Mr. Durant.]*

Rent Acts (Amendment)

4.26 pm

Mr. Francis Maude (Warwickshire, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Rent Acts to make new provision in relation to the supply of private rented accommodation.

I hesitate to suggest new legislation in view of the horrifying list that we have just heard you read out, Mr. Speaker. It is already a very complicated Session. I am sure that the House will be glad to know that there is very little prospect of this measure reaching the statute book in this Session.

We have in this country a substantial net housing surplus, but at the same time a large number of people are homeless. The explanation for this apparent paradox is quite simple. Enormous numbers of houses and flats remain empty. A trip down the high street of any town will reveal that a number of flats above shops are generally empty. Unless the shopkeeper lives in the flat, it will generally be empty. The same applies to farm cottages. I know of one farm which has 12 cottages, all of which are empty. In London alone there are estimated to be 200,000 empty dwellings.

We have to ask ourselves why they are kept empty. If one examines the Rent Acts, the explanation becomes quite simple. If a landlord allows a tenancy to occur in any of those dwellings, he runs the risk of losing control of the dwelling for up to 100 years because not only will the present tenant have absolute security of tenure but so, too, will two generations of successors. A small business man, a shopkeeper or a farmer does not know what the state of his business will be in two years' time, let alone in 100 years' time. How on earth can he justify ceding possession and control of the property in that way? The farmer may easily decide in two years' time that he wants possession of a farm cottage. If he wants to take on an extra employee, he must have that accommodation available. Therefore, he keeps the dwelling empty, and another homeless person is kept homeless.

Even if he allows a tenancy to occur, a state official is empowered to intervene to set a so-called fair rent. Fair rents throughout the country now represent a net yield of some 1 or 2 per cent. on the investment. That is a bad return in anybody's book. It is approximately one third of the market rent, and it goes a long way to explain why a number of private landlords allow their properties to become dilapidated and to fall into bad repair.

My proposal would allow all new lettings to take place on terms agreed between the landlord and the tenant. It would affect no existing tenancies. All existing tenants would retain security and the ability to have their rents set by the rent officer.

Under my proposal, new landlords and tenants would be able to agree that the tenancy should run for, say, a period of two years at a rent agreed between the two of them. This would be an ordinary agreement enforceable in the courts by either party in the ordinary way, and the tenant would have absolute security of tenure for the period of that tenancy.

There is no reason why in a free society Parliament should take from responsible adults the power to make agreements on terms acceptable to both parties. It would be outrageous if we were to suggest that state officials

should have the power to intervene between the buyer and seller of a house or a car and to say, "You cannot sell it for that price because it is not a fair price. You must sell it for this price." That would be monstrous. It is a concept that is quite alien in a free society. It is time that we got rid of this ridiculous control that prevents landlords and tenants making arrangements to their mutual advantage.

By drying up the supply of private rented accommodation, the Rent Acts have done untold damage to the homeless and the low paid, especially to the young and the single homeless for whom the private rented sector has traditionally provided accommodation. Indeed, the Labour party is now the only party—perhaps apart from the Communists and all points Left — that does not accept the need for reform of the Rent Acts. Even the late Mr. Anthony Crosland, the Minister who piloted through the 1974 Act, was apparently persuaded that it would dry up the supply of rented accommodation. How right he was. We are now reaping the fruit of that.

This artificially created housing shortage has desperately damaged the mobility in the labour market on which we so desperately rely. Many of my constituents in the west midlands have told me that they have found jobs in the south and south-east. They want to take those jobs but cannot move there because there are no houses to buy that they can afford, no chance of getting a council tenancy and no private rented accommodation to be had. We have lost that crucial flexibility in the housing market that is important for flexibility in the labour market. The result is that we maintain high levels of unemployment in some parts of the country while there is a growing scarcity of labour in others. That cannot make sense.

I am sure that some bright spark on the Labour Benches —[HON. MEMBERS: "Bright?"] I agree that the material is not promising, but I am sure that a Labour Member will raise the spectre of Rachmanism. But the fact is that the Rent Act created Rachmanism. That was at its peak in the 1950s when rents were frozen—eventually for 18 years —and absolute security applied. Rachmanism survived the 1957 Act only in the remaining controlled sector. The plain fact is that if we deny landlords the right to claim possession of their property through the courts the unscrupulous landlords will turn to alsatians and the scrupulous landlords will keep their dwellings empty. It will be the homeless who will suffer.

If lettings are made on terms agreed between the parties, so that the landlord gets a reasonable return on his investment and knows that at a fixed date he can obtain possession of the property, there is absolutely no incentive to go outside the law, and that would be extra protection for the tenant.

Someone else will no doubt mention the 1957 Act and the fact that the decline in the private rented sector increased after that. Of course it did, because that was a time of great growth in owner occupation when there were enormous incentives on landlords to sell previously rented accommodation into owner occupation. That no longer applies to the same extent, and anyone who does not believe that the decontrol of rents will stimulate the growth of new accommodation is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

One of the effects of rent control and security of tenure has been to push many tenants into "loophole" tenures — company lets, holiday lets and licences. That is unsatisfactory for both parties. The tenant does not know where he stands. It would be much better if he could agree a tenancy with the landlord for a fixed term at a fixed rent so that he knows where he stands for that period.

Similarly, by denying landlords an economic return on the property, rent controls have caused a large number of properties to fall into disrepair. They have discouraged landlords from improving property. By allowing them an economic return, we shall enable the tenants to benefit by encouraging landlords to improve and repair properties.

The Government took a small and timid step by introducing the shorthold tenure. They spoilt that potentially beneficial measure by including it within the fair rented sector. Again, landlords were discouraged from embarking on letting new properties. We must go further than that. The Government also introduced assured tenancies, a marginal measure that could be improved and increased by extending it to rehabilitated property. That would be particularly helpful in the inner cities.

It should be recognised that the decontrol of new lettings would increase incentives on landlords to remove tenants to enable them to create other new lettings. Therefore, my Bill would substantially increase the penalties for harassment. It would also extend to licensees the Protection from Eviction Act, and that would fill an existing gap.

The Government have announced that they believe that this type of reform is essential, and the White Paper that has just been issued confirms that. However, they said that they propose to defer this essential reform until after the next election. This is a desperately needed and urgent social reform. The present system does untold damage to mobility, to the homeless, to the weak and to the vulnerable. The Government should reinstate this measure into the next Session of Parliament and make it the flagship of the next Queen's Speech. It should be given a high priority. The remedy for the present scandal of empty houses and homeless people lies within the power of this Parliament, and we should take steps to use it. I urge the Government to add rent control to the bonfire of controls that has just been announced, and the sooner the better.

4.36 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman seeking to oppose?

Mr. Winnick: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The first question to ask is why Tory Back Benchers use the ten-minute Bill procedure to argue for a change in law on the Rent Acts? After all, their Government are in office. Moreover, they are a Right-wing Tory Administration who have made a particular virtue of deregulation and privatisation. Surely the Prime Minister needs no lectures from the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) about deregulation in the privately rented sector, yet the Cabinet has decided to shelve any such proposal during the lifetime of this Parliament—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State for the Environment has told us so, and if some Conservative Members bothered to come into the Chamber more regularly they would have heard the Secretary of State do so.

That statement caused much upset to the Minister for Housing and Construction, the hon. Member for

[Mr. Winnick]

Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is just as enthusiastic as the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude), but the Minister lost the battle.

Why has the Cabinet concluded that it will not act, at least during the lifetime of this Parliament, along the lines advocated in the proposed Bill? The simple explanation is that the Prime Minister and her Cabinet colleagues know how electorally unpopular it would be to accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. They have not forgotten the notorious Rent Act 1957. When the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North, like so many others, argues that deregulation would produce more rented accommodation, he should remember what the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) said in 1956. The right hon. Gentleman was then a junior housing Minister in a Conservative Administration, and on 21 November 1956, when he was helping to pilot through what became the Rent Act 1957, he said that the Bill

"will halt the drain upon rented accommodation, it will release additional accommodation that is under-used or wasted, it will arrest the deterioration of millions of houses for lack of maintenance, and it will give to persons who are moving or setting up home the opportunity to find accommodation in the market."

They were virtually identical to the words used by the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North today. However, things did not quite work out that way.

In June 1956 privately rented dwellings numbered nearly 6·5 million. In December 1961 that figure had decreased to 5 million. The Rent Act 1957 did not do what the hon. Gentleman says his present Bill will do. It did, however, create a tremendous amount of homelessness, misery and injustice. As a result of that Act a large number of people lost their homes. The local authorities, including the one of which I was then a member, had no alternative but to rehouse the people forced out by the 1957 Act. That Act will always be remembered for the injustice and misery it caused, and we on the Labour side have no intention of forgetting it.

Shocking abuse and injustice, which became known as Rachmanism, were the product of that Act. Rachman and his gangster colleagues acted as they did because they knew that if they could dislodge from his accommodation a tenant who had Rent Act protection that accommodation would then be available for letting at any rent that Rachman and his colleagues wanted to set. The 1957 Act became so discredited that when the Conservative party went into opposition in 1964 it could not bring itself to argue against the Labour Government's repeal of the legislation.

That Act of course was a large issue in the 1964 election campaign, and some people would argue, bearing in mind Labour's majority in that election, that Labour would not have won without the effects of that Act. That is one of the reasons why the Prime Minister is so reluctant to act. In her constituency about 20 per cent. of the electorate live in privately rented accommodation. I wonder how many people in Finchley would want the hon. Gentleman's Bill? *[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is for me to say "Order."

Mr. Eric Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): About time too, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect.

Mr. Winnick: We know that many Conservative Members——

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The speech by the hon. Gentleman is giving rise to some lack of attention on the part of many people in the House. That is because he does not seem to be addressing his remarks to the substance of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I am listening very carefully. The hon. Gentleman is in order and I think that he is about to finish.

Mr. Winnick: A number of right hon. and hon. Members clearly have property interests, though I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman has. They are therefore very keen to support the measure proposed by their hon. Friend.

Shorthold tenancies, about which the Government boasted at the time, have been a complete failure. So have the other provisions that the Government made for deregulation. The real need at the moment is not what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting but to provide rented accommodation in the publicly rented sector. How many people now in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and homeless or near homeless would be helped if the hon. Gentleman's suggestion were implemented? What is needed by people who are not able to obtain a mortgage is decent and adequate accommodation at a rent that they can afford.

It is a scandal that so few dwellings are now being built in the public sector. In the present year, it is estimated that no more than 30,000 new council dwellings will be built. We need more council dwellings, not another 1957 Rent Act, not another provision to enable the Rachmans of this world to make a lot of money. We require public sector and voluntary accommodation for people who desperately need housing. I hope the House will reject the Bill, and I hope also that the country will discover, as we have discovered today, that a majority of Tory Members of Parliament are willing to impose on many private tenants who now have protection all the harm, insecurity and possible homelessness that would result from the passing of this Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):——

The House divided: Ayes 159, Noes 160.

Division No. 278] **[4.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Fookes, Miss Janet

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Jessel, Toby
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Sumberg, David
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Fallon and
Mr. Christopher Chope.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Harry Cohen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Rate Support Grant (England)

4.58 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1982/83 (House of Commons Paper No. 504), which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.

It may be for the convenience of the House if we discuss at the same time the following motion:

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1985/86 (House of Commons Paper No. 478), which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

This has already been an interesting day in local government terms. About an hour ago, Mr. Speaker, you announced that the Local Government Bill had received Royal Assent. This debate is not about that, but suffice it to say that many people hoped, and many more thought, that that event would never occur. Now that that Bill has become an Act, I hope that there will be co-operation by all councils to ensure a smooth transition to the new regime when the Greater London council and the six metropolitan counties come to an end at midnight on 31 March 1986.

We now have another debate on the rating system. Such debates often acquire the nature of seminars. I believe that Mr. Edward Pearce referred in the *Daily Telegraph* to the

"verbal sludge of municipal speak"

which characterises many parliamentary debates on rating matters. I shall try to avoid that verbal sludge.

I should like to remind the House of something that Fowler said in his "Modern English Usage". I paraphrase slightly. [HON. MEMBERS: "Norman Fowler?"] No, the other Fowler. He provided a classic description of the split infinitive, which can be applied to the rate support grant system. The English speaking world may be divided into those who neither know nor care how the rate support grant system operates, those who do not know but care very much, those who know and condemn, those who know and approve, and those who know and distinguish. As Fowler said:

"Those who neither know nor care are the vast majority, and are a happy folk to be envied by the minority classes."

It is those who do not know but care very much with whom I feel the greatest affinity. The rate support grant system is fiendishly complicated, and of crucial importance to all of us, for it is responsible for distributing and redistributing vast sums of ratepayers' and taxpayers' hard-earned money.

I should like to make it clear that this debate is not about 1986-87. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement about rate limitation for next year, and the Government's provisional proposals for the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement, before the House rises for the summer recess next week.

The House has before it today two supplementary RSG reports. We have the first report for the present financial year, 1985-86 and the final report for the year 1982-83. This is, therefore, an occasion when we can review the total of local authority spending, the Government's policy on this, and the success of rate capping.

I remind the House of the long timetable that we are debating. Nearly one year ago, on 24 July, my right hon. Friend gave local authorities their provisional targets for the current year, 1985-86. Following consultation with local authority representatives last autumn, he announced on 11 December the RSG details, including the final targets and the holdback tariff. On 16 January the House approved the main RSG report for the current year.

The message is one of substantial success in the long campaign to contain the growth of local authority expenditure. The information we have so far is that 107 authorities are planning to spend £278 million in excess of the targets which the House approved in January. The overspend this time a year ago was three times greater —£848 million. Overall, authorities in England have not increased their spending in real terms in 1985-86. This has reversed a 20-year trend. In the 1960s, local authority current expenditure was rising at 3·7 per cent. per year above the rate of inflation, and in the 1970s it was rising at about 3 per cent. per year above the rate of inflation. This led Tony Crosland to go to Manchester city hall in 1976 and make his brave speech, "The Party is Over". For about 18 months the party was over, because the Chancellor of the Exchequer was nailed down by the International Monetary Fund.

When we came to office, we inherited a rising level of local authority expenditure. During the past six years that level has been contained to slightly less than 1 per cent. above the rate of inflation, and this year it will just about match the rate of inflation. In effect, local authorities this year are matching their expenditure to the annual rate of inflation. This cannot possibly be presented as creating a wasteland through savage and severe cuts in local authority expenditure.

As the overspend is down, average rate increases have been in single figures for the third successive year. The average general rate increase for 1985 was 7·4 per cent. Without rate capping, rate increases would have been far higher. If Labour councils in London had had their way, the total budgets of rate-capped London boroughs would have been at least £220 million higher. For the country as a whole, the figure is more like £330 million. This means that ratepayers in London have been saved £220 million and that ratepayers in the rest of the country have been saved £110 million.

Ratepayers in the rate-capped areas have enjoyed savings. For example, the average householder in Lambeth will pay £21 less on the local rates bill than last year and a staggering £185 less than the council would have demanded if it had not been rate capped. Twelve of the 18 rate-capped authorities have issued lower rate poundages this year than in 1984-85.

The high-spending councils have known all along—despite their rhetoric—that the expenditure levels and rate limits that we proposed required no savage cuts in jobs and services. Many of them have now said so openly and some authorities, such as the Greater London council, budgeted for a rate even below the level that we set.

Does the House recall the hysteria earlier this year and the claims that local authority expenditure would be slashed as a result of rate capping—slashed to such an extent that the very elements of civilised life would be undermined? In Islington the leader, Councillor Margaret Hodge, predicted that fixing the rate at its rate-capped level would mean an immediate loss of up to 1,000 jobs and severe cuts in services. A few days before Islington fixed its rate, the finance committee chairman, Councillor Wilson, said that it was perfectly possible to fix the legal rate without cutting jobs and services. Journalists employed in Islington's public relations department have complained strongly that they were asked to lie during a

£200,000 campaign about the number of job and service cuts and that subsequent events have proved claims about cuts to be totally bogus. Public relations experts turning on their clients in this way is almost totally unprecedented and a little like the monkey biting the organ grinder.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): If the system has worked so well, will the Minister explain why an authority such as Haringey, which was rate capped, had an enormous rate rise and exceeded by more than any other authority its target and incurred a gross amount of penalty? Why does the right hon. Gentleman's system produce such amazing distortions and aberrations? If he were less selective in his quotation of authorities, the system would be seen to be far more of a hit-and-miss affair and not nearly as effective at reducing local government expenditure as he thought it would be one year ago.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will remember that at the last moment the district auditor told us and Haringey that there was likely to be a deficit on the previous financial year. Under local government law, that has to be recovered in this financial year, so we had to adjust the rate limit level for Haringey at the last minute.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I remember it well.

Mr. Baker: Like the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I, too, remember the episode well. If we had not acted, the rate level in Haringey would have been much higher. The same is true for the hon. Gentleman's London borough, which is rate capped.

All of the authorities selected for rate limitation in 1985-86 have now set a rate. The campaign that was supposed to spearhead the Labour Opposition's fight against the Government whimpered to its end on 3 July, when Lambeth became the last of the rate-capped authorities to set a rate. The collapse of the rebel councils has been a triumph for the role of common sense. It has meant that, as promised, ratepayers in these areas are being protected from excessive spending.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in a borough triply rate capped through the Greater London council, the Inner London education authority and Lewisham borough council, rate capping has brought welcome and popular relief? Is he further aware that in three recent council by-elections there have been substantial swings and overwhelming victory to the Conservative party in once safe Labour wards?

Mr. Baker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House that protecting the ratepayer is a popular policy which has its results in the ballot box.

The process of fixing a rate this year has been marred by scenes that are quite unacceptable in our free democratic society. We have seen gangs of thugs shouting from the gallery and taking over the council chamber. Mayors have refused to call in the police to restore order. Moderate Labour councillors and Conservative councillors have been physically threatened and assaulted. Mobs outside the town hall have prevented councillors from getting into the town hall. Fortunately, that is not characteric of local government. We have had flying pickets and all of the bullying antics of Scargillism. It is the highly organised brutality of the Fascist Left, and I hope that we will hear today from the Opposition Front Bench utter and complete condemnation of these tactics. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to repudiate those tactics and the illegality in Lambeth and Liverpool.

Lambeth and Liverpool, which set a rate on 14 June——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I shall give way in a moment.

Lambeth and Liverpool, which set a rate on 14 June, may pay a heavy price for their delaying tactics. The auditor is investigating losses in those two councils because of the delays in rate setting and has issued formal notices of surcharge to the councillors responsible. In that regard, the auditor is acting in his capacity as the watchdog of public expenditure. I wish to make it clear that the district auditor is completely independent of central Government, and has been since the office was established 150 years ago. That position has been accepted by Governments of both parties.

It is nonsense for Labour Members to talk of the auditor being the lackey of the Conservative party. They know that during the past 12 months the Audit Commission has published reports which have been highly critical of Government policy. Labour Members should reflect on Tony Crosland's statement:

> "I have no power to interfere with the work of the district auditor. In no circumstances would I dream of doing so."—[*Official Report*, 24 March 1975; Vol. 889, c. 62.]

I echo that statement. The auditor is equally independent now. All that I can do is to call on councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool to manage their finances properly and to prevent further losses from being incurred.

Mr. Heffer: The Minister referred to Liverpool and to some authorities where there had apparently been trouble, but I am not aware of that. Will he make it absolutely clear that there was no such trouble in Liverpool, that on no occasion did the police have to be brought in, and that no gangs invaded the city council?

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman mentioned Liverpool and Lambeth in relation to district auditors. They were not the only local authorities which failed to set a rate on a particular day. Many other local authorities also failed to set a rate. Why have Lambeth and Liverpool been picked out by district auditors, and why have other local authorities not been tackled? Is it that some people—I am not sure who, because the Government say that they have nothing to do with district auditors — are attempting to suggest that those councils are led by loonies, whereas the others are not?

Mr. Baker: Lambeth and Liverpool do not have that unique distinction. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I agree that rate setting in Liverpool was not marred by scenes of violence. However, rate setting in other councils, including some in London, was marred by unacceptable scenes of violence in which people were physically hurt. Pressure was applied to distort the democratic process. I am sure that the Opposition Front Bench will not sanction that. Secondly, it is up to the district auditor to decide what action to take. Lambeth and Liverpool were the last two authorities to fix a rate, and the hon. Gentleman could raise that point with the district auditor or the Audit Commission.

Some right hon. and hon. Members opposed the Rates Act 1984. They preferred to avert their gaze from a minority of local authorities' reckless disregard for public

[Mr. Baker]

spending and their ratepayers. A responsible Government, of any colour, cannot take such a detached attitude. We may regret the necessity to set ceilings on [redacted], but our responsibilities for public expenditure, and our concern to protect ratepayers, compelled us to act.

Liverpool's budget problems are of the council's making. It has ignored every opportunity to improve its grossly inefficient services and to bring down spending. It now looks to the Government for more taxpayers' money to bale it out. The council must think again. There is no question of the Government seeking to undo the rate support grant settlement approved by Parliament in January, to increase the city council's programmes at the expense of other authorities. The city council must find its own salvation. It has not helped itself by fixing a rate which it claims to be substantially less than is necessary to fund its budget. It must reduce its grossly inflated spending figure of £265 million. Each £1 million saved above the target increases its grant entitlement by £2 million. The city treasurer has already shown that £10 million can be saved; and the council must go further.

If the council cannot balance its income and spending, it remains open for it to ask the courts to set aside the rate, thereby providing the council with the opportunity to set a new one. The central message to Liverpool city council and the representatives in the House of that great city is, "Face up to reality". If the council wants to maintain services and ensure that its staff are paid, it must put its finances in order.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): As the Government are anxious to cut public expenditure, or to keep it down to what they regard as a reasonable level, does the Minister agree that if Liverpool city council were to carry out the strictures of his Department it would have to dismiss thousands of workers and cut services? Has he estimated what the increased social benefits would cost the Department of Employment and the Department of Health and Social Security? Have the Government worked out the social cost of the policy in Liverpool and elsewhere? If they have not, they are failing in their declaimed objective.

Mr. Baker: I know that the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the matter because he represents parts of the city of Liverpool. If the city council had started to put its house in order a year or 18 months ago, it would not be in its present position. In a moment I shall point out some areas in which councils can make savings without slashing services.

Mr. Heffer: This is an important matter. Yesterday, when we met the Secretary of State and the Minister, I asked the Secretary of State whether, if Liverpool city council kept to the £222 million target suggested by the Government, it would mean cuts in services and up to 6,000 workers being thrown out of employment. He admitted that it would mean reductions in staff and that people would be thrown out of work. I remind the House that the area has one of the highest levels of unemployment.

Mr. Baker: As I said earlier, if Liverpool city council had started to address itself to its substantial overspending a year or 18 months ago, it would not be in its present position of demanding more Government money. If it receives more money, it will be at the expense of other local authorities which are living within the system. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the city treasurer has already made it clear in the report that was given to the city council last week that the present rate level can support a budget of £229 million.

Last year, some 60 per cent. of local authorities planned to meet their spending targets. This year, 74 per cent. are doing so. That is good news, but, inevitably, our attention is directed to the 107 authorities which, if the House approves the 1985-86 report tonight, will be subject to holdback this year. The holdback tariff is deliberately severe. It is a necessary complement to the realistic spending targets which we were able to set, thanks to the advent of rate capping. Realistic targets had to be matched by much tougher holdback. Sadly, as before, a comparatively small number of local authorities have ignored their ratepayers' interests and set their budgets and rates deliberately to incur holdback.

The total holdback this year is £550 million. The House should sympathise especially with ratepayers in the areas of seven authorities, which between them account for £250 million of the total block grant to be held back. They are Avon, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Liverpool, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. Of the total sum of £550 million, £491 million will be forfeited by Labour-controlled councils—that is 90 per cent. That is a clear sign that old habits die hard.

Holdback need not have been incurred. The choice is not simply between spending and cutting. There is no doubt that savings can be made if a council is determined to make them. Brent authority, for example, which is under minority Conservative control, saved £24 million in 1984-85 and is on course to saving £32 million in 1985-86. In achieving that, no one has been made redundant. It has been achieved through more realistic rents, efficiency savings and a careful review of all staff vacancies, but the authority has still been able to allow £2 million growth for redecoration for schools, which were neglected for 10 years under the previous Labour administration. It has also increased the amount spent on social services for the psychiatrically disturbed. That shows what can be achieved in a relatively short time when Conservatives take over and begin to reverse the legacy of Labour overspending.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): The vast majority of individual ratepayers would support what my right hon. Friend is saying and his theory that local government expenditure should not exceed the rate of inflation, but should be below it. However, the great problem is that the individual ratepayer is in the minority.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right, and this will be a central feature of the review of local government finance being conducted by me and by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. Our society is unique in that it has only one tax at local level, whereas all other developed countries have a variety of taxes. That single local tax bears an enormous burden, and one strain on it is that only about one third of the locally registered electors pay full rates.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept that, despite the efforts of Brent, that authority, with three other Tory-controlled London authorities, will lose money by way of clawback? If an authority which the Minister

commends must be penalised because it cannot reduce its expenditure further, does that not prove that the system is defective?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman is right, but I should say that Brent may not suffer any holdback if it continues to make savings similar to those that it has made during the past two years. I said earlier that this holdback could be suffered by local authorities. It is up to them to incur it or to make savings and tighten their belts slightly. Brent has made remarkable savings during the past two years, and I am told that it could continue to do so.

May I draw to the attention of the House the series of reports published by the Audit Commission to show how local authorities can make significant savings without a reduction in services. They could save £150 million a year if there was a better match between the number of places and the number of pupils in secondary schools. They could provide up to 20 per cent. more social services for the elderly within existing resources, and at the same time improve the quality of service to clients. Improved efficiency in vehicle fleet management could save £130 million a year without reducing standards of service or safety. They could save £20 million on refuse collection, £200 million on purchasing and £150 million on further education.

Wandsworth has made substantial savings in refuse collection. It charges its ratepayers £8·70 a year per head to empty their dustbins, whereas the ratepayers of Lambeth, which sticks to the traditional, union-dominated system, must fork out £17·58 each a year. Wandsworth has saved £25 million as a result of privatising its services, and one can see the result. The borough rate is 30·7p, whereas neighbouring Labour-controlled Lambeth—which has a similar population and social characteristics — sets a borough rate of 107·6p. Wandsworth, whose population problems are similar to those of Lambeth, makes do with 5,700 council employees, while Lambeth requires more than 10,000.

There is scope for worthwhile savings, all of which can be achieved by applying good practice more widely. Such good practice is already a way of life in many local authorities.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The Minister compares Wandsworth with Lambeth. When I stay in London, I reside on the border of the two boroughs. What the Minister did not say was that the collection of refuse in Wandsworth is so appalling that I would rather pay a higher rate for a better service in Lambeth.

Mr. Baker: I understand that the hon. Gentleman lives in Wandsworth——

Mr. Pike: Yes.

Mr. Baker: How lucky he is. He has the benefit of low rates and good services.

As I said to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), savings can still be made by authorities which face holdback. It is not too late to make savings. Grant holdback on the basis of budgets in this report can be returned if spending turns out to be lower. For example, if Liverpool spent £10 million less than its present budget, it could reclaim £22 million worth of grant. I urge all authorities in this position to reconsider the matter, in their ratepayers' interests.

Why should one authority spend £126 per pupil on school cleaning when another can manage with £31? Why does one council service its vans every 600 miles when identical vans can go twice as far between services elsewhere? How can it possibly be right that some vehicles go for fewer than 10 miles between services? If one authority spends £7·30 on meals on wheels to the elderly, why does another spend only £1·30? [HON. MEMBERS: "Because the quality is lower."]. If Labour Members would read the Audit Commission's reports, which I know will be unpalatable to them, they will see that the variation in the provision of services does not reflect the variation in costs. It is in the interests of all councils—whether Labour-controlled, Conservative-controlled or hung—to find ways of saving money.

Dr. John Cunningham: The Minister talks about efficiency. The Opposition welcome all attempts by local authorities to use precious public resources effectively. Since he is quoting from the Audit Commission reports, may I draw his attention to the two major reports—one on block grant distribution and the other on capital investment under the Government's financial system? The latter states:

> "The Commission believes that the systems have contributed to wasteful investment by a combination of delays to worthwhile projects, pressure to spend before the year end, failure to plan ahead and abrupt curbs in programmes"

as a result of Government policy.

The report on the block grant distribution states:

> "The uncertainties associated with the present arrangements for distributing Block Grant to local authorities are now leading to higher rates than are necessary."

Are they not damning criticisms of the Government's policy?

Mr. Baker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has reaffirmed that the Audit Commission is not the poodle of the Government — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am about to answer the hon. Gentleman's point. I must ask him to await next week's statement on the block grant system for the future. As to capital control, we are examining, with the local authority associations, ways to improve the system, which everyone recognises is imperfect.

Dr. Cunningham: Is that it?

Mr. Baker: That is the answer.

The third supplementary report for 1982-83, which is also before the House, is intended to be the last supplementary report for that year to close the books. I should say that 1982-83 was only the second year of the block grant arrangements. There is no change in the total of block grant payable to authorities, but there are changes within the total for all authorities.

I should also refer to what has become known as the housing grant-related expenditure anomaly for that year. This matter has a comparatively long history, and I apologise for the complexity of my explanation. There was an error in the main rate support grant report for 1982 in the specification of the GREA on some items of housing expenditure. It was discussed with local authority representatives in the summer and autumn of 1982. It was agreed that the first supplementary report for 1982-83, made in December 1982, should incorporate a disregard to ensure that no local authority could incur holdback as a result of the understatement of its GREA in that year. The treatment of the anomaly has been maintained in successive supplementary reports.

[Mr. Baker]

My right hon. Friend considered carefully whether he should correct the anomaly in his final report. After listening to the representations of the local authorities, as he does on all matters — they were divided in their views, as those who follow the matter will know — he concluded that it would be unreasonable now, in the course of the year, to alter the basis set in 1982, on which local authorities have made their 1985-86 budget and rating decisions.

I now return briefly to the supplementary report of 1985-86.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Before my right hon. Friend concludes, will he consider a very important point? Of course there was not agreement among the local authorities, because £36 million was being filched from the counties and given to other areas of the country. Of course there will not be agreement between those who benefit from an error and those who lose from it. Why was it not put right in the main GREA formula, so that the shire counties would not continue to suffer in their GREA assessment from having £36 million filched from them? It is not good enough to say that there is not agreement when some benefit from the mistake and some do not. Once a mistake is located, it must be put right immediately and not continued.

Mr. Baker: It was an error relating only to 1982-83 and has not been continued subsequently. That is an important point. It is not a cumulative error. The error, which relates only to 1982-83, can be taken into account in later years.

There is a limited pool in the grant to be distributed, and if it is to be given to some it has to be taken away from others. We thought that on balance we had come to the right conclusion in leaving it where it was. We shall listen to the arguments, but there are arguments on both sides. I note what my hon. Friend said.

In conclusion, I return briefly to the main report that is before us. I am sure that Labour Members will represent the holdback schedule as harsh and draconian, and I agree that we have had to make some tough decisions, but I re-emphasis the point that I have made twice before in my speech. The decision to incur holdback is not a Government decision, but is taken by those authorities which determine to exceed the Government's expenditure guidelines. High-spending councils have only themselves to blame. I remind the House that 74 per cent. of the councils this year, compared with 60 per cent. last year, are operating within targets.

We hear a great deal about caring Labour authorities. Where is the evidence that they care for their ratepayers, when they deliberately push up rates by their flagrant over-spending? I have indicated in my speech various ways, identified by the Audit Commission, in which savings can be made, through good management and moderation.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): My right hon. Friend made an eloquent plea to local authorities to obtain better value for money. Does he feel that the time has come when we should be thinking in terms of compulsory competitive tendering for all local authorities which are not doing so voluntarily?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend made a very distinguished contribution, when he was the leader of Wandsworth council, to the privatisation of local authority services. He will know that we published a consultative document, and we are receiving comments upon it. When they have been collated, we shall come forward with proposals on the subject.

One of the Audit Commission reports showed that, whereas some services which had not been privatised were as efficient as those which had been privatised, every council which had privatised its refuse collection made significant cost savings. That is very convincing evidence.

I say to the high spenders that, even at this late hour, it is not too late for them to pull back and avoid the worst consequences of holdback. If they will follow the example of the sensible Conservative-controlled councils, there are savings to be made. This is the way to demonstrate a caring attitude—not by grand political gestures, but by sensible good housekeeping. The choice is not between high spending and cuts in services. The choice is between wasteful extravagance and responsible, accountable local government.

5.34 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The House waited with interest and not a little amusement—at least on the Opposition Benches—for the Minister of State's speech. We were wondering whether his task in presenting the reports and recommending them to the House would mark a new phase in the Government's presentation of their case. Indeed, that was so. For almost 20 minutes of his speech, the Minister did not address himself to the reports.

We were interested to know whether we would be told that a public expenditure increase in real terms of 9·5 per cent. since 1979 was a virtue, and whether a reduction in rate support grant of 23·4 per cent. in real terms in the same period was a vice — or was it vice-versa? The Minister did not say.

Against that background, is the real reduction in local government expenditure since 1979 of 4·6 per cent. regarded by the Government as a success? Public expenditure has gone up dramatically. Local government expenditure has gone down. Were the assembled Tory Members — although there were not too many of them here today — *[Interruption.]* There are more Labour Members than Tories present, and there are twice as many Tories as Labour Members in the House of Commons. We wondered whether the assembled Tory Members were here to applaud real cuts. Were they here to applaud public expenditure being massively up or rate support grant being massively down?

One thing is clear. In spite of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Brecon hangover speech, the Prime Minister was correct about rate support grant. There is no middle way for this Government with rate support grant. There is only one way for them — down, down, down; so far down that the total accumulated loss to councils in England in rate support grant alone since 1969 as a result of the Government's cuts is a staggering £16·14 billion.

In 1985-86 alone, the total grant is £3·8 billion lower than when Labour left office in 1979, and that is at 1985-86 prices. They are, indeed, real cuts, and cuts that hurt millions of people, as councils of all political persuasions are caught in the Government's financial vice —or perhaps one should say vices.

It is interesting that, when political argument runs low, the Tory party wheels out the rusty old artillery and flint-locks of political abuse to fill the gap.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): What is wrong with abuse?

Dr. Cunningham: The reality is that councils of all political persuasions are suffering as a result of the Government's policies. The hon. Gentleman asked what is wrong with abuse. I think that it was Samuel Butler who once said,

"I do not mind lying but I hate inaccuracy."

The Minister of State was perhaps inwardly reflecting that he might have chosen more fertile ground for his leading role from the Front Bench. His right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently made a speech in which he looked at public expenditure to the end of the century. That is real vision, I suppose—but I wonder. I suspect from his performance today, however, that the Minister of State has much more limited horizons in view—for example, perhaps the next Government reshuffle. Government policy has been presented as a success, although outside this House — and increasingly inside it, too, for that matter — fewer people than ever believe it to be so. Whatever the presentation, the reality is that in the two reports before us the Government's failures lie nakedly exposed.

The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which was introduced by a Conservative Government, places a duty on the Secretary of State to use the best information available to him to estimate the amount of grant to which each authority is entitled and to notify it. He is supposed to consult the local authorities. Yet today the House is asked to approve supplementary report (No. 3) for 1982-83, which is intended to close the books for that financial year. Everyone knows that, because of an error in the Department of the Environment on grant-related expenditure calculations, the shire counties and districts were deprived, as the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) rightly said, of £36 million. The mistake came to notice some considerable time ago but Ministers have constantly and consistently refused to correct it. It is described euphemistically in paragraph 15 of the report as an "anomaly". I think that the Minister used that word himself. How many millions of pounds must be involved before an anomaly becomes an error under this Administration?

The refusal to face facts, which is typical of the Government, illustrates the hollowness of Ministers' consistent promises to help especially the shire counties. The Government's error has been hidden away despite repeated representations. Ironically, it benefits many of the London boroughs that Tories most dislike at the expense of the counties, which many of them pretend to prefer to support and represent. The hollow claims in respect of the Berkshire factor were quickly disposed of earlier in the year and the Government's GRE error demonstrates once again their inherent weakness on these issues.

Do Conservative Members really intend to vote for and approve the report when they are aware of the facts? They know that Ministers are ignoring their representations, their error and the standing agreement between the Department and local authority associations that such errors should be corrected before the books are closed on a financial year. If that is the Government's attitude—that is what it appears to be—it exemplifies that under this Government truth is the accident of error. The issue demonstrates above all the weakness of GRE as a means of determining grant. Such errors have even greater significance as GRE is used to set targets for council spending and ultimately to undermine local democracy through the Rates Act 1984, about which the Minister had much to say.

The Minister referred to violence, and the Opposition condemn all violence unequivocally. Violence has no place in a democratic community. Indeed, it is inimical to the entire democratic process. We defer to the Minister not one iota in our condemnation of unacceptable events over the past few months. But the Government cannot evade their responsibility for the social climate and for the attitudes that are often struck by the Prime Minister. Her aggression and uncaring attitude can be described only as provocative in the extreme.

Grant-related expenditure assessments are subjective and unfair, especially to metropolitan authorities as they take little account of the acute social problems existing in our urban areas. Over 70 per cent. of the members of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, Conservative as well as Labour, are spending more than their GRE to cope with acute problems. They will be penalised even more harshly for such spending if, as has been rumoured, GRE is to become the new test that the Government will impose if targets and penalties are to be abolished.

The Audit Commission has told the Government that there is too much fine tuning by computers of inadequate basic data resulting in spurious accuracy and that the information used to calculate the needs for local authority services is open to serious question. When I intervened in the Minister's speech to put that to him, he said, "These matters are being considered". These matters have been well documented for a long time, but the Government persist in using their system, and the methodology associated with it, knowing that it is open to serious question.

It is the view of all local authority associations that the Government's system, and the GREs upon which it is based, is completely discredited. Yet if reports are to be believed, the Government are contemplating using that system when they scrap targets and penalising authorities solely on the GRE formula. We would reject such an approach, and I believe that it would be rejected overwhelmingly throughout local government.

The School of Advanced Urban Studies was commissioned by the Government to examine various matters and it concluded that GREs

"are inherently unsuitable to form the basis of legal limits on local spending."

That has implications for the implementation of the Rates Act as well as for setting targets for local authority expenditure. Even the Government, in their published document, which is in the Library, admit that GREs are intended to be an objective assessment of the need for spending based on independent indicators rather than the actual expenditure required for services. We reject the third supplementary report for 1982-83.

The supplementary report for 1985-86 raises many more serious objections. The total grant in 1985-86 was reduced by £660 million in real terms compared with the previous financial year. That meant that a significantly smaller pool was available to all councils. Although councils' budgets in total are only about 1·3 per cent. over proposed expenditure, grant penalties are the most severe yet. As the Minister has said, they total £550 million or 6·5 per cent. of total block grant. That illustrates the major

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Treasury windfall gain from penalties imposed on councils by the Government's financial arrangements. In reality the penalties are twice the amount that is in dispute between the Department and the councils.

The Secretary of State has reputedly refused to limit the impact of the Government's system, as he could have done by disregarding expenditure by councils that have been elected to tackle the problems of some of the most disadvantaged communities in areas such as those of time-expired urban programme projects or joint financed schemes. This approach has been urged on him again by local authority associations only very recently, but it has again been rejected.

The Secretary of State has agreed to disregard expenditure on contributions to the Bradford fire disaster appeal. That sounds generous and it could be asked, "Who would disagree with that?" The irony is that Bradford council will lose £11·4 million in grant because of the severity of the penalty system that is being imposed upon it. It would be far more beneficial for Bradford if the Minister were to consider some of the disregards and got rid of the Government's iniquitous scheme than to agree a disregard for sums given to the disaster appeal, however worthy that appeal might be.

Penalties are likely to affect 107 councils. That is an illustration not of profligacy or irresponsibility, as the right hon. Gentleman implied, but of how unacceptable the Government's approach to local government finance is.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman with interest because he speaks with authority and sometimes with wisdom. Does he include in his remarks the borough of Tameside which has recently announced that it will spend about £300,000 a year of ratepayers' money exploring the voting records and other behaviour of north-west Tory Members of Parliament? Does he believe that that is a justified use of money? If it is not, should my right hon. Friend take action on it?

Dr. Cunningham: I can understand the hon. Gentleman being annoyed about such decisions. I have no difficulty with such matters because, unlike him and his right hon. Friend, I do not believe in central Government controlling local government expenditure, especially when it is raised through income. I do not believe that there is a sensible macroeconomic argument in favour of it. However, like the hon. Gentleman, I can identify items of expenditure by authorities that I might not support, but the Opposition have faith in the democratic system. We believe that in a plural democratic society the right way for the ratepayers—at Tameside or anywhere else—to resolve such problems is through the vote. The way to improve local government accountability is not to weaken local government and take away powers but to strengthen it—the obverse of what the Government have been doing for six years.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): The hon. Gentleman might be surprised, but I agree with most of what he has just said. I agree with accountability and democracy. If he believes what he says about accountability, surely consideration should be given to those who foot the bill. In other words, the business and commercial ratepayer has no vote and no influence and therefore local government is not accountable to them. If he believes in democracy and accountability he must take account of the lack of accountability and democracy in the case of those who contribute more than those who vote and exercise their democratic will.

Dr. Cunningham: I am familiar with that curious argument. It has been raised many times by Conservative Members in the past two years. I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman was implying when he said that the business men have no vote. They have one vote like everyone else. We live in a system of universal suffrage. There is universal franchise. If he is suggesting that the system should be altered or tampered with, he should be explicit.

The Opposition have no intention of changing the system and we shall oppose any proposals from the Government that appear to do that—whether by giving people additional votes, imposing a tax on votes or on the right to vote through a poll tax, or by any other means. I reject the argument. I hope that I have made myself clear.

The 107 councils to which I was referring before those interventions are not deciding voluntarily, as the Minister of State implied, to spend money that they desperately need in clawback. They are not rushing into penalties willy nilly. The overwhelming majority are paying little in penalty, as he pointed out. They are not in that position out of choice. They are there despite improving their efficiency, despite using money from balances and despite rate increases, because they have decided to do their best to sustain the services and jobs—the quality as well as the range of services—wherever possible.

However, there is no disguising the fact that even many of the best managed councils have been faced with severe problems because of the cuts in rate support grant. That is most graphically spelled out by looking at an individual case. The Minister did that and I shall do the same. I should like to quote from a long letter from the Tory leader of Sefton borough council to the Secretary of State for the Environment. That gentleman pleaded for leniency for Sefton because, he said, Sefton was

"staring a penalty in the face."

He continued:

"There is much work that needs to be done in Sefton."

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) would agree with that if he had not been unfortunately absent on House of Commons business with a Select Committee, because there are many major problems in the borough. Councillor Watson, the Tory leader of the council, continued:

"I am very concerned that Conservative Members on Sefton council feel that they have exhausted their capacity and indeed their desire to explain away rate increases . . . caused almost entirely as a result of adverse block grant movements."

That is the view of many other Tory local government leaders. He then said:

"Political support is ebbing away at an alarming rate."

There are hundreds of such examples in local government after six years of these policies. The latest evidence of the political debacle facing the Conservative party was demonstrated in this year's county council election results and, more recently, the Brecon and Radnor by-election. Not only have services been undermined and jobs squandered, but rates have been forced up as a direct result of Government policy. The right hon. Gentleman carefully quoted the average industrial and domestic rate increases for the current financial year. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy figures show an average domestic rate increase of 9·5 per cent. this year—

shattering the Government's claims to be protecting ratepayers. Rates have now increased in real terms under this Government by more than 80 per cent. in six years. Rates fell in real terms by five per cent. under the previous Labour Government. Who governs in the ratepayers' interests?

In 1978-79, the average weekly rate payment in England and Wales, including water rate, was £3·19. After six years of those policies, it now stands at £8·27—two and a half times higher — under a Government who promised to abolish domestic rates and who pretend to protect the ratepayers.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the Government have a duty not just to the ratepayer but to the taxpayer, because, after all, that is where the rate support grant comes from?

Dr. Cunningham: It is astonishing that the hon. Gentleman has not noticed, after all this time, what every Labour Member is now telling him, that it is not just the rates burden that has increased under the Government but the tax burden. The tax burden is much higher after six years of these policies than it was under the Labour Government.

There is now a certain amount of panic, no doubt with attempts by the Minister for Local Government to steady the ship. The Department of the Environment Ministers are apparently willing to contemplate a tax on the right to vote in a desperate attempt to escape responsibility for what the Government have been doing for the past six years. I reiterate that there can be no consensus for a poll tax. Will the Government, if they wish a consensus, as the Prime Minister suggested at the Scottish Tory party conference, publish a Green Paper on reform of local government finance?

The Government seem oblivious to the long-term damage that they have done to local democracy and good local government. They seem unconcerned by the diminution in the quality of the crucial services such as education, transport and housing. They seem unaware of the harm done to inner city communities, black and white, to families, children, the disabled and the elderly. As Shaw said:

> "The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity."

The Government increasingly display indifference to the problems faced by millions of people.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Can the hon. Gentleman square what he said with the experiences of the citizens of Leicester? They were told that, with rate capping, 25 per cent. of services would go, 800 jobs would be lost, community centres and swimming baths would be closed, and dustbins would not be emptied. Many tales of doom were told about what would happen. Now, under rate capping in Leicester, more jobs are being advertised, the council continues to operate, the rates are reduced and more people are coming to work in the city at a time when the council is spending £137,000 on an anti-rate capping political research unit. How can the hon. Gentleman say that the Conservative Government do not care when the business men of Leicester are taking on more people? Has not success come through the Government bringing rate capping to a city such as Leicester?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not sure whether the hon. Member was speaking in support of the policies of the Labour-controlled city council. He must be as aware as I am that the biggest single swing seen against the Conservative party in the county council elections was in Leicestershire. The hon. Gentleman would have lost his seat with such a swing in a general election. If he is interested in the reaction of voters to these policies, I suggest that he looks no further than the outcome of the county council elections in the county where his seat is located.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: We have control.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred twice to the county council elections. If they were such a triumph for the Labour party, why did it end up controlling five fewer county councils at the end of the elections?

Dr. Cunningham: If the right hon. Gentleman wants me to digress into the county council elections and into the private grief of the Tory party, which was shattered in its strongholds, I can say this. The Labour party dramatically increased its share of the vote in the shires. The Tory party did not win back control of any of the 10 councils that we controlled when we went into the elections. It is true that we lost overall control of five such counties and it is true, I regret to say, that in some of them, thanks to Liberal collaboration, the Tories are administering the councils.

I regret that it is true in my council of Cumbria. I also regret that the Tories, with Liberal assistance, have started to implement cuts in budgets in Cumbria and, I understand, in Lancashire. However, the Tory party did not win control of any councils from the Labour party. If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that, he is deluding himself.

It is increasingly clear that the Government are not concerned about the people and their problems and do not feel responsible for the people and communities, and the country's problems. Therein lie the seeds of this Government's defeat. While Conservative Members may gloat about Royal Assent for the Bill to abolish the metropolitan councils and the GLC, their problems as a result of that appalling legislation are only just beginning. The Government have once again demonstrated, by draconian orders such as this, their invincible commitment to centralisation and control from Marsham street of the daily routines of each and every town hall in the country.

Once again, I say that the Government's policy is unacceptable to the Labour party. The past six years of Tory Government, and particularly the last two years of debate on local government, have convinced those Labour Members who still needed to be convinced—there were very few of them — that Ministers and officials in Whitehall simply cannot cope with the minutiae of local government, nor should they try. People elect local authorities to run local affairs and the evidence available to us from recent elections and opinion polls suggests that people favour more, not less, local independence from central Government.

For example, a report to the non-party constitutional reform centre shows that over half the people questioned in detail want some independence for their local council from central Government, and not less, but the Government have spent two precious years of parliamentary time enacting legislation — the Rates Act and the

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Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act — and producing orders such as these that we are debating today that run counter to the increasingly popular will of the people.

We have necessarily spent this time pointing out the error of the Government's ways, frequently supported by the Government's Back Benchers, senior and junior, by the other Opposition parties, by the other place, by local government in all its shades, as well as by the public at large. It has been right and absolutely necessary for us to oppose that legislation, but now that the Government have apparently exhausted their miserable stock of malevolent attacks and ideas for local government we serve notice that we shall be talking about change under the the next Labour Government and about strengthening and enhancing the local democratic process.

The Labour party will be calling on all those who claim to care for the quality of the country's government to join us in debate. The debates will not be about the sterile attempts to abolish councils that support or oppose us, or about the arcane detail of financing individual services, which Ministers in the Department of the Environment are so pleased to be always nit-picking about, or about individual administrative areas. It will be about how to increase and improve democratic opportunities and performance in Britain in the future.

All this means a rethink about the role and function of local government and, for that matter, of the regional or strategic delivery and control of services, including some now run by appointed boards. It means the strengthening of local government and the enhancing of its powers and its role in the British economy. It does not mean the continual bleeding away of its freedom and strength, as has been happening since 1979, because we believe that it is only by strengthening local democracy that better performance and real accountability can come. Strengthened local government, with powers devolved from Whitehall, will make a major contribution to the vital and essential attack on unemployment in Britain, and strengthened support services and finance will be required to match up to the reality of full-time councillors.

On the other hand, the two reports are simply the latest in a long line of squalid impositions on local government, ratepayers and those who depend, often essentially, on local services. They offer a miserable prospect, and we reject them.

6.10 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I am delighted to be called in the debate so that I can convey the pride and pleasure that so many of my constituents feel at rate capping having taken effect in Southwark. When they find that their borough rates bill has been reduced by some 25 per cent. as a result of the Government's action, they are delighted. I offer their congratulations to the Government on that.

Southwark is a deprived area. It is an inner London area in which we know that there are great problems, but many of those problems are of the borough's own making. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that the worst sin was not to hate one's fellow men, but to be indifferent to them. Never have we seen a council which is more indifferent to the needs of people than Southwark in its present-day practice.

Southwark's greater failure is perhaps not just its indifference but its incompetence. We see its incompetence in its full flowering in its housing management. Here we have a borough with a housing stock of some 66,000 properties, but where 4,500 of those properties are left vacant and boarded up. Is that a way to care for the homeless? Is that how to show one's compassion to the homeless? That is an indictment of the way in which Southwark runs its housing.

Of those 4,500 vacant properties, some 1,500 have squatters in them. At a recent civic service the preacher drew attention to the fact that squatters were often more efficient at running Southwark housing than Southwark council itself. That was not a particularly spiritual message. Indeed, in the eyes of the leadership of Southwark council, it was regarded as distinctly heretical. However, the point was made that the squatters could manage housing for themselves in a better way than the council could.

Those vacant homes represent the loss of some £4 million to £5 million in rent. Is it the way to concern oneself with the careful management and housekeeping of the finances of the borough to forgo some £4 million to £5 million in rent on vacant voids? In addition to that, if that were not bad enough, rent arrears now amount to some £21 million, and £5·5 million of that is owed by former tenants. Is that a way to manage housing? Is that a way to exercise good housekeeping? Southwark can be indicted on that ground also.

It is against that background that we need to improve the way in which housing is managed in this borough, so that the benefit can be passed on to those in real need. The system demonstrates the indifference and incompetence of present housing management there. That is to cite but one aspect of the housing problem.

The aspiration of so many of my constituents in Dulwich has been towards home ownership. Those who have been council tenants for many years and who are now reaching retirement, having brought up their families in a family council home, and for whom the prospect of being a home owner never suggested itself as a reality in the past, have, as a result of the Housing and Building Control Act 1984, been enabled — in theory at least — to purchase their homes. However, since the Act has been in force —almost a year now—there have been few sales.

The powers that be in the town hall — the union bureaucracy—have attempted consistently to thwart the wishes, aspirations and hopes of prospective purchasers, by several different tactics. The latest and most dispiriting one for prospective purchasers is the law's delay. I speak as a quasi-lawyer. I recognise that there are sometimes necessary reasons for delay, but the way in which the legal department of Southwark council has delayed the preparation of the legal documents that are required for the transfer and conveyance of property is a scandal.

I am delighted to know that the Department of the Environment is to have meetings with the officers and members of Southwark council to see whether there is a way of speeding up the process, whether the council is so incompetent that it cannot find the appropriate form of words for its legal documentation, whether it should be helped, or whether the duty should be taken away from it. My constituents feel that the Government have offered them the opportunity, but the council has failed to see it through, and by its intransigence is attempting to thwart the tenants' applications to purchase their homes.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Did the hon. Gentleman notice in the *South London Press* this morning that the ombudsman had upheld two complaints against the goody-goody council of Wandsworth for exactly the sort of delay that he is complaining about in Southwark?

Mr. Bowden: De minimis non curat lex. If there were only two complaints to the ombudsman in Wandsworth, that is remarkable. I shall show my colleague from Norwood the postbag that I have, which runs to several hundred letters from frustrated tenants who are trying to buy. Two seems a very small number. I would willingly settle for two in these circumstances.

Southwark council is unable to fulfil its job in its present role. The housing management problem is far too big for it. The opportunity to improve its finances and housekeeping by the sale of some of its properties, and to redress the unhealthy imbalance between local authority and private housing—there is some 70 per cent. local authority housing and 30 per cent. private housing in the borough — is not being seized. It is an unhealthy climate, in which local authority financing cannot operate effectively. We see the demands of heavy rating on the very limited number, the minority, who pay full rates—a mere 28 per cent. of the electorate.

It is against that background that my constituents welcome and applaud the fact that rate capping has been applied to Southwark. However, that is only a beginning. There is a need for greater impetus and direction in the operation of local authorities such as inner London boroughs in general, and Southwark and Lambeth in particular, to ensure that they fulfil their proper functions, exercise good housekeeping and use the resources that are available to them for the good of those whom they are there to serve. They are patently not doing that at the moment.

6.18 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): This debate is about local authorities endeavouring to meet their obligations under the Rates Act, along with the targets and penalties that are imposed upon them. At the same time, they are trying to meet the needs of the community and to act in the interests of their ratepayers.

My local authority of Manchester has endeavoured to protect and promote employment, and to improve and extend services for which it is responsible, in the light of the remorseless deterioration in the standard of living and conditions of Manchester residents. At the same time, the council is opposed to any large rate increases, recognising that excessive rates only add to the hardship of its residents.

A local authority such as Manchester, a major inner city area, needs only to look at the social and economic statistics of recent years to be aware of the downward spiral of urban deprivation. Manchester now has the highest level of urban deprivation outside inner London. Unemployment is higher than the national average. In 1978 the unemployment rate stood at just over 10 per cent. It is now over 23 per cent. Male unemployment in one part of my constituency is running at over 50 per cent.

About 20,000 jobs have been lost in the north-east area of Manchester since the late 1970s—4,000 in the last couple of years. While that has been going on, people in their thousands have been languishing on the housing waiting lists. More than 21,000 are now listed, and their chances of being housed grow weaker daily while the Tories are in power.

We in Manchester have over 6,000 unfit dwellings. Another 7,000 lack basic facilities and 58,000 are in need of renovation. Many of those are of the system-built rubbish variety which were foisted on local authorities by central Government. Massive finance will be required to try to save them or, better still, to demolish them. Many ministerial visitors have looked at that type of housing. They cry crocodile tears and say that they suffer from a design fault and require what they describe as a "repair element". That is nonsense, and they know in their hearts that a massive financial input from central Government will be required to put them right.

The unemployed and those in need of housing are only two of the groups affected by the rate support grant cuts. In addition, the city contains a concentration of deprived social groups, pensioners living alone — they now account for 17 per cent. of all households—and 51,300 single parents, and the number of residents claiming supplementary benefit has increased from 50,000 in 1980 to more than 81,000 in July 1984.

All those problems affect the provision of services. About 50 per cent. of schoolchildren are now receiving free school meals. Whether the services are for the unemployed, the homeless, the elderly in need of meals on wheels, the provision of home helps, day nursery places, cultural and recreational services, cleansing and environmental health, street lighting and road maintenance, all are vital and all fall within the responsibility of the local authority.

Despite that, the Government try to compare one authority with another and attempt to blanket coverage the lot. That cannot be done, because one cannot compare Manchester even with its sister city of Salford. Much less can Manchester be compared with Birmingham or, further afield, Torquay or Blackpool. Each local authority is different and has different needs.

Manchester believes in meeting those needs and in honouring its commitment to improve and expand its services. In its 1985-86 submissions for improvements in services, Manchester city council reckoned to spend an additional £33 million. That increase would have created 2,200 jobs, mainly among lower paid and manual workers. Staff would have been employed in old people's homes, in establishments caring for the mentally ill, in teaching and in the housing benefits sector. It would also have gone some way to restore some of the 6,000 city council jobs which have been lost, not to mention the many other jobs lost in the private sector.

To maintain services and jobs at existing levels, the city council will need to spend £276 million. The Government have set a target of £250 million. A £2 penalty for every £1 spent will mean the Government pocketing £53 million which should be used to provide jobs and services.

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman explain why in Manchester, which is next door to Stockport—there is no grass between the two—and where there are twice the number of local government employees per head of population, there should be a downward spiral, whereas in Stockport the unemployment rate is down to less than 10 per cent.?

Mr. Litherland: The hon. Gentleman does not compare like with like. Manchester is a core city, with art

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galleries, museums and so on, all requiring money for their upkeep. When we last debated this subject I tried to explain the position to the hon. Gentleman, who invariably tries to make that comparison. We in Manchester have had a mass exodus of the more able, and those strong in wind and limb, into the suburbs, leaving in Manchester those with greater needs, including the elderly, mentally ill and young unemployed.

Our massive majority on the city council has arisen because the electors want what the council can provide, if given the chance. If the people of Manchester want the level of employment and services which the council wishes to provide, it is for them, the voters, to decide. Manchester wants to provide the services which the people want and for which they have voted.

Mr. Harry Cowans (Tyne Bridge): The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) should accept that, by the inner city partnership, even the Government recognise the problems of cities such as Manchester and Newcastle. One problem is the tightly drawn boundaries, which condense those problems into smaller areas. In view of the lecture that he has received from my hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Stockport should accept that the difference between Labour and Conservative Members such as he is that we want to solve the problems, while they want to draw money away from local authorities. They claim that so long as the rates are low, the level of services does not matter.

Mr. Litherland: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for making the position abundantly clear. As he says, the inner city partnership recognises the differences and, as I have explained on many occasions to the hon. Member for Stockport, the type of comparison that he wants to make cannot be made.

Why do the Government and their Whitehall mercenaries think that they are better at costing and assessing the needs of local authorities, when central Government spending has increased by 100 per cent. since 1979, while local authority spending has fallen by 14 per cent. in real terms?

Rate support grant cuts in Manchester have amounted to £161 million in the last four years. All that cost must be borne by those of whom the Tories claim to be the champions, the ratepayers. Those cuts have been the primary cause of the massive rate increases that have occurred, with, in Manchester, the loss of more than 6,000 jobs.

The council has made representations to the Secretary of State to reconsider the harmful effects on Manchester and other local authorities of the Government's targets and penalties, with a plea for the restoration of the reduction in the level of grant paid to the city of Manchester. It is estimated that since 1979, against the growth in demand for services, the Government have reduced revenue support by more than £1 million a week.

Penalties and targets are applied unfairly. The result is that local government expenditure is by Government instruction. For example, under the housing benefit scheme, which was imposed on local government, authorities must meet all the residual costs, including the running of the local discretionary scheme to meet local needs. All of that expenditure is borne by local government. It should be financed by central Government. In other words, it should be taken out of the cost assessment and disregarded.

Manchester city council has produced a statement on the issues which it wants the Secretary of State to disregard. They include:

"*(a)* the full cost of projects assisted by Government grants or projects recognised by Government as priority initiatives including
—the urban programme and UDG scheme.
—joint finance schemes with health authorities.
—European regional development fund projects.
—section 11 expenditure.
(b) the changes to advanced further education 'pooling' arrangements.
(c) the costs of operating a free school meals scheme.
(d) the cost of providing mandatory student awards".

On the subject of employment, the council said:

"Disregard should be introduced for the residual cost of YTS and other schemes together with all other expenditure designed to tackle unemployment, including grants, loans, rent guarantees, mortgages, estate development and infrastructure work for industrial development."

The council said that the cost of administering housing benefit should be disregarded. All the increased charges in the nationalised industries above the cost of inflation —for instance, water and electricity charges—should be disregarded, as should services outside local authority control, for example, magistrates court expenditure net of specific grant.

These issues should exercise the mind of the Secretary of State so that he gives Manchester and other local authorities a better deal. Until the Secretary of State understands the real difficulties facing local authorities in balancing their budgets, as they must do by law, and balancing the interests of the ratepayers against those of the community to whom they are responsible for providing services, we can expect more conflict as more councils refuse to accept cuts in jobs and services.

Next year, many local authorities will confront the Government. Next year is crunch year. The Government's policy is one not of compassion or care, but of political confrontation, which is meant to strip away every vestige of local democracy as long as local authorities oppose a centralised diktat.

The Government's attack is not just on Manchester, but is part and parcel of a national campaign directed at local government and the public sector. The aim is to starve local authorities of finance. To have a monetarist policy, one must have financial control. To obtain that control one must crush all forms of organised opposition, whether trade unions, local authorities, county councils or even opposition parties. This is the sinister path down which the Government are taking us. This is fully recognised in the speeches by the more responsible elements of the Tory party. They know that to use legislation to impose centralised control on local authorities and to ride roughshod over democratic rights is sinister and foreign to the old Conservative doctrines.

The Minister said that local government finance was fiendishly complex. The attacks on the most needy in our community have been more fiendish. The Minister asked for councils such as Liverpool to be condemned. The Government stand condemned for their confrontation of local government and their obscene policies towards it.

6.33 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): One quality in Parliament since the 1983 election has been the emergence

of hon. Members with practical local government experience. I commend those Labour Members with experience of local government at a senior level. For the first time for many years many Conservative Members have had such experience. Whatever our political beliefs, that experience benefits the House. We may disagree about policies, but at least we are discussing them from a background of practical experience.

I shall mention my local government experience for the benefit of hon. Members. Although they may disagree with my views, I have seen service on a county council for 10 years and a district council for 12 years and was leader of a local authority. Many of my colleagues have had similar experience.

Whether in relation to local government or central Government expenditure, my basic philosophy is that we should not any more than is necessary tell other people how to spend their money. I prefer the individual to keep as much of his or her own money as possible. I prefer central Government taxation to be as reasonably low as possible, taking account of the need for certain public expenditure. The same applies to local government expenditure. Local authorities should allow the people within their areas, within the constraints of providing essential services, to keep as much of their money as possible. Some may say that that is a hackneyed Conservative policy, but it is my basic philosophy.

Some people take a different view. In central Government they think that they know best, that they should incur higher Government expenditure and tell people how their money should be spent. Many people associated with local government take the same view—that they know better how to spend the money of local ratepayers or business ratepayers. I do not subscribe to that view. I approach local government and central Government financial dealings on that basis. I am no better qualified than anyone else to spend other people's money. Invariably the individual ratepayer knows how to spend his money better than I or any other hon. Member.

Many years ago, the Labour party decided that the percentage given to a local authority in rate support grant should be decreased. That decision was correct. The Labour Government reduced the percentage——

Dr. Cunningham: As the hon. Gentleman has raised this red herring, I must tell him that, when the Labour party came to office, the level of RSG was 60·5 per cent. It increased for two years and then decreased to 61 per cent., remaining at that level for the last three years of the Labour Government. In every year that the Labour party was in office, the percentage of RSG was higher than in any one year of this Tory Administration.

Mr. Powley: A former Minister, Anthony Crosland, said, in referring to local government, that the party was over and that profligate spending would have to cease. As a follow-up Labour Ministers said that the percentage of grant given to local authorities should be reduced—they did not carry that policy all the way through—and that was a wise decision. It was wise also for the Conservative Government in 1979 to carry on that philosophy.

District and county councils and metropolitan authorities should be more responsible for the expenditure that they incur rather than put out a hand to the Government so that they might dole out the taxpayers' money to cover that expenditure. I firmly believe that he who pays the piper calls the tune. If one depends more and more on central Government for funds to run local government, central Government inevitably must have a greater say in local government expenditure.

Mr. Cowans: To hear the hon. Gentleman talk, one would think that central Government imposed nothing on local government. In fact, 148 Acts have been passed which impose financial spending on local authorities. The hon. Gentleman seems to be making a good case for his being neither in Parliament nor in local government if everybody knows better than he does.

Mr. Powley: I certainly do not pretend that I know better than anyone else. It is my philosophy that preferably individuals should have their own say, and I wish that they had more of it.

Central Government—and this has been recognised by Labour and Conservative Governments — have a responsibility for the effects of overall economic policy on the country. There is no question but that the level of rates in a local authority has a direct influence on inflation and on the well-being of the economy. Therefore, central Government must exercise that responsibility, and the Government are right to exercise control now on the general level of the economy. Indeed, the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979 exercised even more control over local government. Anybody who was in local government in that period, as I was, will know the constraints which were put on local government. The cuts in housing allocation, hospital building and many other services between 1974 and 1979 occurred because the Government had a responsibility for the economic effect of all spending, in particular local government spending.

I turn from the generality of my remarks to my area of East Anglia where there are considerable problems. I apologise for referring to the time when I was in local government, but one draws on one's own local government experience. In East Anglia, we suffered when regression analysis was put into operation. In general, it seemed that the sparse areas with increasing populations received fewer resources while those areas with declining populations, particularly the urban areas, received more resources. That appeared to be patently unfair. It had a disastrous effect in East Anglia. East Anglia is a fairly populous area — indeed it has a growing population. Here I am critical of my own Government, because, in my opinion, they have not sufficiently restored the effect of regression analysis.

In Cambridgeshire, in Suffolk, which is my old county, and in my county of Norfolk, there are three very efficient authorities which are traditionally low spending. Given the target and penalty system which has been in operation, of which I am critical, those authorities have suffered because of their efficiency and low spending. Where targets have been put into operation based on previous expenditure, which in many areas has been profligate expenditure, they have benefited. Where targets have been based on authorities whose expenditure generally has been much lower and more efficient, counties like Norfolk have suffered because of the system.

The efficiencies and economies of counties in East Anglia such as Norfolk must be taken into account more realistically to reflect the economies which they have made in the past so that they are not repeatedly penalised. There is a limit to the number of economies that can be

[Mr. Powley]

made. Whatever criteria one takes, East Anglia has been economical. It has accepted the realities of financial discipline, and does not deserve to be penalised again for its economies while observing that the Government appear to be supporting authorities which have incurred increased expenditure and in which greater economies could have been made. I therefore make a plea for the abolition of the target and penalty system and for a greater recognition of the regression analysis as it initially operated.

In East Anglia one can also see the difference between the services of a county authority and those of a district authority. Norfolk has Norwich in its centre. Norfolk administers essential services such as education, fire and police, in all of which economies have been introduced. Norfolk does its best to privatise its services. It looks for more efficient ways of doing things and endeavours not to engage in profligate spending, which is to its credit. However, Norfolk, like many other shire counties with cities at their centre, observes a city like Norwich engaging in profligate and unnecessary spending. When my own district council of Norwich wastes money on promoting CND or other such oddities, although this is not the same scale of spending as that in which Norwich has to engage, Norfolk realises that it is being economical at the expense of another authority in its area which is profligate and wasting ratepayers' money. That is not good enough.

The Government, through their allocation system, must recognise that it is those district authorities like Norwich which engage in profligate spending which need to be penalised, at whatever level the spending happens to be, because they are getting away with it at the expense of counties like Norfolk which administer essential services.

Some way must be found in the rating system to remove business and commerce from the political element of rate fixing. I do not know the Government's view on this, but I believe that commerce and business should make a contribution to the services which an authority rightly needs and of which it rightly takes advantage such as the fire service, the police service and the security services. However, I do not believe that any business or commerce should make a contribution to the profligate spending patterns of other authorities in the area. There is no reason for business or commerce in the city of Norwich to contribute, say, to expenditure on CND, which my authority loves to support.

I believe that there are other elements to which business and commerce should not contribute, and these should be taken out of the district rate. High rates cost jobs. I know that this is disputed in some quarters, but I have no doubt that that is the case. I ran a small business in Cambridge for 24 years. I have talked to my colleagues, and I have my own experience on which to make a judgment. There is no doubt that high rates cost jobs. Local authorities must recognise — and unfortunately Norwich has a high unemployment problem — that an efficiently-run and low-rated local authority attracts business and commerce. There is no doubt in my mind but that that is the case. We want to attract business and commerce to my constituency, but that will not happen if the local authority levies too high a rate.

Rate capping has had the right effect. In the past, the ratepayers of Norwich were used to rate increases of 10 per cent., 15 per cent. or 20 per cent., but thanks to rate capping and the discipline placed on that authority, the increase can now be 4 per cent. or 5 per cent. or nothing at all. Rate capping has had the desired effect, at any rate in some areas.

In my area, the district council has moderated its expenditure. The past Lord Mayor, Councillor Leonard Stevenson, said that if the Rates Bill ever became law he would resign. That legislation has now become law and is having a good effect, rather than the disastrous effect that Councillor Stevenson predicted. However, he has not seen fit to resign, and that gives the lie to his integrity.

Norwich city council has a bad council housing record. It tried to resist the 1980 Act which gave local authority tenants the opportunity to buy their own homes if they wished to do so. A commissioner was put in to ensure that the authority complied with the law. Thankfully, it has seen some of the light in that it is now co-operating within the law and is selling local authority houses. However, Norwich's housing policy has not been good for the people of the area. The authority has been so inefficient that there are 600 empty council houses in the city. If the rent for each house is, say, £15 a week, and that is multiplied by 600, and then by 52, that will show the sums of money that are being wasted by the local authority simply by allowing 600 council houses to remain empty.

The local authority may argue that it has a very long waiting list—about 4,000 people, 3,000 of whom are single. But my own son is eligible to go on that waiting list, even though he lives at home and has no housing need. Therefore, waiting lists are not necessarily an indication of housing need within a local authority area. Any local authority can go a long way towards resolving its housing needs so long as it gets away from the idea that it can be resolved simply by building more and more council houses. That will never be the case.

Local authorities should look beyond the objective of owning as much of the property within their areas as possible. Instead, they should look to owner-occupation and to giving local people the freedom to choose. Our housing problem could then be resolved much more economically and efficiently and at less strain on ratepayers' and taxpayers' resources.

I hesitate to comment on Labour's alternatives. The Labour party does not believe in rate capping or in penalties. It believes in favourable treatment for Labour local authorities and in profligacy. Where will it all end? The Labour party knows that what it says cannot be put into operation. When it was in government it put those policies into operation and had to introduce economies.

The economies introduced by the present Government have resulted in a sounder basis on which local authorities can operate. I sincerely ask the Minister to look at the points that I have raised with regard to those local authorities that have operated economically.

6.54 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): So predictable are the routines of the House that I have checked and discovered that we went through this ritual a year ago minus a day to the moment, and I was called to speak a year ago minus a day minus three minutes to the moment.

We are now at the time of year when we look back on what has happened to the Government's predictions, and today's debate takes us over the past electoral year. On this occasion, this is unusual for one reason. I have a feeling

that the Government's defence of its case today is rather like the Government arguing the case for the nationalisation policies of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) before the European Court of Human Rights, because we are likely to hear next week that the Government do not believe in targets anyway and that they will change the system of finance. In other words, they will be putting forward a correction to a system that they can no longer support.

It will be recalled that when we met just before the summer recess last year there was on the horizon the first of the two reports of the Audit Commission. We had only the leaked document before us, and I do not blame the commission for that. I well remember the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and others—I think that I added to it—taunting the Secretary of State with the fact that it was likely that he would be criticised during the summer. The right hon. Gentleman made great play of the fact that the report was only a draft, but the substantive document was not all that different. It came out on 30 August and was critical of the system of setting expenditure assessments and target figures for local authorities under which if authorities overspent they would be penalised according to a rapidly escalating graph. That had bizarre implications, one of which was that some people ended up with nothing at all. It also meant that one penalised other authorities, often previously Tory-held shire counties, that were not overspending as much in the first place.

Last August, the Audit Commission, when reviewing the grant aid system for local authorities, came to the conclusion that major changes were now desirable. It found many things wrong with the system, such as unnecessary uncertainties and the fact that reserves had been built up unnecessarily. Perhaps most important of all, it came to the conclusion that:

"Because some information on local needs is often inadequate and that on local resources is out of date, serious distortions result . . . The introduction of targets partly related to past expenditure has encouraged some authorities to spend more to secure more grant, a perverse incentive which the present system was designed to avoid; and the gap between targets and grant related expenditure is generally widening."

No one suggests that the Government should not determine the amount of money available to local authorities. All Governments must retain that power. But the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) will know that one of the criticisms of the present Government is that they have imposed far more rigorous restraints on local authority expenditure since 1979 than on national expenditure. That may be a criticism of their own public expenditure policy which the electorate does not seem to think is particularly appealing.

Although the two sets of figures are getting closer, it is clear that the Government have been seeking to screw down the local authorities—which deliver the front-line services—more than they have been able to screw down themselves.

Mr. Waldegrave: That is not really a fair point to make. Our 1979 manifesto, quite straightforwardly—it was repeated in our 1983 manifesto—gave a set of priorities. The priorities on which we were elected had at their centre defence, the Health Service and pensions, as protected programmes, and law and order. The principal services on which we promised growth happen to be in that category, but the principal service in which the client group has dramatically declined—education—happens to be a local authority service. That fully explains the discrepancy.

Mr. Hughes: A Labour Member has muttered to me that that is the Government's new line—that pensions and the Health Service will have more money and that everything else will suffer. I expect that in real terms that is true—*[Interruption.]* Of course that is true, but it is not satisfactory. Employees on my local health authority were told only the other day that 350 of them are likely to be laid off. That includes doctors, nurses, ancillary staff and specialists in Guy's hospital and in others. Clearly even that policy is not acceptable.

Last year, this debate was opened by the Secretary of State who is not here today because he is in Cabinet Committee. That, of course, is a perfectly valid reason. It may be that one of the things to be grappled with is how one replaces the present system by the system we are to hear about next week in a way which complies with the Government's general policy of continuing to screw down local government expenditure. He has had as much criticism about that over the past year from his own hon. Friends as he has had from the Opposition.

The second report of the Audit Commission issued on 2 April this year said something similar and reached the similar conclusion to the first. It was a report by an independent official on the operation of the rate support grant system. It said:

"The addition of a regime of targets and penalties unrelated to objectively assessed spending needs, but designed to restrain spending, has detracted still further from the original purposes of the system, to the point of making its sophistication worthless."

To show how worthless it is, I will take some examples.

The Minister will know that the Government's record of arguing that local expenditure should be cut and that the system is fair has failed abysmally to convince the electorate. I shall take two obvious examples. The first relates to parliamentary by-elections, of which there have been eight since the general election. The Tory vote has gone down in each of them. In six of the eight it has gone down by more than 10 per cent. The Labour party vote has gone down in four and up in four, but never by more than 10 per cent. either way. Our vote has gone up in seven, and in six of those it went up by over 10 per cent.

In county elections, local services were clearly what people were voting about. I do not want now to labour the point, but the Labour party lost five out of 10 of the authorities it held. But the Tory party, as the Minister knows, for the first time in its history lost control of the Association of County Councils, and, instead of the majority of the shire county councils being run by the Tories, the Tories are now a minority group on the ACC.

In passing, I must add that it is not true to say that we more often support the Tories in shire counties than we support the Labour party. In Cheshire and Shropshire and originally Warwickshire, we supported the Labour party. In places like Essex, Hertfordshire and Humberside, we have supported the Tories. In three places—east Sussex, Hampshire and Oxfordshire—the Labour party put the Tories in, much to the chagrin of many people. In two places the Tories put Labour in. Let it not be imagined that in this new three-way balanced political scene it is only the alliance which is willing to put in its opponents. The

[Mr. Hughes]

Labour and Tory parties are now deciding that they often would prefer to see one or the other in power rather than have us in power.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The hon. Member is talking about the great election successes of the Liberals and their junior partners the Social Democrats, whose members have been conspicuous by their absence throughout this debate. I am sure that it is embarrassing to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who dislikes them perhaps even more than many of us do. Will the hon. Gentleman explain what happened to the Liberal-SDP vote in the county elections? While it is true that compared with 1983 the Conservative vote collapsed, it is also true that Labour's vote went up by almost 10 per cent. Compared with 1983, the Liberal-SDP percentage share of the vote went down a little. Why did the Liberals and the SDP do worse in the shire county elections than in the general election?

Mr. Hughes: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was about to make a 100 per cent. correct point, but he tripped at the last fence. I anticipated his questions and have the answers to hand, supplied by the research department of the Library. Yes, he is right in saying that in the shire counties the Tory vote went down from 50·2 per cent. to 38·4 per cent. He is also right in saying that the Labour party vote went up from 21·4 per cent. to 30 per cent. As he said, that is a rise of nearly 10 per cent. But he is not right in saying that our share went down, because the figure is exactly the same, at 27·9 per cent.

I will not rise to the bait of saying why there are no colleagues of mine here from the other party in the alliance, except to say that I have no doubt that they trust me to argue the case for both parties because we are agreed on the subject. An interesting development on the political scene is that the hon. Gentleman's party now argues votes and percentages and not seats. I look forward to the natural consequence of that which we will no doubt have to discuss after the next general election.

Mr. Straw: Given that the hon. Gentleman's party subscribes to proportional representation, will he explain why on the hung council in Wiltshire, when the Conservative party proposed proportional representation for committees, the SDP and the Liberals categorically refused to accept it because it would have undermined their power?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): If the hon. Gentleman follows that line, he will be getting away from the debate on the rate support grant. Let us get back to that subject.

Mr. Hughes: I will tell the hon. Gentleman later. I accept your stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is a very easy answer, but I shall deal with it in another way.

The debate has shown up the anomalies of the system by way of some very bizarre examples which I want to put in the context of the overall figures. The figures show that local authorities will overspend their targets this year by about £278 million. That is about 1·3 per cent., a relatively small amount. But it means that over £500,000 will be incurred by way of penalties lost to the local government budgets. That will affect a considerable number of local authorities. It will affect 19 out of 46 shire and metropolitan counties which will be penalised and will lose money, and 14 out of the 32 London boroughs, including, as I said to the Minister, four Tory-controlled boroughs. They would not incur the penalty if they honestly believed that they could get below the target, especially if they are seeking to uphold Tory policies on strict budgetary control.

Twenty-five out of 36 of the metropolitan districts will incur penalties, and of the other districts about 60 of all political species of authorities will be penalised because they have chosen to spend a certain amount of money. In their case, it is an overspend of about 3 per cent., but for that they will lose 12 per cent. of their block grant.

There are some very bizarre distortions. How can the Minister justify them? How can he justify a penalty of £17·7 million on an overspend of £10·1 million in Brent when surprisingly—and this redounds to the benefit of some of my constituents—in Harrow the penalty is £3 million on an overspend of £1·5 million and yet in Southwark there is less than half of that penalty, £1·4 million, on an overspend of £1·6 million? How can anyone justify a system of swings and roundabouts which penalises certain types of authority to such an enormous extent? As the Government know, it is not just the inner city authorities which suffer, although most of them suffer most. I hope that whatever system the Government come up with next week will recognise that with cuts in rate support grant, if they do not find substantial amounts of money for the inner cities in which the elderly are most concentrated and services the most run down, they will preside over a further decline in what used to be the power houses of the land.

The shire counties, too, are affected. As the hon. Member for Norwich, South pointed out again today, the present system revolves around special pleading. When the Government announced the figures last year there was a great baying from Tory Back Benchers from Warwickshire to the south-west asking the Government to let them off the hook. The Government did not oblige sufficiently and the Tories lost many seats as a result. We do not want another system geared to special pleading. We must have a system that treats everyone fairly.

Sadly, in the past year several authorities have played into the Government's hands. The hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) represents the southern and leafier end of my borough. Southwark is both rate capped and Labour controlled. That authority, with others, went through the process of arguing that it could not comply with the rate-capped limits and then eventually set a rate. It certainly came within the category to which the Minister referred. Intolerable scenes of violence and viciousness put horrendous pressure not just on elected members of the council but on members of the public who through much publicity had been invited to attend the rate-making meetings, of which I believe there were in the end about 10. Sadly, the Labour party in Southwark played into the Government's hands. Having cried wolf and said that it could not set a rate, the council eventually gave in. Other authorities did the same.

A leader in *The Guardian* a few weeks ago made the case for local authorities having more money and being able to argue the case for money with the Government without all the derogation and restrictions that now apply and without the Government being able to say that because a council cried wolf last year and then managed to make

ends meet it will be penalised even more severely this year when the Government know that the authority has used up most of its reserves. *The Guardian* said:

"Yet in many ways the most culpable of the councillors are those who knew all along that the strategy"—

the anti-rate-capping strategy—

"would fail, but who never said so in public, preferring to go along with it either for opportunist personal advancement or in order to set up a witch-hunt against more cautious and realistic Labour councillors and leaders. Into this category must be placed, for varying reasons, Mr. Ken Livingstone of the GLC, Mr. David Blunkett of Sheffield, Mrs. Margaret Hodge of Islington and Ms. Hilda Kean of Hackney."

I would add to that list Mr. Tony Ritchie of Southwark.

The Guardian continues:

"Some of these councillors have done very nicely out of this game. Some have got their parliamentary nominations. Some will soon do so. Others, notably in the London boroughs where elections are due next year, are using the betrayal to launch a purge of councillors who voted to set rates. All of this has lots to do with careerism and lots to do with internal Labour politics. But it has precious little to do with either a council's responsibility to get the best deal for its local people, or with Labour's national need to present a politically credible image to voters who have previously deserted the party at election time".

If the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he may be able to confirm that the deputy leader of Liverpool city council and other members of that council wanted to set a rate of 20 per cent. but the city Labour party said that there must be only a 9 per cent. rate increase, resulting in enormous deficit budgeting. Liverpool clearly deserves a considerably greater grant-related expenditure assessment than it has, but it is financial suicide to bring about a reduction in grant of about four fifths by way of penalty. That is kamikaze politics. Many good, long-serving council officers have been ringing my colleagues and, no doubt, members of the Labour party in Liverpool saying that if that policy continues council officers will lose their jobs. Such a policy is folly indeed.

It is the duty of local authorities to argue against the Government but, more importantly, it is their duty to provide local services as efficiently, competently and munificently as possible. I hope that the lessons of the past year will have been learnt by both the Government and the Labour party. I hope that the Conservatives will never again lumber us with a system of targets that are clearly unattainable by most authorities, including Tory-controlled authorities. I hope, too, that the Labour party will not make a great song and dance about non-compliance purely for party political ends and cost ratepayers hundreds of thousands of pounds, only to give in eventually as it intended from the start.

On a day, which the Government will live to regret, when we have heard that the foolish and ill-conceived measure to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan counties has received Royal Assent, I have received a copy of an internal document from County hall. It is from the chair of the transport committee to Nick Lester of the Public Transport Campaign Unit. The letter, dated 28 June, refers to issue No. 2 of a newsletter on public transport in London put out by the GLC last month and entitled "LT in Exile". The letter requests "Dear Nick" to "See attached." The attached newsletter refers to a complaint that I made about the escalator at Rotherhithe tube station. The letter continues:

"Please avoid publicising Simon Hughes. In the past when he was invited to the wreath laying ceremony at 55 Broadway"—

that was to do with the Government's demolition of London Transport—

"I was heavily criticised by Labour MPs and activists in the Bermondsey CLP."

The writer concludes with his usual flourish:

"Yours for Socialism, Dave".

He then adds the following postscript, just to make things clear:

"No blame. It's my fault for not proof reading it!"

I am sorry that the Labour party has to go to such lengths to avoid publicising me, but it does its own publicity no good when it helps the Government—on a policy that we should be united in opposing because the Government do not want to listen to the views of local authorities — by publicising its own folly instead of making it clear that the Government and their policies are primarily to blame. The sooner the system is changed—next week, we hope—the better.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your help and guidance on an important component of today's debate. My point of order concerns the accuracy of the information given in the report. In the table on page 27 a figure of £111,556,000 is given for Northumberland. I have checked today with the treasurer's department of Northumberland county council and I am informed that that figure is about £1 million too high. The treasurer's office checked with the Department of the Environment, which has admitted that the figure is too high and that it is the Department's error. If that is so, may we question any or all of the figures in the document, as they are important in terms of our contributions to the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not really a matter for me. The Minister has heard what the hon. Gentleman has said and will no doubt make appropriate comments at the end of the debate.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This may not be a matter for you, but it is an important matter for the House. We are being asked to approve the report and the figures set out in it, but the Department itself has admitted that the figure for Northumberland county council is wrong. For all we know, other figures in the report might be wrong.

The Secretary of State for the Environment sent me a letter dated 11 July 1985 about the supplementary report for 1982-83 which was presented to the House and then withdrawn because it contained an error in respect of GRE for Dudley. In that letter the Secretary of State said:

"The extent of the error is minimal, but since I intend this Report to be the final one for 1982-83 . . . I have decided that the Report should be re-made and re-laid."

The report was reprinted and relaid.

If what the Secretary of State described as "a minimal error" requires a procedure such as that, it cannot be right that the House should be asked to approve this report, which contains an error of about £1 million in respect of Northumberland county council. The fact that the error has come to light today leads us to question the validity of other figures in the report.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) has had the error confirmed by Northumberland county council, and the Department has agreed. Further consideration of the report should not take place and the Minister should withdraw it, have the error corrected, have other figures checked and re-present it.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The hon. Gentleman is right about the final report for 1982-83 and the error concerning Dudley. As we had hoped that it would be the final report, we thought it right to withdraw it and table another one, which was considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments this morning. As for the 1985-86 report, if there is an error concerning Northumberland, I am glad to say that I have been advised that there is a procedure which allows it to be taken into account. The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a series of reports and there will be a second supplementary report later this year. In that case, the error, if it is an error, can be corrected. The point is that Northumberland will not suffer.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today's debate is based on the figures presented to us. The £1 million in respect of Northumberland will colour my attitude.

Mr. Cowans: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister for Local Government said that he had been advised. The House is entitled to know when he was advised. One alteration to one set of figures has a knock-on effect on all the other figures. I do not know how anybody can debate the report when every figure in it will be altered by that knock-on effect as a result of this efficient Department getting it wrong by one million quid. These are the people who are talking about local authorities. Surely the Minister will have the courage to say, "I am wrong. We will adjourn the debate until we get it right." Perhaps he will acknowledge that the Department is not as efficient as the local authorities it is trying to destroy.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are being asked to agree the determination of certain figures for a list of authorities of which Northumberland is one. The Minister cannot say that he will make an adjustment, because, if a figure is wrong, it should not be in the report. Only a few weeks ago the High Court found that there had been an incorrect figure in regard to Hammersmith and Fulham and quashed it. If there is an incorrect figure in the report, it is likely that the matter will have to go back to court, because we cannot undo what we do if we approve a figure today. We could deal with Northumberland later in some way which the Minister might think of, but we should not be asked to vote when there is a risk of the court finding our action invalid.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the Minister is unwilling to act, we need your guidance. The Minister said that Northumberland will not suffer because the figures can be adjusted in a later submission. No doubt the same argument could be applied—it would be by him—if there were queries on other figures. We might learn of such figures later. It is good if Northumberland, or any other authority, will not suffer, but this is an important matter for the House. The House is being asked to approve a report. If it is not correct, the House cannot endorse it. It does not matter whether other queries might emerge. We cannot be asked to vote on inaccurate figures.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have submitted that there is an error in the report. The Minister was equivocal and said that there may be an error. Our information is that there is undoubtedly at least one error in respect of Northumberland county council's GRE. My hon. Friends have said that that error has implications for other figures in the report and for other authorities. It cannot be in order for the House to be asked to vote on and to approve a report which we know contains at least one error.

Several choices are available. You could suspend the sitting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to give Ministers time to sort this mess out and to advise the House of their intentions. The Minister could say now that he intends to withdraw the report and retable it later. I strongly submit that we cannot vote on the matter, as that would not be in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are important matters and I have listened carefully, but I cannot adjudicate on the accuracy of figures presented in the report. It is not a matter for me. The arguments being used are arguments for voting against the report.

Mr. Cowans: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an important matter. May we have an assurance from the Minister that all of the other figures are correct and will not be amended in any way if we continue to debate the report? So far, we have had no assurances. We know that one figure is wrong. It was discovered, but the House was not informed. Are any more wrong? Have the figures been checked? The error must colour the whole of the report. Surely the Minister will stand up and say whether his report is right or wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is asking for assurances from the Minister. With great respect, it is not a matter for the Chair or a point of order.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must press the point, because it is a matter for the House. You say that the matter is not for the Chair, but I cannot see how a submission on a point of order that the House is being asked to approve a document which is in error is not a matter for the Chair. Surely it is a matter for the order of business in the House. The Minister did not refute our submission about an error in respect of the figure for Northumberland. Indeed, he was equivocal about it. Given the array of senior officials present to advise him, I cannot believe that he does not know that there is an error in the report. I put it to both you and the Minister that the debate should be adjourned to give the Government an opportunity to consider their position in the matter, and the Minister an opportunity immediately to seek the leave of the House to make a statement about the facts and to withdraw the report, if it is in error, as I believe it is.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support entirely what you have said. I understand that in the past the House has debated supplementary reports of this nature when mistakes have been discovered. There is a means by which, under the procedure on supplementary reports, such mistakes can be corrected. If there has been a miscalculation for Northumberland, I assure the House that it will be taken into account in the next supplementary report. I hope that the House will now be able to proceed with the debate.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I implore you to consider the matter far beyond parliamentary activity. As a result of decisions taken here today, Liverpool city councillors——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must put his point of order to me.

Mr. Cowans: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the protection of hon. Members, would you accept a motion, That further consideration of the report be adjourned until such a time as the Secretary of State can substantiate the correctness of the other figures?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot accept such a motion. Clearly, the hon. Gentleman has been in touch with his authority, but I cannot adjudicate on the accuracy of the figures. I understand that it is possible in supplementary reports to correct figures, and I cannot accept the motion. Therefore, we should proceed with the debate and allow hon. Members to make their points.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) accepted the need for at least some national control of local government expenditure. He criticised the method being used by the Government, but did not say how he would change the system or what he would put in its place. I was disappointed that he did not acknowledge the benefits to the people of Southwark arising from the degree of national control of local government expenditure that has been derived from legislation, or some of the benefits mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden).

One of the functions of the 1985-86 report, as set out in the first paragraph, is to make changes to the grant-related assessment of local authorities so that they are based on actual capital allocations rather than estimated allocations. Will the Minister look at the machinery for making those changes, and introduce some means of mitigating their effect when an authority is placed in an awkward position through no fault of its own?

Both the Conservative minority and the Labour majority in the Hounslow authority are disturbed about the way in which the changes have been made in the report. As I understand it, two groups of officials at the Department of the Environment deal with local authority capital expenditure. One group consists only of Department of the Environment officials and is concerned with capital expenditure as part of its work on calculating the rate support grant. The second group has contact with other Government Departments, deals with bids for local authority capital expenditure, and is responsible for allocating the sums resolved by the Government in the PESC White Paper.

In December 1984 both groups made recommendations to the Government, and the Government made two announcements within about a week of each other. The first was about the rate support grant settlement, and the second was about capital allocations. On the basis of those announcements the London borough of Hounslow and other authorities made their budgets and rates. Two months later in June Hounslow was informed that its grant was to be reduced by no less than £1·1 million because of the difference between the assumptions made in the rate support grant settlement of 11 December 1984 and the capital allocations which the Department of the Environment announced about a week later. Having made its rate on the basis of the Government announcement, the local authority is in an extremely awkward position. The sum of £1·1 million is considerable for an authority where the product of a penny rate is £490,000. The local authority could not have known between December and June that the two bodies from the Department of the Environment were making different assumptions on capital expenditure for Hounslow.

First, there is room for some improvement in communications between those two groups of officials. That would undoubtedly be helped if in future the Government made greater efforts to make the necessary decisions at the appropriate time so that the officials could operate as near as possible on the same basis. Secondly, some warning should be given to local authorities when it is discovered—it must be known within the Department — that different assumptions are being made for rate support grant calculations and capital allocations. Authorities would not then be put in such an awkward position over such a substantial sum. Thirdly, there should be a temporary safety net for authorities placed in such a position, whereby the loss of grant should be limited in any one year to the product of a penny rate. On page 8 in paragraph 20 of the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1982/83 it states

"The Secretary of State is concerned that these changes should not lead to severe mid-year grant losses."

In that case, he imposed a temporary safety net such as I have described.

I hope that the Secretary of State is still anxious that the changes in this report should not lead to severe mid-year grant losses. I urge him to follow the precedent set for the 1982-83 report with regard to the London borough of Hounslow, which I believe is one of the authorities worst affected by the anomaly.

7.40 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The Minister referred in his opening statement to the position in Liverpool, and suggested that the city council is not acting responsibly. I and my Labour colleagues from Liverpool believe that the council is acting perfectly responsibly. As I said earlier, the target for Liverpool is £220 million. If the city council kept to that target, it would be forced to lay off up to 5,000 or 6,000 workers. It would also be forced to cut local services. Liverpool city councillors, the people of Liverpool and the work force there believe that that is unacceptable.

Merseyside has one of the highest concentrated unemployment levels in the country. Most of our constituents suffer from unemployment that is unheard of south of Birmingham. In one or two constituencies, unemployment has reached between 40 and 50 per cent., and in most of them it stands at between 27 and 30 per cent. Our people are suffering terrible hardship. The majority of people who live on some estates exist on benefits of one sort or another. Those who wish to know about misery, poverty, unemployment and the conditions in which people must live under this Government should come to Liverpool to see for themselves.

During the past few years, 60 per cent. of the industrial base in Liverpool has disappeared, but not because the workers are lazy or wish to live on charity, as one hon. Member had the audacity to say the other day. On the contrary, they are hard-working people who are crying out for employment so that they can lead dignified lives. That is the background to the stand taken by Liverpool city councillors.

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

The villains of the piece are not the city councillors, who now face possible bankruptcy and disqualification. The villains are the Government and those who accept the policies and ideas of the Prime Minister and her Ministers.

I draw to the attention of the House the report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General, which was ordered by the House to be printed on 2 April 1985. At paragraph 4.65 on page 24, it states in relation to the rate support grant:

"Under the previous RSG system the proportion of total relevant expenditure met by grant had remained constant at 61 per cent. for a number of years up to 1980-81."

That is true.

Local authorities in areas such as Liverpool used to receive a decent rate support grant. However, the previous Liberal and Tory coalition council in Liverpool did not increase the rates following the improved rate support grant that it received from the Labour Government. It kept the rates down, and boasted about the fact throughout the city. It did not improve services, which meant that when the Labour party took power last year and wished to improve the services it immediately ran into difficulties with the Government's penalties. Labour councillors are called villains, but the real villains are Ministers and the previous Liberal-Tory administration that controlled Liverpool.

The report from the Comptroller and Auditor-General also states:

"The reduction from this figure to the latest estimate of 48·3 per cent. for 1984-85 means that the proportion left to be borne by ratepayers has risen from 39 per cent. to 51·7 per cent., an increase of almost a third or about £3 billion in cash terms for 1984-85. Over the same period the average rate poundages for domestic ratepayers rose from 100·1p to 160·1p, an increase of 60 per cent., and for non-domestic ratepayers from 117·5p to 178·7p, an increase of 52 per cent."

The report makes this important point:

"These increases can therefore be attributed more to the reduction in the proportion of Government grant than to increases in local authority spending; and unless and until the level of central government support is stabilised again it will be difficult for local electors to distinguish how far changes in rates should be attributed to the actions of the local authorities themselves, except in those few cases where the entitlement to block grant has already been wholly eliminated."

Although the Government have said for the past few years that local authorities have placed increased burdens on their ratepayers by spending too much, the report of the Comptroller and Auditor-General shows clearly that the problems have arisen because of Government policy. The Minister cannot say that that is untrue. The Government talk about the terrible wickedness of local authorities, but they are in a Catch 22 situation. They wish to improve services to the community and they must increase rates slightly to do so. Then they are accused of overspending. They are not overspending; they have simply been placed in that position by the Government.

Liverpool city councillors have been unable to set a so-called legal budget because of the Government's policies. I have been given some figures by the council. Its committees have worked out that, to maintain existing services, and taking into consideration inflation and last year's deficit of £6 million, which it must meet, it must spend £258,500,000. That means an immediate penalty on that council of £63 million. The rate requirement would be £204 million, and the rate increase in the city would be 75·7 per cent. With the additional payments that would have to be made, the increase in rates could eventually be as much as 130 per cent. Even some of the employers' representatives who came to see us recently are constantly arguing that the burden of rates is too high. In their own way, they have made representations to the Government about it.

Can we expect councillors to accept that situation? I do not think that we can, because they were elected on a programme. Two years ago they went to the people of Liverpool and promised to defend existing city council jobs and services, to create additional jobs and to improve services. They have created additional jobs in the construction industry to build houses for the people. Council houses had not been built by the local authority for years. If the councillors accepted Government policy, that activity would have to cease.

The councillors made it clear that they would build houses for rent, and end the threat of privatisation of the city council services. They originally went to the public on that programme. Last year they went to the public again on the same programme and they won. The choice before the city councillors is either to carry out their local mandate to the people of Liverpool or to be dictated to by central Government.

The Government are dictating to local authorities what they should and should not do. We have a centralised, authoritarian force developing in Britain. The councillors have said no to that. There can either be genuine local democracy or centralised control by the Government. The Government are always talking about freedom and saying that they believe in freedom of choice. What choice have the local authority and the local people in those circumstances?

On 26 June, the national executive committee of the Labour party, of which I am proud to be a member, made a lengthy statement on the crisis in local government. It said:

"Local government is now in deep crisis. The Tory Government have progressively cut the grant available to local councils."

The national executive also said:

"Local authorities everywhere are being ensnared by Tory legislation. And the Tories are now prepared to use the District Auditor to crush those local authorities determined to defend their local communities."

Liverpool councillors are faced with action by the district auditor, not at this stage on the basis of fixing a deficit budget but on the basis of delaying the setting of a rate. Many local authorities as well as Liverpool and Lambeth have delayed the setting of a rate. They could all be faced with the same action by the district auditors, but Liverpool and Lambeth have been picked out so that the Government can say that those local authorities are led by wicked, Left-wing, loony militants, and so on. That is the Government's line. They know that it is not true, but they want to do their damnedest to make the actions of the Liverpool and Lambeth councillors appear to be irresponsible when those councillors are fighting responsibly for the interests of their local people.

The national executive committee of the Labour party said that it

"supports the Labour councillors, and calls upon all sections of the Party to offer maximum support to those councillors, in Liverpool, Lambeth, Edinburgh"—

the councillors in Edinburgh are faced with the same problems, arising from legislation operated against them in Scotland—

"and other authorities, in seeking to prevent the threatened disqualification and surcharge".

Yesterday the Liverpool Labour Members of Parliament met the Secretary of State. We told him that the Government should give advice to the district auditors. If the Government were intelligent and did not want a confrontation, they could advise the district auditors to have a further look at the problem and see what could be done to overcome it without confrontation.

The Liverpool city council has asked for two meetings so that it can discuss the urban aid programme and rates. I agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that we shall soon be hearing of a change in policy in regard to penalties. If there is to be such a change, let us have it now, rather than continuing to put the councillors into a difficult position. The Ministers could discuss the urban aid programme, even if at this stage they did not want to discuss rates. They could discuss in detail what could be done through the city partnership schemes and the urban aid programme to help Liverpool.

Our Liverpool councillors are the victims of legislation that has existed for far too long. When we have a Labour Government, the legislation that is putting councillors into such difficulties must be repealed once and for all. Good honest people must not be put in the position in which councillors at Clay Cross, Camden and St. Pancras found themselves in the past.

In the past, the Government have brought in retrospective legislation on various issues. If councillors are disqualified and bankrupted as a result of Government action, I hope that the next Labour Government will introduce retrospective legislation to deal with those councillors. They are not criminals or people who wish to break the law, but they are being forced to do so by Government policy.

The point has been made clearly by local authorities and by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in the briefing that I am sure we have all received. I imagine that all hon. Members have received a copy. It states:

"The penalties are so severe that the 'marginal grant rates'"—

that is the cost to the ratepayers of each additional £1 of spending—are

"£4·54 in Hounslow, £4·22 in the West Midlands, £3·36 in Birmingham and £3·04 in Liverpool."

That AMA believes that that is entirely wrong, and I agree. Even at this late hour, I hope that the Government will have second thoughts. If they do not, the full responsibility for the uneasy, unhappy and difficult summer that might lie ahead for them and our people will be fully their responsibility and will lie fully and squarely on their shoulders. The fault will lie with the Government and not with the honest, decent and courageous councillors of Liverpool who are fighting for those who elected them.

8 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): If anyone is minded to accept the advice of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) and journey north to Liverpool, I invite him first to call in at Leicester, which, unlike Liverpool, is a city on the up and up. It is a city of enterprise in which industry and small businesses form a significant part of the economy.

Leicester has done well out of the Conservative Government since 1979. The rate support grant for this year amounts to over £12 million and the inner urban grant amounts to about £5 million, a total of more than £17 million. That is to be compared and contrasted with the sum that is raised locally in rates, which is £10 million.

It is clear that a large part of Leicester is not funded by Leicester: it is funded by the taxpayer. Who will speak for the taxpayer who has contributed to the rate support grant this year, which is £2·5 million more this year than last? Who will speak for the taxpayer who subscribes to the inner area grant? If that taxpayer is to have a voice, it must be one that comes from right hon. and hon. Members.

The rate-capping exercise which we have witnessed at first hand in Leicester in the past few months has produced three concrete benefits for my constituents. First, it has produced lower rates. If the local Labour party had had its way the rates bill that my constituents would have had to meet this year would have been about twice that which they were eventually set. The second advantage that my constituents will enjoy is a higher rate support grant. The third advantage is a substantial sum for the inner area programme. The amount which Leicester receives for that programme is almost a quarter of the grant-related expenditure.

When I recite these facts to less happy boroughs, they are amazed that we can have such a generous extra subscription from the taxpayer to the city. I can say of behalf of the citizens of Leicester, South that for the most part their money is put to good use in what is a city of enterprise. Indeed, it is evident that it is not a city of gloom and doom. If visitors to Leicester travel on to Liverpool and witness how things are conducted there, I think that they will be able to draw their own conclusions on where they should finally come to rest.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. and learned Friend recall the extraordinary statements that were made by some local authorities before the Rates Bill, as it then was, became law? They were saying that the Bill, if enacted, would result in wholesale redundancies, the decimation of services and chaos in the streets. Has my hon. and learned Friend seen any evidence of such happenings in his area? The predictions have not come to pass in the area that I represent. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend will comment upon that.

Mr. Spencer: I shall accept my hon. Friend's invitation and deal with that issue out of order. I can rely on none other than the chief of public relations of the city council, who is not a politician. He is an officer who is paid a salary from the public purse, having been hired by the Labour local authority to advance the anti-rate-capping propaganda campaign. He announced recently that the authority had got it wrong. He acknowledged that many of the claims made in the rate-capping propaganda campaign have not been borne out in the slightest. He and his colleagues were prevailed upon by their political masters to make various claims which, to use his words, "with the benefit of hindsight have not been borne out by events." I am sure that the same claims were being made throughout the country by other rate-capped boroughs. I have a copy of the propaganda literature which was circulated in Leicester and it is almost identical to that which was to be found wherever else I went. The same literature was being circulated in Leicester, Camden, Southwark and Liverpool. Its message was virtually the same as that which we received from the hon. Member for Walton. We were told:

[Mr. Spencer]

"The Government want to slash services and jobs by over a third. This means a cut of £10 million plus. Cuts of this savagery would affect the services of the city council. For example, housing — reduction in the inner city housing improvement programme. Recreation—closure of three sports halls and two swimming pools. The cancellation of the Leicestershire show and the closure of the Haymarket and the Phoenix. Withdrawal of support for Bradgate Park. Works—severe reduction in refuse collection and street cleaning. Planning — long delays in planning applications. Environmental health — abolish the service for dealing with rats and mice. Employment—abolish the Leicester promotion campaign."

If we examine the reality against the promise, what do we find? Do we find that Leicester has been converted into a stinking heap where refuse is piled up in the streets? Do we find that no work is being done on council housing? Do we find that the swimming pools are empty? Do we find that expenditure on the parks has been cut and that the grass is growing knee deep? We find not one of those symptoms. Indeed, we find, as the Labour council has been forced to admit, that all these services are going ahead in much the same way as they were before the anti-rate-capping campaign began.

There is a two-faced monster in many town halls. One face is speaking inwards telling the truth and one is speaking outwards putting forward a pack of distorted nonsense. The pack of distorted nonsense is along the lines that I have just outlined, but the reality is that the council has been able to discharge its functions without laying off one member of staff.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) may be interested to know that far from a reduction in staff under rate capping, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) will be able to confirm, there has been a significant increase, month by month, since rate capping came into operation. At one and the same time, we have been able to have rate capping and the city council has been able to discharge the promises to continue taking more people on to the staff that it made earlier.

We have made a start and rate capping has brought benefits to my constituents. I urge the Government not to give up now just because there has been some squealing in one or two town halls and blood on a few municipal banisters. Now is not the time for the Government to become squeamish, because the blood in Leicester was the blood of the Labour party taking to its heels and running away from its commitment to break the law. As late as 14 February, the leader of the city council said in the Labour newspapers:

"We are firmly committed as a group to non-compliance."

When it came to it, at the first whiff of gunfire the Labour party turned and fled. It fixed a rate long before the time limit had expired. It had to send to each ratepayer a certificate of compliance with the Rates Act 1984, which, in its case, was a certificate that it had egg all over its face.

The lesson of rate capping in Leicester is that, once deceptions are practised, the skein of the deception envelops those who seek to practise it.

Although it was possible to fix a rate in Leicester within the time available, with a similar background, similar propaganda and a similar commitment to non-compliance in Camden, where I served five years before the mast before I came to this place, my colleagues found that the Labour party there was not willing to set a rate.

I pay tribute to Tony Kerpel and others of my former colleagues on Camden council who had to withstand a hail of spittle, intimidation and threats at council meeting after council meeting through April, May and into June, not just at the hands of people living in Camden, but at the hands of those bussed in from Lambeth and elsewhere on a so-called battle bus. Is that the responsibility of local government about which some Opposition Members have spoken? Is that local government discharging its obligations to the people who elected those councillors to sit in the town halls on their behalf? I defy anyone to say that that is a proper discharge of is responsibilities.

It was not surprising when Councillor Phil Turner, leader of the Camden Labour party, sent a letter to Camden ratepayers on 3 April saying that the council found it impossible at that time to set a rate. If it found it impossible to set a rate then, am I now justified in saying that I find it impossible to pay it? I should be using words in the way that he sought to do if I were to seek to say that now.

Eventually, on 8 June or thereabouts, Camden council fixed a rate. On 13 June, out went another letter from Councillor Turner saying that on 8 June the council set a rate. It did, but that letter draws a veil over the way in which it was done. It was done through a combination of a few defectors from the Labour party and the Tory party discharging their duty to fix a rate. One has eventually been fixed within the legal boundary.

A loss must have been caused to Camden ratepayers by the late fixing of a rate. It has been said that it would be terrible if, in such circumstances, the district auditor were to pursue the councillors. I say that it would be a dereliction of duty if a public servant such as the district auditor did not pursue them. I, with others, intend to see that the course that I set in motion after the settlement of the dirty jobs strike in Camden on terms that were adverse to the ratepayers, which was eventually referred to the High Court by the district auditor, Mr. Pickell, turns out to be not an isolated case, because, for justice to be done to the ratepayers, matters cannot be left as they are.

If one could say that the anti-rate-capping campaign fought by some Left-wing councils, as well as heightening public perception of the importance of local government —I believe that it has—also informed it better about the true facts of local government, I should have been prepared to chip in as a ratepayer in Camden and Leicester —in the way that I have been obliged to—for that campaign. But, unfortunately, as the public relations officer in Leicester was bound to admit, it has not been information that has been fed to the public; it has been a great deal of misinformation.

Such truth as has emerged from that sorry story has emerged from Tory councillors and Tory Members of Parliament speaking at meetings and trying to put the truth in the face of a hailstorm of misrepresentation. We have done that willingly. We believe that the cause is just and we wish to see the Government go further.

8.20 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) has misunderstood, if not misrepresented, the motives that led many Labour councillors, decent and sincere people, to do what they did in the face of the appalling dilemma with which they were confronted. They knew that they had a responsibility to some of the most vulnerable members of

their communities, but they were being prevented from discharging that responsibility by the actions perpetrated by the Government.

In the last debate that we had on this subject, on the Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) Order, on 25 February I accused the Secretary of State and his Ministers of injustice and vindictiveness towards the London borough of Greenwich. I made that charge on the basis of evidence that in my borough, and no doubt in many other local authorities, as is apparent from the debate, the GREA system is arbitrary in its assessment of need and unjust in its effect on grants.

Greenwich is an inner-city London borough with all the problems associated therewith — high unemployment, decaying industry, the need, and the statutory duty, to spend substantial sums of money on maintaining and improving the council's housing stock, and severe social problems. The Government have manipulated the rate support grant system in a way that is unfair to inner cities in general, and London authorities in particular.

Greenwich has been singled out for particularly harsh and unjust treatment. Since 1979, £119 million in block grant and £85 million in housing subsidy have been withheld or withdrawn. This is at a time when the council is faced with increasing demands for its services as a result of demographic and social factors and, in particular, as a result of Government policy.

For example, the increased unemployment and reduced welfare benefits mean that more people living at or below the poverty line make increased demands on council services, housing services and leisure services. Cuts in the NHS lead to a greater demand on the council's social services. The Government, while consistently increasing their expenditure, as has been pointed out, have reduced financial support for local authorities. In 1979, about half of Greenwich's spending was met from taxes. In 1984-85, it was less than a quarter. As the Audit Commission has noted, the Government, and not local authorities, have been responsible for the increase in rates in recent years. In addition, the Government withdrawal of housing subsidy has meant increased rents for tenants.

Greenwich residents are being made to pay higher rates than they should as a result of the Government diverting money paid in taxes to other purposes, rather than returning it to local authorities through the block grant system to pay for local services and to reduce rates. The loss of block grant and subsidies for Greenwich since 1979 is £204 million, and this figure is very much higher if the grant losses of the precepting authorities—the GLC and ILEA—are included. As the House knows, ILEA is the only education authority in the country that does not receive block grant.

Government policy has forced up rates in Greenwich and has restricted the ability of the council to develop essential services to meet the increased needs of Greenwich residents.

The use of GREAs to distribute block grant was introduced by the Government with the stated objective of giving local authorities enough resources to provide broadly similar standards of service while ensuring that ratepayers were being charged roughly the same rate in the pound. GREAs are claimed by Government to be a measure of the expenditure that an authority needs to spend if the same standard of service is to be provided throughout the country. This is nonsense, and I expect an announcement shortly showing the extent to which the Government know that that is nonsense.

GREAs are not a reliable basis for comparing relative spending levels of different authorities. They have become successively less comprehensible and increasingly unpredictable. Moreover, they are biased, inflexible and based on out-of-date and inadequate data. They are based on mathematical formulas that do not take into account unemployment or urban deprivation. Housing GREAs do not take into account local needs and conditions. Social services GREAs take no account of population changes or demands caused by legislation.

The GREAs for housing and social services were criticised in a recent report by the Audit Commission which stressed that inner city authorities such as Greenwich were suffering because of faulty GREA calculation by the Government. A central failing of GREA calculation, identified by the Audit Commission, is the continued use of inaccurate data. In its recent report on the block grant system, the Audit Commission quotes the old adage, "garbage in equals garbage out" and states that inadequate information in calculating GREAs leads to "serious distortions" to the grant distribution process.

Inner London boroughs are unfairly penalised by the present system, and Greenwich is treated worst of all, for in Greenwich the GREA per head of population is the lowest in inner London. I can illustrate this by reference to social services. Greenwich's social services committee commissioned Tony Travers, research fellow at the North-East London polytechnic, to undertake an independent examination of the Greenwich social services component of GREA. I shall set out his main findings.

First, Greenwich has a relatively low social services GREA compared with broadly similar authorities and, per head of population, it has been growing less rapidly than social services GREA for inner London as a whole. Secondly, Greenwich has a social services GREA that falls short of its spending by a wide margin. Its GREA is measured in a systematically unfair way. Thirdly, the Greenwich system is particularly disadvantageous compared with that of other London boroughs, which are treated badly enough anyway. This is almost certainly because the borough has, perhaps alone among the other inner city authorities, an increasing population.

In addition, the population numbers of the very young, people over pensionable age and those who are mentally ill or handicapped are relatively high in Greenwich. Social isolation, particularly among the elderly, creates a disproportionate need for social services in Greenwich. Despite this, the Greenwich social services GREA per head has risen less rapidly than elsewhere in inner London. This is only one example of the unfairness of the GREA for Greenwich. Similar examples can be found in respect of highways, housing and libraries.

On top of the block grant system is the wholly arbitrary and subjective system of targets and penalties. Greenwich has been penalised in recent years for spending above a target set by the Government. Although the High Court ruled in 1983 that Greenwich's action in spending above target to provide essential services was lawful, in 1984-85 the Government fined the Greenwich ratepayer approximately £1 for every £1 of expenditure that was 3 per cent. above the arbitrary target set by the Government. The unfairness of this is emphasised when the Government

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consistently add to the responsibilities of local authorities and require them to incur additional expenditure, which the Government then penalise them for incurring.

I can give some examples of this behaviour, although I make no comment about the value of the legislation. In social services, the appointment of guardians ad litem under the Children Act, implementation of the Mental Health Act 1983, the Criminal Justice Act 1982 and the Registered Homes Act 1984 all add to the statutory responsibilities of local authorities.

The same is true in housing. There has also been the transfer of responsibility for the administration of housing benefit from the Department of Health and Social Security to local authorities. There is the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, which, in an effort to encourage privatisation and damage direct labour teams, has substantially increased administrative tendering costs to local authorities. New duties have been imposed on local authorities under consumer protection and environmental health legislation. I could give further examples of burdens that are placed on local authorities. Little or no recognition is given of those extra burdens in the way in which the Government treat them financially.

Therefore, at a time when the Government are requiring local authorities—and my local authority in particular—to do more, they are steadily reducing the money available. That I believe to be logically indefensible and hypocritical. It needs to be stressed that the legislation to which I referred is new legislation, imposing additional duties. Because of social changes, increasing unemployment and Government cuts in other public services, the demand for existing services has increased, yet central Government are determined to reduce money available to Greenwich to provide those essential services.

The Government have made no attempt whatever to answer the charges that I made in the House on 25 February. Either the Secretary of State does not care about the situation in Greenwich or he is too embarrassed to admit the faults in the lunatic system that he is currently operating. The Secretary of State, or the Minister for Local Government, has a responsibility sooner or later to come clean and admit that the system that he is operating is unjust to local authorities such as mine, and often highly damaging to the most vulnerable sections of the community who depend upon the delivery of services by those local authorities.

8.31 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): There is one important point that I should like to raise about the supplementary report for 1982-83, but in the overall context of some general remarks about local government policy.

It is now nearly 10 years since a Labour Secretary of State said to local authorities, "The party is over," and that unrestrained local authority expenditure would have to be controlled. There have been considerable advantages from Government policies in recent years in terms of better management of local authority resources. The more sensible authorities have accepted the coaxing towards that better management, whereas more rigorous measures have had to be applied to others.

I pay tribute to the management of my local authority of Calderdale for the way in which it has run our services, with no reduction, and within a tight financial budget. It has used imaginative processes to do so. It is surprising that many local councils have not turned to more vigorous attempts at improving their management techniques. Throughout the country we have seen many examples of where, on certain budgets, by the tendering exercise and by contracting out services — sometimes not even by contracting out, but by the practice of tendering—there have been savings of 10, 20, and even 30 per cent. It seems unfortunate that those exercises have not been undertaken by more local authorities. Those authorities have preferred to stick to their tired old ideology rather than release resources which could be given back to the ratepayer or provide better services for the people whom they represent.

There are many ways in which the private and voluntary sectors, in co-operation with the public sector, can work together to provide services at a reduced cost to our ratepayers. If, as has happened with the encouragement of more sensible management, certain authorities do not carry out policies that are to the advantage of their ratepayers, it must be for the Government to say that they will be compelled to apply such policies. In the absence of any evidence that some local authorities will be sensible, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will say in due course that there will be tough measures to compel local authorities to put out to tender a wide variety of services.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): There may be some logic in what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but does he agree that the Government should insist that the public works departments, the direct labour organisations in local authorities, should be able to tender in the private sector, as well as the private sector tendering in the public sector?

Mr. Galley: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. That is an entirely different debate. There is no reason why the public sector should go into operation as a commercial company. It is not there to run commercial operations. It is there to give the best services that the ratepayers require at the least cost.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) said, the important factor is that in so many instances services have not been reduced in any way. Complaints arise from time to time about local authority budgets. It is remarkable that whenever local councillors have a pet scheme which they want to implement, somehow or other they can find the money to do so. They will take money for their pet schemes from other projects and then say that essential services cannot be provided because of Government policies.

I take as an example the way in which a series of ill-advised traffic management schemes in Halifax have led to the strangling of the town centre. Resources which should have been available for highway maintenance elsewhere have been denied. More importantly, larger sums of money have been used increasingly for overtly political expenditure by local authorities. I shall keep to West Yorkshire in my examples, as I am familiar with it. In opposing Government legislation for the abolition of metropolitan county councils, West Yorkshire county council spent nearly £600,000 of ratepayers' money, without a by your leave. That money should have been spent on providing services for the people whom the council represents, but it was used for party political propaganda. The council also recently diverted money to a campaign against the Transport Bill.

Leeds city council spent over £100,000 in opposing rate-capping legislation. There are many other smaller examples of purely party political use of ratepayers' money. Money is raised from every ratepayer for the services that ratepayers want, yet it is used for purely party political propaganda. If political parties wish to put forward a particular point of view, they should raise their own money to do so, and there should not be a precept upon the ratepayer.

There is an increasing use of public funds to encourage the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. There has been the appointment in Leeds of peace officers and the continuing development of councils' ludicrous nuclear-free zone policies, the production of leaflets, the financing of seminars, and the establishment of peace gardens. Throughout West Yorkshire such activities are increasingly using sums of money which should be providing proper services for the people of the area. I refer also to the "great" Liberation Festival in Bradford, when substantial funds were used to support and enhance several Socialist campaigns, such as the Troops Out movement and the El Salvador solidarity campaign.

I hope that in the next Session of Parliament my right hon. and hon. Friends will present to the House legislation banning the use of ratepayers' money for party political propaganda. There will be problems of definition, but I have no doubt that by using the Independent Broadcasting Authority's code of practice on advertising, which bans from advertising any overt political material, it will be possible to enshrine that provision in legislation.

The supplementary report for 1982-83 makes several corrections to the rate support grant settlement that had previously been agreed. I understand that one correction has not been made. It appears that the Department of the Environment made an error in 1982-83 in the allocation of the non-housing revenue GREA. That error resulted in additional payments being made to London authorities and insufficient money being made available to certain other authorities, including my metropolitan borough of Calderdale. As a result, the Calderdale authority lost £116,000.

That loss resulted, not from any over-spending or inefficiency on the part of the council, but from an error by the Department, and the report makes no attempt to correct that mistake. As the error has been known about for some time, we should be told why the position has not been corrected.

During this year's budgetary exercise the Calderdale budget was set on the basis of perceived GREA rules, and after the exercise was completed the amount available to the local authority by way of grant was about £300,000 less than had been anticipated. It is understood and accepted as part of the game that rule changes may happen after budgets have been set, although that presents difficulties for local authorities. It is hard to swallow the fact that apparently the Department of the Environment can make a mistake — a mistake to which Calderdale council had in no way contributed — and the local authority is penalised as a result. If the Department had not made that error, the council would be £116,000 better off.

My hon. Friend the Minister may say that it is a relatively trivial matter. To Calderdale, a small authority, it is not trivial. That money could have been spent wisely and, with the good management that we have in Calderdale, it would have been spent to the advantage of the local people. I urge the Minister to reconsider the matter and, if possible, give the money back to the Calderdale authority.

8.42 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Conservative Members adopt double standards. They speak of what is responsible and what is irresponsible. They refer to so-called pet schemes, which they regard as good schemes, and question whether political propaganda is paid for out of ratepayers' money, and they call that disgraceful. I remind the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) that the chairman of the Tory party is paid by the taxpayer, because he is on the Government payroll. If that is not a scandal, I do not know what is.

Why criticise councillors over small items of expenditure when an enormous hole exists in the Government's financial strategy? Since 1981-82, local government has suffered tremendous interference from central Government, all in the cause of reducing expenditure because the nation cannot afford it, we are told. Grant reductions have been the main cause of the rate situation that now exists in our cities. Since 1981-82, Sheffield's grant reduction has reached a staggering £240 million.

However efficient one may be in management terms and however much imagination one may have, when that sort of money has been lost, it is difficult to make ends meet. I am sure that any other authority, Tory or Labour, would feel the same when faced with a loss of that magnitude.

The excuse given by the Government is always the same. They say, "We are not against democracy. We must take this action because the nation cannot afford the expenditure." They are saying, in effect, that the nation cannot afford local democracy. As I listened to the hon. Member for Halifax, I thought of the way in which certain authorities can always find money for pet schemes — £2,000 for something here and £20,000 for something there. However small or large one regards such sums, one cannot overlook the Government's biggest pet scheme, a scheme about which nobody was consulted, namely, the new runway on the Falklands. That cost four times the whole of the grant-related expenditure taken away from local authorities since 1981. That runway was built, the Government say, for the defence of democracy, yet we cannot have money for local democracy.

Mr. Galley: How can the hon. Gentleman suggest — as there was a general election in 1983 at which the electorate endorsed the Goverment's Falklands policy — that it was not known that our policy towards the Falklands would be carried out?

Mr. Michie: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how it comes about that every local authority that has been rate-capped was elected last year on a mandate or manifesto? He cannot have it both ways. The Government cannot declare one policy for democracy and deny it to local authorities.

To enable Sheffield to adopt any form of local democracy, we are having to spend about £3 to achieve £1 of value. That may not make sense, but it is not the fault of the local authority. No account has been taken of the real effect on services. It is easy to do an accountancy exercise and come up with attractive figures, but no

[Mr. Michie]

revelation has been made of the real effect of the cuts that have been imposed on the less well-off, the immobile, the single-parent families, the homeless, the aged and the unemployed. Many local authorities do not believe that it is a waste of money to spend it on services to help old people to get about and to help single parent families make a decent life for themselves and their children.

Sheffield is an aging city. In 1976, there were 9,000 live births, but by 1981 there were fewer than 6,000. At the other end of the spectrum, at a point after 1986 there will be 110,000 pensioners in the city, almost 20 per cent. of the population. Within that 20 per cent., the number of over-75s will increase by 20 per cent. to a record 42,000, and, of those, the number aged over 85 will increase by 75 per cent. to 10,000.

Such figures cannot be ignored. They will not go away simply because money is short. The elderly are living longer, and while I accept that some of them do not need help, nobody can dispute the fact that such rapidly rising figures must have implications for the social services.

The city also has growing numbers of people out of work. Today, 15·2 per cent. of people are unemployed in the city overall, and in the inner city areas, on large council estates—the same applies to other major cities that are rate-capped—the levels of unemployment are double that. The chairman of the Sheffield budget sub-committee, when trying to describe the hardship that is being caused to the electorate of Sheffield because of the council's difficulty in maintaining services, said:

"It is easier for a Rolls-Royce to pass through the eye of a needle than for a Cabinet Minister to enter in imagination the experience of the unemployed."

It is not surprising that, with such high levels of unemployment and poverty in Sheffield and other local authority areas, councillors are becoming frustrated in attempting to carry out their duties. We cannot expect them to fulfil their responsibilities by pretending that these things are not happening to thousands of our fellow citizens. These are the realities of life that they face every day in town halls, in their jobs—if they still have jobs —in their surgeries and at meetings which they attend almost daily. All our great conurbations are affected in the same way.

If the Minister is convinced that the cuts, penalties and rate-capping activities have been painless, I challenge him to agree to conduct an independent inquiry into the needs of thousands of people living in rate-capped areas. I am confident of the result of such an inquiry, if it were truly independent. It would reveal incredible suffering for the less able, the less articulate and the most vulnerable. It would also reveal a sad erosion of the quality of the lives of the majority of people in our towns and cities.

8.49 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): This is an important debate in which I should have thought that the Conservative and Labour Members representing Leicester would have participated. Having heard the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on a number of occasions on the radio assuring the Leicester people that he would be in the House to oppose rate capping, his absence is surprising.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruinvels: The concern of myself and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) is apparent. We are concerned that rate capping, which——

Mr. Straw: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that it is a convention of the House that a Member who is absent should be informed before he is attacked? Is it possible for you to ask the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) whether he has informed my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) must answer for himself. It is the usual courtesy for an hon. Member who intends criticising another to notify that hon. Member in advance.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am concerned about the allegations about rate capping and what it will do for the people of Leicester and the city council.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The hon. Gentleman did not tell my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

Mr. Bruinvels: Any letter that I have sent to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West is a private matter between myself and my conscience.

On 25 February we heard that all was doom and despondency for Leicester, that rate capping would be terrible, that jobs would go out the window and that many services would be lost for ever. I am happy to report from my visit to Leicester at the weekend, where I live, that Leicester is still doing well. The jobs are still there, advertisements for jobs are appearing, none of the services has been cut and many job notices are appearing in the Labour council's propaganda magazine "Leicester Link".

Councillors are elected to keep rates down, not to increase public expenditure. We can argue about the percentages in any local vote. Because 30 per cent. of the Leicester electorate voted, one cannot say that an overwhelming majority wanted increased expenditure on public services. Many of those who voted in the city and county elections did not pay rates. Those who pay the rates, especially business men, do not have a vote. Why not? Rates in Leicester have been too high and the business men have been driven out of Leicester. They are now coming back because rates are decreasing with the arrival of rate capping. That makes a lot of sense.

It is amazing to see advertisements in the London Underground, saying "Come to Leicester where the rates have been reduced." The Leicester people should be grateful to the Conservative Government for bringing in the rate-capping legislation. The Leicester city council budget has been set; the Government grant has been agreed; the rate revenue of £10 million has been worked out; and the reserves are there. The 2p in the pound that will be saved this year will bring much prosperity to Leicester and its people.

The red covered "Leicester Link", which is the Labour council's typical monthly paper, admits:

"The total rate . . . is down by just under twopence in the pound on last year.

Leicester City Council reluctantly fixed a rate at its March meeting".

"Reluctantly"? The council was going to fix the rate from the first moment. It was not going to fight, because a

number of councillors did not want to be in trouble. They wanted to stand for Parliament in other parts of the country. The councillors did not put their money where their mouths were. It was clear that this was a great whipped-up fear to get the Leicester citizens rushing around, pinning stickers on their buses and lapels and saying, "We shall fight rate capping the whole way." Yet the council did not even lead from the front. It manipulated some of the Leicester people by frightening them about losing their jobs and threatening to close the lovely golf course at Humberstone Heights. I do not play golf, but many people were playing golf on that course at the weekend. That is typical of Labour — it never goes through with its promises.

The scare campaign had some effects. About £65,000 was spent on the campaign and £135,000 is budgeted for this year. The rates legislation saved jobs and many more people are returning to the city.

Robin Treacher, the head of public relations for the city council, said that the council had spent a large sum printing leaflets and had got it wrong. Just like the Islington NUJ, it is a typical case of where the public relations people have been taken advantage of. They had to provide something in which they did not believe. They did as much as they could, scaring some of my constituents and those of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South. I am glad that the Labour councillors could not match that. That was an abuse of the system.

Leicester deserved to be rate capped, and I was delighted that that occurred. The propaganda included pamphlets entitled "Who Pulled the Plug? What Ratecapping Means for Leicester" and pamphlets in Gujarati. I shall not read the Gujarati edition. Not one of the cuts has occurred. No jobs have gone. There has been no reduction in refuse collection and street cleaning, although for some strange reason the men do not like to collect street refuse on Mondays. The inner city housing improvement programme is on target. There has been no cut in benefits—indeed, I admire what the city council has done there.

A large rally was arranged, which I was not able to attend because it was Monday 13 May and the House was sitting. Not many people went there. The Peace Action Group, which is operated through Leicester city council, had on its pamphlet the logo "Nuclear Free Festival Week". The ratepayers' money is being spent on a nuclear free festival week. What does that have to do with jobs and the people? The declaration of a "Nuclear free zone" will not stop us from being bombed. Expenditure of £12,000 warning people that they are entering a nuclear free zone did not reassure my constituents or anyone else — as usual, it made Leicester a laughing stock. The city has two active Conservative Members of Parliament, yet, because it has a Labour council, people want to attack us. We stand up for the people of Leicester.

The Leicester people feel hard done by when they see how much money the city council spends on the politicisation of jobs manipulating some of our citizens.

The unions in Leicester do not want to bring extra jobs to the city, because they are worried about equality of opportunity. They tried to stop 400 jobs from coming in through the community programme. We are fighting for those jobs for the city. We must keep up with the business of rate capping. I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that the rates continue as they did before and that the council is checked financially. The Labour group will try to whip up feeling on this matter. Each time in the annual whip-round the Labour group says that it has been fighting all the way to protect the people. Members of that group fight to protect themselves. They scare us and spend more money, yet, at the end of the day, they will not go through with their aims.

I am very keen, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), that council services should be put out for competitive tendering. There is a lot to be done there. Leicester proved, when it had the fear of being rate capped, that it could keep within its limits. I should like us to consider what else we as a Government can do to save the citizens in all our great cities a large sum of money, whether it be on vehicle maintenance, refuse collection——

Mr. Rooker: The golf course?

Mr. Bruinvels: Yes, even the golf course—anything that will bring about some savings for the private golf course. This must be welcome to anybody who wishes to see savings made for the citizens of Leicester.

I am worried about the Leicester Labour party. It has now established a research and information unit to supervise the existing public relations campus. It has been called by the civics reporter of the *Leicester Mercury*, Colin Vann, "the Ministry of propaganda". This research and information unit is comprised of an information officer, two information assistants and a clerical assistant. It is to spend £29,000 a year with three officer contracts to monitor not only what is happening outside but what is going on in the city council. It is to look at the work of the Labour councillors because obviously it is felt that some of them are not Left wing enough! I do not know about that, but I think that it is incredible. Does it not have its own whip to look after the Labour councillors? We have a whip on the Conservative side of the council. Why does it need this monitoring unit?

Mr. Rooker: To check on your questions.

Mr. Bruinvels: It wants to increase public awareness. We all know what is going on in the city of Leicester through the daily *Leicester Mercury*. We all know what the council is doing because it is advertising this in the *Leicester Link*. Why is this unit needed? Is that not the kind of thing which would save all the ratepayers of Leicester some money? But, oh no—it also wants to take over education from the county council. A city council to run education? It cannot even run its own council, so why does it want to interfere in education? I suppose that it wants to politicise that as well, and to bring politics into the school room. That is scandalous, it should not be allowed and I shall fight against it. Then there is social services. I suppose that it wants some of its own employees to get social security handouts.

It has a budget of £137,000. That is atrocious. It wants to reject attacks on local autonomy and services. It may wish to do that, but I interpret it as the foundation of extreme Socialism, and I shall have no hesitation in referring this unit directly to the Widdicombe inquiry because I think it is the kind of thing that should be examined.

Keeping the rates down is the most important thing that the Government have so far done. This is bringing real jobs into the city again and giving prosperity to a large number of businesses. If the rates are kept down and

[Mr. Bruinvels]

Leicester gets back into line, I feel certain that, when the next election comes, Leicester will be better off and better run and, I hope, Conservatives will be running the city council.

9.1 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): In the early part of the debate, the Minister referred to the county council elections and in particular to the results of Lancashire county council. As a shire county council representative, I think that one should consider Lancashire in perspective.

The Minister should recall that when local government reorganisation took place, all the Labour strongholds on the south side of the county were put into Merseyside, Greater Manchester or Warrington, which was transferred into Cheshire. That was an attempt by the Government to try to ensure that Labour would never take control of that county council.

In 1977, Labour had only 12 seats on the council, in 1981 we moved into a majority, and even this year's results were extremely good for the Labour party. We now have 48 seats, and remain the largest party on the county council.

The Minister referred to the Crosland speech in 1976, as did the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley). The situation in 1976, when councils were being asked to exercise restraint, was very different from the position which we now face. At that stage, there was no penalty and no rate capping. There was some fat which councils could cut then but, cuts having been made continuously since then, that is no longer so. Any further cuts in local government bite on essential services. As finance chairman, I was called to London at that time to meet Anthony Crosland at party headquarters. We co-operated at that stage. It is important to remember that at that time councils had the right to fix their own rates, a right which has now been removed from them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to the reform of local government. The one thing that the legislation that has recently completed its passage through Parliament will give the future Labour Government the opportunity to do is reform the whole of local government. The legislation makes it a priority to deal not only with the metropolitan counties but with the shire counties and, as my hon. Friend said, also to give democratic control over hospitals, water and many other services. I look forward to the day when, as Secretary of State, my hon. Friend introduces a Bill that will take us forward in that direction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) referred to disregards with particular reference to the urban programme. I fully support his comments. We are told repeatedly that the Department of the Environment is considering this issue. But I believe that all expenditure — be it programme, designated authority, partnership or traditional urban—arising from the urban programme should be disregarded.

My hon. Friend also referred to housing benefit, and one must take into account the social security review which will transfer an additional 10 per cent. burden that will have to be met from local government funds.

The Green Paper says that GREs will be adjusted, and it is reasonable to assume that if the Government are to save money—one accepts that that is the purpose of the exercise—the adjustment will not be a full one and that once again the burden will have to be borne by local government.

Paragraph 1*(e)* of the RSG supplementary report for 1985-86 indicates a total overspend of £278 million. I should stress that that is the Government's view, because I do not believe that it is an overspend. but that is 1·27 per cent. above the figure which the Government believe should be spent. That figure has attracted a block grant penalty loss of £550 million, which is equivalent not to 1·27 per cent. but to 6·5 per cent. That is a further blow to local government, local democracy, local services and local ratepayers.

In 1984-85, when the Government determined the overspend to be £841 million, the penalty was £452 million. This increase in the penalty rate is the severest yet and is almost double the overspend. This cut in block grant is returned directly to the Exchequer, and to meet that expenditure the burden must be put on to ratepayers, otherwise essential services will have to be cut yet again and there will have to be further job losses.

Most shire counties have targets below the GRE figure for 1985-86, but this type of penalty has forced them to keep their figures below GRE. That makes a nonsense of the Government's own GRE system.

I have always believed that at some stage the Government would make the GRE the key target figure. If the rumours are correct, that seems to be the path that the Government will now follow. We shall hear the announcement next week. If that is so, while it will benefit many shire counties, including Lancashire, which spends below GRE — given that the penalty to spend at that figure would be too high—it will penalise councils such as Burnley in my borough.

Burnley's cash target is 50 per cent. above its GRE, and it is one of the 13 councils that have a cash target so much above GRE. If the Government are to contain expenditure within the GRE figure, it stands to reason that authorities spending over it will be more heavily penalised. I accept that the rate of grant above GRE is progressively lower, but as the scheme continues I have no doubt that the position will worsen. That will place Burnley and many other authorities in serious difficulties, and it will result in more cuts, more job losses and an inability to deal with problems such as housing, the elderly and all the others with which local government is trying to deal.

I have always believed that Government have a right to fix the total amount of expenditure that councils should be able to spend, but at present that amount is far too low. Local government and Parliament have the right to argue about that amount, but, even more important, local government should be given the freedom to spend the money that it believes is necessary to maintain services.

If the GRE system is to be strengthened and improved, it must be more clearly understood. At present, it is neither understood nor fair. Several times before my election to the House but as leader of the council, and since my election as a Member of Parliament I have met civil servants on the issue. They failed to explain how they arrived at the figures. People in local government do not accept that the system is either fair or right and there must be key changes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) referred to a number of factors, and certainly a key one for a non-metropolitan district is the housing factor E7. That is crazy and puts Burnley in an

unfavourable position compared to our neighbouring authority, the borough of Blackburn. I cannot see why there should be such a difference. One great problem of the late penalty set out in the third report is that councils have to take it into account after the end of the financial year and after they have fixed their budgets. In Burnley's case that means the council has to find an additional £80,000 for this year. That is the equivalent of 1p on the rates.

It is time the Government devised a much fairer system for local government and allowed democratically-elected local representatives to deal with the problems and services in their areas. I could say a lot more but another of my hon. Friends wishes to speak. I hope that the Government will make changes in the way that they tackle these problems.

9.12 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Minister argued in this debate that somehow rate capping and penalties increased the efficiency of councils. But the game was given away by one Conservative Back Bencher after another. They talked about the pet projects of Labour councils, but what the Government are really about is to use the House as a court of appeal from decisions of elected local councillors. It is no function of ours to decide how an elected local authority should conduct its affairs.

The Minister made a comparison between Wandsworth and Lambeth. The reason why Wandsworth has a low rate is partly because it does not incur penalties, and partly because Wandsworth, within its power, took a political decision to sack people on a very great scale, to abolish services, to cut back on services for the elderly and the young, and to cut back on housing. Those were political decisions, and there is no way a Minister is going to force Labour councils to take decisions of that sort except in the most excruciating circumstances. All this is certainly not going to increase the efficiency of any local authority.

There is no evidence to suggest that the Minister is in any way capable of getting a local authority to change the way it behaves. If that were the case, I would have people coming to me in Lambeth saying that as a result of rate capping and penalties the repair service and housing benefit administration were more efficient, and the admission of people to homes for the elderly was better. There is no evidence that the interaction of what the Government are proposing and what the local authority does leads to an improved service at a lower cost.

What we will have is an increase in inefficiency, because as one gets industrial action or reaction to the Government proposals, as councils are locked in battle with the Government, as penalties pile up and as people are sacked—which is inevitable if cuts are made—what will follow is a lower quality of service and a lower standard of efficiency. There is no link between efficiency and these proposals. It is simply that the Government want to substitute their political judgment for the judgment of elected councillors. The consequence will be a combination of cuts, chaos and confrontation at a cost to the ratepayers,

Even on the present figures of rate capping in Lambeth, on the Government approved level of expenditure of £113million we suffer a penalty of £1·6 million. That is not a penalty on councillors; it is a penalty on the ratepayers. I cannot see the logic of that sort of arrangement. The Government revised the amount of money we can spend in Lambeth to £122 million. Then we were penalised on that Government-approved level of expenditure to a total of £11 million.

The illogicality of the system is at its most acute in relation to urban aid projects. Lambeth council is picking up projects approved by central Government, and time-expired projects in the current year amount to £1·5 million. The Government's failure to review £800,000 of urban aid programme expenditure means that Lambeth will lose £660,000 in grant because it is carrying on with time-expired projects. Next year that figure could be £1·1 million. We end up with a confrontation between Government and councillors in which there can be no victor, only victims.

Taking up the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), I suggest that in the short time which remains the Government should tell the district auditor that the Government have already stood to benefit by £113 million in grant lost to Lambeth, that in the current year alone the Government can expect a profit of between £1·6 million and £20 million in penalty on the figures contained in the orders and that in view of that very large gain to the Government it is about time that the auditor stopped his depredations and left Lambeth council to make its own political judgment about the level of services to be provided in Lambeth without the Government interfering in this overbearing way with penalties and rate capping.

9.15 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The debate has been notable for the fine speeches made by my hon. Friends the Members for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett), for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and by my good friend from Lancashire, my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). It has also been notable that at no stage has any representative of what is described as the Social Democratic party been present.

Mr. Waldegrave: As the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) put in a rare appearance today, is it not disappointing that he could not stay among us a few minutes longer?

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) represents a Scottish constituency, although he may not do so for much longer, but, as ever, I share the Minister's concern.

Mr. Simon Hughes: As the hon. Gentleman knows, my colleague and hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) speaks for the Social Democratic party on local government. My hon. Friend was in hospital yesterday and is recuperating today. Otherwise, he would have been here. For his sake, it is right that I should put that on the record.

Mr. Straw: I know that the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) is an assiduous attender and we send him our commiserations, but I should point out to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that there are other members of the Social Democratic party.

In January this year, the Minister for Local Government in what he described as his

"maiden speech in a rate support grant debate"

described the system as

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"well nigh incomprehensible and . . . understood only by the initiated."

He went on to say:

"I accept that the system is byzantine in its complexity and that it is probably fully comprehended only by those who have a taste for scholastic theology."—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 411.]

It is also of interest to those with a taste for error, and our debate today has been punctuated by information about the errors in the report. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) pointed out that a major error of £30 million in the 1982-83 settlement is being institutionalised in the third supplementary report. There is a straightforward solution to errors of that kind which even the Government might accept. Even at this late stage, they should recompense the shire authorities which have been losing for so long without disadvantaging other authorities. We commend that solution to the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) also pointed out that the figure for Northumberland should be £110 million and not £111 million.

We all appreciate the complexities of the system. Indeed, some complexity is inevitable in any system of grant redistribution. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon Ministers to ensure that the reports are as accurate as possible; and, when inaccuracies are brought to their attention, they should withdraw the reports until they have been corrected.

There is a third item, which I raise on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is chairing a meeting of the Greater London council. This is the first debate on rate support grant, abolition or rate capping that he has missed. Ministers are familiar with the argument. The information in the third supplementary report for 1982-83 is based on the first return submitted by the London borough of Newham some time ago. It submitted a revised return which was certified by its external auditor, Arthur Young. Newham believes that it will suffer severely if its grant entitlement is not based on that revised return. Although the Secretary of State has said that he hopes that the third report will be the final one, I hope that, if he is satisfied with the representations made by Newham, he will be willing to bring forward a fourth supplementary report to accommodate the difficulties that Newham has raised.

Behind what the Minister described as scholastic theology and the complexity and statistical trickery of the rate support grant system lie consequences for local authorities and the people they represent which are simple, straightforward and brutal. The report is part of the crude, politically biased mechanism by which the Government impose their will on local communities and their representatives regardless of those communities' will.

No Government have prayed democracy in aid more than this one and no Government have undermined democracy more than this one. The Government continually fail to comprehend that the essence of democracy is the right to choose, the right to say, "No", the right to disagree. In theory, people have those rights but, in practice, when the people and their representatives try to exercise them, the rights are cut away and the representatives are cut down. Great local authorities are abolished—seven are to be abolished by the Act that received the Royal Assent today—because their voters chose to elect Labour councils. There is no other reason. When the remaining local authorities try to meet the needs of their communities, they are penalised and punished for exercising their democratic rights.

Increasingly, the Government's motto is, "You can do anything you like, provided that we agree." The Minister revealed himself when he described 90 per cent. of authorities over target as Labour and said, "Old habits die hard." What arrogance. Does he not understand that the Labour party is in the habit of caring about communities and of being willing to spend money on them? We are willing to invest in those communities. We have the habit of Socialism and we shall not throw it away just because the tanks of Marsham street driven by the Minister are driven in the way of those authorities. It was revealing when the Minister dismissed the will of those Labour-controlled authorities and their electors by saying that old habits die hard.

Under the first supplementary report for 1985-86, the severest ever penalties are imposed on local authorities —apparently 90 per cent. of them are Labour controlled —which exceed their targets. For every £1 of alleged overspend, £2 is taken away in penalties. To pay for an alleged overspend of £278 million, the Treasury takes back £550 million. So grotesque has the system become that the Treasury now has a vested interest in its continuance. Whatever Department of the Environment Ministers may say, the Treasury wants authorities to spend over their targets, for overspending reduces the public sector borrowing requirement — and it is at the shrine of a diminishing PSBR that the mad monetarists still in charge of the Government worship.

We object root and branch to the target and block grant system which penalises individual authorities for choosing a level at which they should spend. The system is made all the more outrageous by the Government's chosen methods. As I reminded the House, at least the Minister has acknowledged that the system is Byzantine and incomprehensible. The Secretary of State, who, as ever, disagrees with his Minister, told the Committee only last year that the system, which the Minister describes as Byzantine and incomprehensible, provides robust and objective tests. Would that the Secretary of State were telling the truth about the system. There is nothing objective either about targets or GREA. Time and again the system's objectivity has been bent in pursuit of partisan political goals.

Some of my hon. Friends may know of a cosmetic range called Max Factor. It was even the subject of some smutty rhymes when I was at school. The Government use a cosmetic to disguise their true intentions, which is called the E7 factor. The report, at paragraphs 18 and 19, waxes eloquent about the E7 factor in language which I am sure its authors scarcely comprehended. My colleagues can take it from me that the gobbledegook disguises a simple and straightforward fraud on Labour-controlled and higher-spending authorities.

In the Housing Act 1980 local authorities were for the first time allowed to make profits from council tenants. Conservative non-metropolitan districts have taken advantage of that with alacrity. Some authorities, such as Epping Forest, South Oxfordshire, Tandridge and Wansdyke, use profits from their council tenants to pay for between one fifth and one third of expenditure from the general rate fund. Therefore, council tenants pay rents

both for their houses, and for the bin and environmental services of all the ratepayers in their area. In effect, council tenants are subsidising richer owner-occupiers.

The position is even worse. To ensure that the Tory shire districts get the best from the rate support grant system, and that they escape penalty, the E7 factor assumes that none of those authorities makes any profit from its housing rent for the purpose of giving it rate support grant. Ratepayers in those areas are, therefore, subsidised twice. Should there be any danger of the Tory shire district reaching its target, the council can increase its rents still further, because expenditure from additional profits does not count against targets. It is an utter scandal. It is not surprising that when a minute marked "Confidential E7 development work" about items that might be politically embarrassing, which was sent from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to an official in the Department, was leaked, the Government's embarrassment was extensive.

Today both the Minister and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said that 74 per cent. of authorities had been able to live within their targets. However, they have ignored the fact that the rules are designed to enable Tory shire districts to escape. If we weight the authorities by spending, a quite different picture emerges. Conservative authorities such as Essex, Harrow, Enfield and Hillingdon would suffer the consequences of penalties on their expenditure. If the Minister wishes to listen to me, I can answer the question that he has just put to his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, as I lip read. Fifty-nine of the 116 major spending authorities—the London boroughs, metropolitan districts and shire counties—are subject to penalty and target. That is a measure of the harm and hurt of the Government system.

The system is so ludicrous that even the Government know that it is likely to collapse under its own weight. The system, which was designed to increase the popularity of the Government, has proved disastrously unpopular, as they discovered in the shire county elections two months ago, and subsequently in their first loss of control of the Association of County Councils. The hapless Minister and the Under-Secretary of State have been set to work to find the Holy Grail and to redeem the tawdry pledge made 10 years ago by the Prime Minister that she would abolish domestic rates.

Tonight, the Minister has been uncharacteristically coy about this work. I note that I have had no reply to a letter that I sent to the Prime Minister almost a fortnight ago seeking answers to simple questions about the studies. I wanted to know when it would be published, whether there would be a Green Paper, and whether it would contain lists of winners and losers. Perhaps at the last minute, as with the social security reviews, the Government will get cold feet and suppress the facts upon which the decisions could be made. Perhaps we shall have to wait until the Conservative party conference for all this information. Whoever will be the new Secretary of State for the Environment—the fact that there will be a new one is certain—will be honing his speech which he will give to the masses there assembled. Will it be the Minister for Local Government? Is he taking a holiday in September? Will he leave his telephone number with No. 10 just in case?

All that is for the future. What of next year? The Secretary of State has repeatedly expressed his desire to sweep away the target system, and the leaks suggest that that may be announced next week. But I warn my hon. Friends and local authorities not to rejoice prematurely. We must all beware Ministers bearing gifts. Unless the Chancellor and the Secretary of State have suddenly abandoned the habits of a political lifetime, most local authorities will be thrown out of the frying pan into a raging fire. If in place of target and penalty we shall have GREA and penalty, the results for all but the shire counties will be significantly worse. The grant-related expenditure assessments of most London boroughs and metropolitan districts are lower than their targets. Therefore, the consequences of basing penalty on GREAs rather than on targets would be even worse.

Moreover, to use GREAs in this way would be a categorical breach of the undertakings given to the House when the GREA system was established in the 1980 Act. The previous Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Secretary of State for Employment, said on 1 April 1980:

"It is not suggested that it"—

the needs assessment—

"prescribes a specific level to which an authority ought to spend . . . I want to make it clear that that was not the purpose. We are seeking to find the fairest way to distribute public money to local authorities."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 1 April 1980, c. 941.]

The Secretary of State had said earlier:

"My Department will not be in the business of saying how much each authority should spend, where it should or should not make cuts or on what it should spend money. Local authorities are autonomous. They fix their rate systems."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 27 March 1980, c. 840-41.]

On the basis of those undertakings, the House accepted the principle of GREA in 1980.

The main question that we must ask is: what has been achieved by all the mess, misery and chaos of the past six years? It has certainly not helped the Government's popularity nor, sadly, the Secretary of State's career. In what way has it improved the welfare of the nation, our economy or even unemployment, for which the Government now profess concern? The answer is that no benefit has been achieved. Ministers weep crocodile tears about domestic and business ratepayers, but they know that rates have increased by 80 per cent. above the rate of inflation because of their cuts in rate support grant. In government, Labour's policies produced lower rates, and would have continued to do so had we remained in government. In so far as business rates have increased, the Government know that there is not a shred of evidence to support their claim that rates increases have caused the loss of jobs.

It was, after all, this Government who ordered the £50,000 study from the University of Cambridge on the effects of rates upon the location of employment. It was that report which confirmed not just what we have been saying but what many reputable independent firms of surveyors have been saying — that there is no relationship between rate levels and the loss of jobs.

The Government can, of course, dredge up the comments of Conservative business men who say that rates are a burden, but they have had the report for six months and produced not a paragraph of proper refutation of its conclusions.

The report concluded that there was a failure to detect a locational effect of rates, which probably indicates that no such effect exists. The report went on to say that

"in contrast to the negative conclusion concerning rates, the study draws attention to different factors that have a large and

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measurable effect upon location, in particular manufacturing and employment trends, the mix of industries, the size of factories and the extent to which an area is urbanised".

The report not only said that but went on to say that Labour authorities—the authorities spending more and therefore rating more—might be the ones that were creating jobs. The report went on to say:

"If high rates are used to finance high local authority spending, it is likely that a local authority's own workforce will be larger than it would otherwise have been. If this is the case, a high level of rates will be associated with a high level of local employment. This is the opposite of the conventional argument that high rates are harmful for local employment".

The conclusion of the report is that it is Labour councils which have been protecting jobs and the Conservative Government who have been destroying them. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry to discomfort Conservative Members with the truth, but they should read the report. I know that they do not ever wish to have facts to illuminate their prejudices, but if they want to know the truth about rates and jobs they should read the Department's own report.

Until two weeks ago the Government could at least claim the merit of consistency. They could claim that they have been saying again and again that they were against public spending; that it was bad for Britain and had to be cut. But even that alibi, that excuse, has now gone. It has been shot away by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his panic speech in Oxford after the trauma of Brecon. He now tells us, after all this, that the Government are in favour of public spending. I quote from the report in the Conservative Party News Service, where the Chancellor is recorded as saying:

"Our public spending record is a good one. It is the middle way".

He went on to say:

"we do spend more where it is needed. On doctors. On nurses. On each pupil at school".

It is true that the public sector as a whole, the local authorities, are now spending more on each pupil at school than in 1979, but that is no thanks to this Government. Had this Government had their way, and had their expenditure plans worked out as they intended, expenditure per pupil would have dropped by £55 per head in real terms between 1980 and 1985. It has risen by £115 per head only because local authorities, led by good Labour groups, have put the needs of the children of their areas above the harsh and brutal spending plans of the Government.

For that record of increasing spending on each pupil at school, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the man who now claims credit for the improvement—has sought to brow-beat authorities with every weapon at his disposal to get them to reduce their spending. What audacity; what hypocrisy.

At today's prices, expenditure per pupil was planned by this Government to fall from £1,130 in 1980-81 to £1,085 in 1984-85; in fact, it has increased from £1,050 to £1,065. If that increase in expenditure on pupils at school is a good thing, and if the Government now claim credit for such an increase, why have the Government repeatedly, and by these orders tonight, sought to pile penalty after penalty on authorities which have been seeking to do no more than that which the Government now proclaim? An answer from the Government is required.

We have a Government who are bereft of ideology, principle and purpose. The orders achieve nothing but vindictiveness upon local authorities and hurt for the communities that they serve. They are worthy of the Ministers responsible for them, and we shall oppose them.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): It is pleasant to return to a rate support grant order debate. For some reason, I have missed one or two. Nothing seems to have changed very much in my absence, and certainly not the speeches of the hon. Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). At the end of his remarks, the hon. Member for Blackburn entered into his PESC speech, his public expenditure speech. Perhaps there will be a reshuffle of those on the Opposition Front Bench in due course.

One notable absence is that of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is chairing his great council almost for the last time. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have missed his moderate and quiet analyses, his tact in dealing with the issues before us and his courtesy to all and sundry. The only differences in the speeches of the hon. Members for Copeland and for Blackburn since I last heard them is that their tongues sink rather deeper into their cheeks each time they make them.

We have had the speeches about the end of civilisation, democracy and local government as we know it. We had a classic version from the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett). The problem for Labour Members is that democracy refuses to come to an end, as does local government, and the world goes quietly on. In the prediction game, the predictions made by Conservative Members seem, on the whole, to come rather more nearly true.

In one of these debates a couple of years ago the hon. Member for Blackburn said that rates would increase in Kensington and Chelsea by 40 per cent. In fact, they increased by 9 per cent., and this year they have been reduced by 9 per cent. The actual results this year seem to be rather closer to what the Government said would happen than the predictions of the hon. Members for Copeland and Blackburn and their right hon. and hon. Friends. We have heard their dire predictions about collapses of local authorities and the rating system, but 74 per cent. of all local authorities were able to meet their targets and 88 per cent. of them came within 2 per cent. of their targets. Only 14 authorities exceeded their targets by more than 5 per cent.

That is not too bad and the outturn was not too far from what we predicted. The net result is that total local authority spending has been held steady in real terms. The very long-term trend to which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government referred, which we have slowed since 1979, has now been stopped.

In a philosophical soliloquy the hon. Member for Blackburn asked, "What has it all been for?" The answer is that we have done that for which we were elected. We have succeeded in slowing down and stopping the overall growth in local authority expenditure.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has only recently concluded his speech and he did not leave me quite as much time as we agreed upon. I shall press on. The purpose of the exercise has been expenditure restraint.

We have had some splendid speeches from my hon. Friends. I have in mind my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South said once again, and rightly, that the penalties on high-spending authorities are all part of the process of putting pressure where it should be, which is on the high spenders, the profligate authorities, so that more responsible authorities can be treated more fairly. That is what the orders are all about and that is the purpose of our restraint on local authority spending. I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friends.

I sympathised with several of the arguments of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), one of which was for stability. The objective of all my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself is to make all the improvements that must be introduced into the system. The Audit Commission's report has been quoted at us and I accept its criticisms on the capital control side and on the complexities of the system. I accept that stability must be one of our objectives.

The other side of the coin has been presented throughout the debate. It has been said that we must have specific changes to the local authority system that will provide perfection. That argument was not advanced by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who stood four square with the view that it would be better for the procedures to be slightly simpler and for there to be an element of rough justice if we could achieve more stability. That is a fair criticism of the present system.

In directing themselves to the 1982-83 final report, the hon. Member for Copeland and my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and for Halifax (Mr. Galley) all referred to "the mistake". I shall not shelter behind the word "anomaly". In the difficult decisions that my right hon. Friends have to make, that is a classic example of the tension that exists when trying to perfect the system at the cost of importing further instability. When that mistake was discovered and discussed with local authorities way back in 1982-83, after we had made the point that there would be a disregard in that year — the hon. Member for Blackburn will remember that there was a GRE exemption that year and that it therefore mattered how GRE related to targets— there was no continuing pressure from local authorities to make changes.

It is fair to say that the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and some authorities have been urging us to correct that mistake. That can be done only at the cost of importing further instability into the system elsewhere. Today we are being urged to make changes and shift money in mid-year. That would be difficult for local authorities. We must find a balance. That was a difficult decision for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and that is why he came down on the side that he did. It was a reasonable decision.

The hon. Member for Blackburn made a point about Newham on behalf of his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a statutory duty to use the best information available to him. When two outturn figures are given to him, he has a difficult judgment to make. I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to what the hon. Gentleman said and he will reconsider the matter. I do not give a commitment that he will change his decision.

On the 1985-86 report, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) asked about the Hounslow change. That was one of the improvements that caused the instability. It is a factor that must be remembered when people are urging us further to refine the GRE factors. There was a change which had an effect on some authorities, including Hounslow.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has carefully considered Hounslow's request. The 1982-83 precedent is not a fair one to use. The matter about which my hon. Friend asked is not a mistake; it is a change derived from the improvement. It would not be right to "safety net" the changes as was done with the earlier anomalies.

I am not convinced by my hon. Friend's arguments. When we are urged by delegations – I see a great many of them — to make further changes and exact adjustments to the system, that always results in an unexpected change elsewhere. That is one of the arguments for not making too many changes from year to year. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appreciates that fact.

We have begun to slow down the growth of local authority expenditure which has been continuing year in, year out for 30 years. It was, on average, 3·5 per cent. higher than inflation throughout the 1960s. We began to slow it down after 1979. Until this year, we had a real average increase of about 1 per cent. That is still formidable. We were teased by the hon. Member for Copeland for not having done more. We were asked whether we were proud of our record in controlling spending. I do not think that we are. We should have liked to have done more. That is what we were elected for. This year, we have stabilised it.

Attention has now turned — it should have turned earlier to some extent — to how to obtain value for money out of the existing spending. There are no slashing cuts in overall resources. There must be an inexorable search for value for money so as to deliver services from stable resources.

The Audit Commission's report has been mentioned today. I have heard some astonishing things said about the auditor by people who, with respect, should know better. I was astonished, for example, to hear the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) say that my right hon. Friends should tell the auditor this or that. He may have been pulling our leg, because he is aware that my right hon. Friends cannot legally tell the auditor, X, Y or Z. He is independent, and it would be a fundamental infringement of one of the points of his constitution, which is so often prayed in aid in those matters, if we were to interfere with the auditor's independence. I am sure that the hon. Member did not mean that. If he wants to withdraw it, I shall be happy to give way to him.

Mr. John Fraser: I am not suggesting anything about the auditor's statutory functions. However, it is open to the Government to represent to him that a massive profit has been made by the Treasury out of these machinations, and that should be taken into account when he makes his final decision.

Mr. Waldegrave: The auditor has a statutory duty as to what to do if he believes that there has been illegal

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behaviour in a local authority. If we were to start making the political points that the hon. Gentleman suggests that we should make, I hope that the auditor would not open our letters but simply return them to us.

I am sorry that I was not here to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), but my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government has reported on it to me. I gather that the hon. Gentleman also wanted us to repeal the legislation in which the statutory independence of the auditor is enshrined. That is a serious suggestion. I hope that that is not the policy of the Labour party. If it is, it is a new policy. The late lamented Mr. Anthony Crosland was among the foremost in defending the independence of the auditor. If I have misrepresented the hon. Gentleman, I shall give way.

Mr. Heffer: I did not say anything of the kind. The hon. Gentleman had better read what I said. Do not local authorities have statutory obligations? Do they not have to carry out certain functions based upon legislation? They are choosing not to carry out the law because of the Government's policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have not heard any suggestion from the hon. Gentleman's local council that it has gone to court to say, for example, that the targets have prevented it from carrying out its statutory duty. There is a clear statutory duty on the auditor to pursue any allegation of illegal behaviour, and there is nothing that my right hon. Friends can, should or will do to interfere.

The Audit Commission has made recommendations to the local authorities about value for money. Often value for money can be achieved to increase the services elsewhere or to give money back to the ratepayer. It is up to the judgment of the local authority to decide which of those courses to follow.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government asked for the view of Labour Members as to why there are such huge differences in spending—for example, £126 per pupil on school cleaning in one authority and £31 in another. This cannot be because there is that much more cleaning to do. The Audit Commission does not believe that. There is the example of vans that are serviced every 10 miles. Nobody can pretend that that is anything other than bad management.

One authority is able to fill all but 0·5 per cent. of its housing stock, whereas other authorities have 5 per cent. of their housing stock vacant. This is bad management and a waste of resources. Any elected official is a trustee of other people's resources, and it is a serious matter if he is not using properly the money that is entrusted to him.

In its recent report on further and higher education colleges, the Audit Commission estimates total possible savings without damaging services at between £125 million and £150 million a year. That money could pay for 75,000 more students, or could be given back to help local industry. The Audit Commission found some lecturers teaching only 10 hours a week. In one college, it estimated that slack management cost £235,000 a year. Bad debt management cost £70,000 in another.

However, there are other colleges that are doing well and it is right to congratulate them. The good colleges are not necessarily in Conservative authorities. I can quote a good college in a Labour district, Wakefield district college. It is a model of what can done with such a college. It is open for 48 weeks in a year while most are open for only 36 weeks. Courses are tightly managed, achieving excellent exam results while pushing pupil-teacher ratios of 8:1 which is more generous than for a full research university, to 14:1 which is more as it should be. The college has a 96 per cent. retention ratio on its courses. What is wrong with that? We must ask why, if Wakefield can do that, others cannot.

Mr. Barnett *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I have only a few more minutes, and the hon. Gentleman made a long speech, so I shall not give way.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) quoted from *The Guardian*. I read *The Guardian*, too. In today's edition of *The Guardian* Maureen O'Connor says that Newham's 3,000 surplus secondary school places are not only bad for the school, because they are distorting the size of the school, but cost the borough about £1 million a year, just in wasted resources. I know that I have the hon. Members for Copeland and for Blackburn with me on this point. The hon. Member for Blackburn has a long and honourable record on value for money. He was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* of 6 June 1984 as having said the following at a Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy conference in Brighton:

> "There is a private joke in the Labour party that the two main obstacles to socialism are Margaret Thatcher and the Camden Housing Department, to which I might add the Islington Building Works Department, certainly when I was its Chairman."

That is very engaging and open. The hon. Gentleman continues:

> "All of us have had some personal experience of a public service which has been rude, or inefficient, or incompetent which has appeared in short to be serving itself rather than the public.
>
> If the public sector as a whole had apparently been less self-serving, less complacent and more efficient, then the climate for cuts and privatisation would have been altogether far less favourable."

That is a very honest and straightforward thing to say. Let me press the hon. Gentleman a little bit further.

I calculate that the Audit Commission shows that there could be savings of about £1 billion a year, and it has looked at only one quarter of local spending so far. Regardless of whether that should go back to the ratepayer or the business man — that is the political divide between us—nobody in the Opposition will try to argue that those savings are not there for the making, because they are, and they should be, and it is a disgrace that they are not.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: With respect, I must complete my speech.

We have heard the usual accounts of the Liverpool problems. The Labour council seems to be sleepwalking towards disaster. I understand that as a result of Mr. Scargill sending for the leader of the Labour party last week, the unfortunate hon. Members for Copeland and for Blackburn are now being sent off in their turn to talk to Mr. Hatton and his cronies in Liverpool. They may take some advisers with them—I recommend that they take the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who knows how to deal with Militant, or perhaps the hon. Member for

Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk), who hopes that he knows how to deal with Militant. Perhaps with the two of them as bodyguards they will get on.

I hope that the hon. Member for Blackburn will share with Liverpool councillors his experience as chairman of the Islington building works department, so that he can explain about searching for value for money. Let me repeat the figure. For every £10 million of saving there would be £22 million more grant available to Liverpool. It is within the council's capacity to find its own salvation. I should like to explore further——

Mr. Heffer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I must complete my speech. I want to explore one further area——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I want to explore with Opposition spokesmen one further area of potential agreement. I do not expect the hon. Member for Blackburn to support the Rates Act. He was bitterly opposed to the 19 per cent. rate cut that we delivered for the ratepayers of Greenwich, the 25 per cent. cut for Southwark and the 32 per cent. cut for Leicester. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East gave robust and welcome support to the benefits that have been achieved for their ratepayers.

However, I think that we may agree with the hon. Member for Blackburn in our views of the utterly disgraceful campaign waged by some Labour rate-capped councils. The hon. Gentleman was the victim of some of it. He was ridiculed by one of Ms. Margaret Hodge's propaganda sheets. He was a threat to local democracy because he had used local politics as a stepping stone to this place. Some people must look with amusement at the way in which some leaders of the London Labour party are scrabbling their way into this place, doing exactly the sort of thing that they criticised the hon. Gentleman for doing.

In the campaign not only were there absurd claims and not only was the hon. Member for Blackburn called a threat to democracy. The campaign was not just seeking to prevent the House from having the benefit of the many people who have served in local democracy, many of whom we have heard today, including my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, who was a local councillor. It was that the whole campaign, which was certainly a fiasco, was not entirely a comic fiasco. Nobody will challenge me in saying that it was a fiasco. Certainly the SDP will not challenge me, for Councillor Anne Sofer wrote yesterday:

"the great anti-abolition and anti-rate capping campaigns now echo sadly like tunes from last year's pop festival—the first played out and the second an expensive flop. What the London public sees now, when it looks at the London Labour party, is a bunch of squabbling incompetents".

That is the SDP's view.

I end with a more objective source. Stewart Lansley, a former Labour councillor, is now above politics—he has become a researcher for LWT—although, perhaps for old times' sake, he still contributes to *New Socialist*, a small circulation magazine. He writes:

"far from creating a crisis for the Government, Labour has manufactured a crisis of its own."

He went on:

"The responsibility for the . . . Labour . . . party's failure to measure up to the challenge lies not merely with local leaders but with the party leadership and the national executive. Neil Kinnock offered no leadership, and no strategy, save capitulation."

That is only the Leader of the Opposition's local government policy, not even his defence policy.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1982 83 (House of Commons Paper No. 504), which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1985 86 (House of Commons Paper No. 478), which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 202.

Division No. 279] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*

Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'fmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George

Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

10.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I beg to move,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1983-84 (House of Commons Paper No. 448), which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

I hope that it will be convenient if at the same time we discuss the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 449).

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have all received copies from the Vote Office of the reports on which the Secretary of State for Wales is just about to speak, and I seek your guidance. Earlier this evening, when we were debating the report on which we have just voted, a point of order was raised about discrepancies amounting to some £1 million. That affects the figures on page 27 of that report and all local authorities in England. Indeed, only 12 months ago the Secretary of State for Wales had to admit to the House that many mistakes were contained in the report that was then debated. The treasurers of all the Welsh local authorities have estimated future rates assessments on the figures that have been published in the two booklets that were available to the House on 4 and 9 July. Can you assure us that the Secretary of State will give a personal assurance, before any statement is made, that all the figures contained in those documents are absolutely and perfectly correct? It would be pointless for the House to debate this issue unless we can have that clear assurance.

The treasurer of the Ogwr borough has sent me a list of detailed percentages and estimated rate grants since 1981-82. He has also highlighted the difficulty faced by all the councillors in that borough—half of whom I represent—in trying to fix a rate assessment to the figure to which the Secretary of State has instructed them to adhere.

In order to ensure that in no way will they be subjected to an order by the Secretary of State if they overspend, can we have an assurance that the figures given to those treasurers are perfectly and absolutely correct? Unless we can have such an assurance, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you will agree that unfortunately the House will be unable to continue with this debate.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may help the House if I say that I express regret that the report as laid—the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1983-84—contains some small printing errors that were corrected by the issue of a printed slip that was placed with the reports in the Vote Office. As I think the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) knows, I wrote to all Welsh Members on 15 July drawing attention to these corrections. The same corrections are also being drawn to the attention of the local authorities in Wales. I am sorry that these printing errors have occurred, but we have corrected them in advance. I have already looked in the reports lying on the Table, and see that the errata slips are correctly with them. I therefore hope that there will be no inconvenience to the House.

Mr. Ray Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely that admission alone proves conclusively that it is not possible to debate this issue. The two reports are confusing in themselves, but we must then find two small slips and try to adjust the figures. What on earth is the Secretary of State trying to do to people in Wales?

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): How many millions of slips have gone out?

Mr. Powell: As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has said, how many millions of slips have gone out? Many people in Wales are concerned about these orders. What effect will the mistakes by the Welsh Office have on the people of Wales? These mistakes were made 12 months ago, and one would have thought the Government could have righted the wrongs and given us a true and proper statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. That is not a point of order for me. It is a matter for the Government, not for the Chair.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): The Secretary of State for Wales said he had sent these slips to Welsh Members. But this order concerns not only Welsh Members; English and Scottish Members will be voting on it. What information have they been given?

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I was careful to say that correction slips had been placed with the orders in the Vote Office, and that I had checked that the orders lying on the table had correction slips with them. I was most careful to ensure that all hon. Members and not just Welsh Members would have the correction slips available.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman does not seem to be able to answer my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). I understand that the figures are not exactly trifling. The errors total £45 million and £3·4 million.

Mr. Edwards: These reports put into effect a number of adjustments to the rate support grants payable to local authorities in Wales, the details of which I will come to in a moment. The reports have a wider significance because they help to highlight the part that most local councils in Wales are playing in achieving a more effective use of resources and the better balance between private and public sector resources that is fundamental to the task of regenerating the Welsh economy. In the present year, 1985-86, local authorities have come near to achieving the targets I have set for local government spending, with responsible rating decisions by most of them. This is welcome news to ratepayers and to all those who wish to see Wales become an even more attractive location for commerce and industry.

Mr. Ray Powell: I should like to come back to the target figure. Can we have the Secretary of State's assurance that the target figures he has talked about and which have been issued to local authorities are correct.

Mr. Edwards: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the errors which have been identified are not in the order, which deals with the targets for the current year, but in the final winding up order. We have drawn them to the attention of the House and they are not difficult to comprehend. As I said, I have taken the trouble to write to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and I have sent correction slips to Welsh Members and placed slips in the House before the debate.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the Secretary of State answer my hon. Friend? Is he giving us a categorical assurance that all the other figures are absolutely correct and that he stands by them?

Mr. Edwards: I am coming to the House on the basis that the figures are correct. If any Member of the House were to guarantee that nowhere was there a semi-colon out of place, he would be very rash indeed. I can certainly give the assurance that these documents have been very carefully checked, some typographical errors having been discovered. On that basis I am presenting them to the House and hope they will be approved.

The record of Welsh local government in meeting the targets speaks for itself. In the first year of the separate Welsh arrangements, 1981-82, total expenditure was about £48 million or 4·4 per cent. above target. In current expenditure terms, the excess was £41 million or 4 per cent. In the present year budgeted total expenditure exceeds my target by only £4·6 million or 0·3 per cent. with a current expenditure excess of £14 million or 1 per cent. I have every hope that by next year that final 1 per cent. will have been eliminated and that local authority current expenditure in Wales will have returned in real terms to the level at which it was when we took office in 1979. It is worth emphasising that that is my objective —to bring local authority spending back to the level at which it was when we took office.

I acknowledge that halting the upward spiral of local authority current spending has not been achieved without a great deal of effort on the part of local government. Councils have been obliged to make a careful re-assessment of priorities and to pursue greater efficiency, and I thank them for their efforts. More important than any thanks or commendations from me, however, there have been some very important consequential benefits.

First, rates in Wales have risen on average by less than the rise in inflation since 1981-82. Secondly, despite the reduced rate of growth in current spending local authorities have been able broadly to maintain, and in some cases to improve, the level of key services. Expenditure on the police has increased by 18 per cent. more than the rise in costs in the economy as a whole during the period 1979-80 to 1985-86. Spending on personal social services has grown by 9 per cent. with significant increases in the number of social workers and home helps. Residential provision has expanded and I have been able to introduce an initiative for the mentally handicapped which is initially 100 per cent. grant aided. Current spending on the urban programme has more than doubled in cost terms and an even greater growth has been achieved on the capital account. We have heard loud complaints about insufficient resources being available for education, but education spending has increased, despite the large fall in pupil numbers. Last, but not least, the achievement of local authorities in limiting their current spending has enabled me to release considerable additional resources for capital spending. Since 1981-82, when I assumed direct responsibility for rate support grant and capital allocations in Wales, gross capital spending by local authorities has risen by 46 per cent. or twice as fast as inflation.

The Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1983-84 finalises the rate support grant for that year. The first supplementary report for 1983-84, approved by the House in July 1983, withheld £12·6 million grant in respect of a gross spending excess at budget stage of £22·7 million. Outturn figures now show that the gross excess, after disregards, has been reduced to £17·5 million. This enables me to reduce the amount of grant withheld by £2·6 million to £10 million. I welcome the fact that two county and five district councils have successfully brought their budgeted spending down to target and now, in common with the large majority of other councils, avoid any grant penalties at all. The £3·5 million in grant previously withheld from those authorities will be restored to them by means of this supplementary report. Sadly, three authorities — Clwyd, Mid-Glamorgan and Ogwr — have actually increased expenditure between budget and outturn, resulted in additional holdback of £421,000, £844,000 and £446,000 respectively. Grant penalties for those authorities are accordingly increased.

At this point I must refer to the report in last Thursday's *Western Mail* which alleged that the grant adjustments made by this report to reflect the actual level of interest rates in 1983-84 came as a "bombshell" to local authorities. I find that allegation astonishing. By a long-standing convention, agreed with the local authority associations, interest rates have always been adjusted in final RSG reports. Adjustments in grant for this reason were made in 1981-82 and in 1982-83, and I find it unbelievable that local authorities were unaware that interest rates were falling in 1983-84 and that this would mean that spending would fall as well as their entitlement to grant. The suggestion is absurd.

I see that, in the debate on the corresponding motion on 18 July last year, reported in *Hansard* Vol. 64, c. 416, I told the House that exactly the same thing had happened in 1982-83. I also told the House that the adjustment can work both ways. Indeed, I strongly suspect that for 1984-85 the outcome will be an increase in grant. Every local authority knows perfectly well that, under successive Governments, adjustments of this kind have been made so that grant relates to actual expenditure. Adjustments of grant for this reason were made by the Labour Government in each of the years when they were last in office. Against that background it really would be a bombshell if any local authority treasurer did not know or failed to plan accordingly.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State said that grant has been adjusted to changes in interest rates. Can he explain the changes between 1981 and 1984 and say how much they have affected RSG for Welsh local authorities?

Mr. Edwards: The results of the changes are set out in the report. This is one of the consequences with which we are dealing. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will wait until I give the total figures. If he has any questions about individual local authorities, perhaps I can deal with them when, with the leave of the House, I reply to the debate.

The article went on to suggest that the interest rate adjustment was the more painful because of higher spending on house renovation grants in 1983-84. However, the writer seemed to have overlooked the crucial fact that the Welsh Office provided 90 per cent. of the cash for financing these grants and that, in addition, the balance qualified for RSG support. The fact that only three districts have exceeded their target for 1983-84 reinforces the point that the improvement grant factor has been grossly overplayed.

The net effect of these technical changes — I am giving the figures for which the hon. Member for Rhondda

[Mr. Edwards]

(Mr. Rogers) asked—made by the report is to reduce relevant expenditure by £6 million. The block grant element is reduced by £2·9 million—0·4 per cent.—but specific grants are increased by £3·4 million, resulting in a £0·5 million increase in aggregate Exchequer grant. Aggregate Exchequer grant is about 4 per cent. higher than in 1982-83.

Copies of the report have been sent to each local authority in Wales with details of their revised grant entitlement. Adjustments to the payment of grants will, of course, be consequential upon the House approving the report.

Mr. Allan Rogers: I did not ask the Secretary of State about the outturn figures and the total of grant available adjusted according to interest rates, but what the interest rates were. I understand that interest rates have increased and that therefore the total of grant going to local authorities should have gone up accordingly. Can the Secretary of State not give a simple answer to a simple question? How have interest rates varied during the past four years?

Mr. Edwards: We are dealing with a particular year in which interest rates fell. As a result, local government expenditure fell, and as a result of that, authorities are not entitled to as much grant. Last year in the same debate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) asked whether, if interest rates rose, a similar adjustment would be made upwards, and I said that it would. If he had listened earlier, he would have heard me repeat that advice in this speech. We make an estimate of what interest rates are likely to be in the year, and, like all our predecessors of both parties, when we know the actual interest rate totals at the end of the period, we make the corresponding adjustment.

The supplementary report for 1985-86 is based on local authorities' budgets. The main report for the year, which was approved by the House on 16 January 1985, set out the basis on which grant would be withheld from authorities planning to spend in excess of their expenditure targets. Of 45 county and district councils in Wales, no fewer than 40 — six county councils and 34 district councils — are planning to spend at or below target. Overall, total spending is only £4·6 million or 0·3 per cent. above the aggregate target. At budget stage, that is a remarkably good performance by Welsh local authorities, and I am delighted to place on record my appreciation of their co-operation in seeking to restrain public spending.

The five authorities — two county councils, Dyfed and Mid Glamorgan, and three district councils, Merthyr Tydfil, Wrexham Maelor and Ynys Môn—planning to spend above target have a total gross overspend of £4·6 million. That is a large figure for such a small number of authorities, and I have no hesitation in putting into effect the holdback formula agreed by the House in January. Under the terms set out in the main report that amounts to £5·5 million. That is a direct and avoidable cost, which those authorities have asked their ratepayers to bear.

I hope that the authorities concerned will review their spending decisions carefully in the light of this supplementary report, as it is still open to them to adjust their spending between now and the end of the financial year. By living within the targets that I have set, they can rid themselves of the unnecessary burden of grant holdback. Experience in 1983-84 shows that it is perfectly possible to get down to target by outturn, if the will is there.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The Secretary of State put forward his view about Wrexham Maelor. In reality, the Wrexham Maelor borough council does not want to cut services to its citizens, which is why it has chosen its present course of action.

Mr. Edwards: I hope that Wrexham's ratepayers note that they are having a heavy unnecessary additional burden placed on them. It is one of only three Welsh district authorities which apparently must spend more than the targets. I do not believe that the great majority of district councils in Wales are uncaring or irresponsible about the needs of their local communities, and yet they have been able to live within the reasonable targets that I have set.

The marked reduction in overspending is welcome news for industry and commerce in Wales, and for the ratepayers of those authorities which are heeding our expenditure guidelines. Welsh local authorities are close to achieving the overall goal which I have set. I look forward with confidence to its achievement, with the benefits it will bring to taxpayer and ratepayer alike.

I commend the two reports to the House.

10.39 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): It is fair to say that the Secretary of State's slip is showing tonight. I remind him of the incorrect figures of about £45 million for education and about £3·4 million elsewhere. It is wrong that so many of his senior officials shoud be involved in this retrograde and wretched system of targets and penalties. He should know that his officials could be far better employed than having to run this unpopular and unsuccessful system.

The right hon. Gentleman did not say that the scale of his penalties was draconian. I must protest about them, because in 1985-86, as a percentage of gross expenditure excess, these penalties now stand at 120 per cent. This is a crippling penalty to impose on Welsh local authorities. It was incredible to hear the Secretary of State boast that his objective was to return to 1979 levels of local government expenditure, when we know from debates and questions in the House that unemployment has increased by 125 per cent. since he became Secretary of State for Wales. The right hon. Gentleman should have said that he would give us more money, so that our local authorities could cope with the challenges which have been created by the failure of the Government's policies.

It should be said as loudly as possible throughout Wales that the Welsh rate support grant, as a percentage of expenditure, has been reduced from 72·5 per cent. in 1982-83 to 67 per cent. under the right hon. Gentleman's regime, about which he boasts. He has set our local authorities, which have major unemployment problems, a most difficult task.

The supplementary report for 1985-86 empowers the Secretary of State to put into effect the proposals set out in the original report, which involve the implementation of target and penalty regimes. As for our eight county councils, this means that, because of an expenditure excess of just more than £4 million, there will be a witholding of grant of nearly £4·7 million. The same applies to Wales' 37 district councils. They budgeted to

spend £450,000 less than the Government's estimate of their total expenditure, but they will suffer a grant holdback of £855,000.

The supposed transgressors are Merthyr Tydfil, Wrexham Maelor and Ynys Môn. To put those figures into context, I remind the House that in the main report——

Mr. Ray Powell: My hon. Friend is right to say that Ynys Môn will be subject to holdback. Will he comment on the fact that that local authority is represented by a Conservative Member of Parliament, who used to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State? I wonder whether the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) will comment later on the effect of this proposal on his local authority?

Mr. Jones: I understand the thrust of my hon. Friend's intervention. Perhaps the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and can justify the penalisation of his local authority. We look forward to hearing his response to this unjust treatment of the island of Anglesey.

The Welsh local authorities will exceed the Secretary of State's expenditure estimate by only 0·3 per cent., but they will incur penalties of £5·5 million. We believe that the entire process is unfair. First, total expenditure is so close to the Government's original guidance figures that there is a reasonable case for suggesting that the Secretary of State should abandon his thumbscrew, financial torture penalties. If he will not go so far as to abandon the penalties, will he not say that the system is a farce or a black comedy, and even if he will not admit that his system is a ridiculous waste of his hard-pressed Department's time, the fact that the total grant holdback substantially exceeds the total expenditure excess is indefensible. Ministers have said that Wales' authorities have done well in operating the Government's guidelines, yet they persist in exacting savage penalties from vulnerable, hard-pressed local authorities which are trying to cope with the aftermath of the Government's failed economic policies.

Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles (Bridgend): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in Mid-Glamorgan the Audit Commission has recently identified savings of nearly £2 million which are achievable in just two areas of local government, school meals and further education, and that such savings would be more than the grant holdback?

Mr. Jones: I find it incredible that the hon. Gentleman, a Member from the area of the Mid-Glamorgan county authority, should sneakily be attacking his own county, when he should be demanding of his right hon. Friend more and more money to help the most socially deprived local authority in Britain. It is a disgraceful posture for the hon. Gentleman to adopt, and he should be ashamed of himself.

The reports are a cruel nonsense. The system is discredited tonight by the mistake for which the right hon. Gentleman had to make a wretched apology. It is a Gilbert and Sullivan situation: the crime is small and the punishment is severe. The Minister has declared financial war on Merthyr Tydfil. Long-term unemployment in Merthyr is 47 per cent. of all unemployment. Male unemployment in that beleaguered community stands at 23·7 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has taken me to his constituency. I have seen the dereliction and the problems in housing and the need for reclamation of industrial land. It is incredible that this Secretary of State should want to penalise one of the ablest of local authorities, with one of the biggest sets of problems in the Principality.

The right hon. Gentleman forgets that, in the fair island of Anglesey, Holyhead has 3,670 workless people. The male unemployment rate there is 23·9 per cent. and the female unemployment rate is 17·7 per cent. Yet he wishes to attack Ynys Môn and penalise it heavily. It looks as though he will have the willing aid of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn. We shall watch with interest to see how he votes tonight. *[Interruption.]* Yes, he has fled the Benches because he is too embarrassed by the reality of the situation.

The right hon. Gentleman wishes to penalise Wrexham harshly. I remind him that unemployment in that constituency stands at 19 per cent.

I also remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Dyfed dole queue exceeds 18,000 and that in Mid-Glamorgan it is 34,000, the highest in Wales. Mid-Glamorgan is the seat of some of Europe's most serious social and economic problems, and without any doubt it is the source of Britain's worst housing problems. Yet the Secretary of State has sanctioned grant holdback of £3·1 million from his own county, Dyfed. The people of Dyfed believe that the right hon. Gentleman's policies are operating an unjust and very spiteful system.

It is true that in the second report for 1983-84 the grant holdback penalties of £10 million are less than predicted in the first supplementary report for that year. Of the Welsh districts, 37 exceeded the Government's estimate by only 0·1 per cent. Yet three districts — Merthyr, Ogwr and Wrexham Maelor—suffered penalties nearly two and three quarter times the total expenditure excess. That illustrates the stupidity and the iniquity of the system.

The Secretary of State did not dwell on it for long, but the Government have reduced relevant expenditure and grant. The Welsh districts' block grant before holdback penalties has effectively been reduced by 3·75 per cent. Some of our districts have had huge reductions. Afan, under the heading of reduced relevant expenditure and grant, has suffered a reduction of 18 per cent., which amounts to about £380,000. Torfaen has had a reduction of 9·8 per cent. while the reductions for Swansea and Alyn and Deeside have been 7·4 per cent. and 5·4 per cent. respectively. For Alyn and Deeside — my own constituency—to lose £140,000 is a hammer blow. The authority is endeavouring to modernise homes, to attract new industries and to cope with a male unemployment rate of one in five. We think that the Government have kicked us in the teeth.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: If the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to acknowledge that he has kicked us in the teeth, yes.

Mr. Edwards: The reductions which the hon. Gentleman has quoted, including Alyn and Deeside, are about 90 per cent. due to the reduction in interest rates. The authorities have had to pay lower interest rates and have had lower expenditure. Therefore, they are entitled to a lower level of grant. For that reason, we have made the same adjustment as that which was made in every year of the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Jones: The right hon. Gentleman should spend more time with the Association of District Councils in Wales, which will not find that explanation sufficient. It is angry. For the district councils which lose relevant expenditure and grant—27 of the 37 lose—it is not good enough to be so informed in the report about 18 months after the closing of their books. The district authorities believe that this is an instance of the Government being guilty of a special sort of incompetence.

Mr. Allan Rogers: The Secretary of State has given a specific figure for the reduction in rate support grant to Alyn and Deeside, but he has still not said by how much interest rates have fallen over the period for which he has calulated the outturn. If he is saying that all the outturns in Wales and the reductions in grant to local authorities are the result of the reduction in interest rates, is he saying that there have been no penalties or cuts in Wales?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend has pinned down the right hon. Gentleman, from whom we have had no assurances and no clear explanation in response to my hon. Friend's cogent argument. As I was about to say before I was so cogently interupted, rate support grant for Wales has been reduced by £5·5 million before holdback since the main order. Is it not the case that nearly all of the reduction —about £5·4 million—has been borne by the Welsh districts.

I deal next with the position of the counties in the 1983-84 report. Clwyd, Mid-Glamorgan and West Glamorgan have been slammed viciously for overspending. I should tell the House that their budgets involve hundreds of millions of pounds. However, the grant holdbacks total over £9 million. The counties are struggling desperately to cope with the coal and steel closures. The Mid-Glamorgan authority must now endure a series of agonising coalmine closures in valley communities, where the prospects of locating new industries must be almost nil in today's climate. I ask the Secretary of State and his junior Ministers to visit Mardy and Maesteg, which are the scenes of imminent pit contractions and closures. If they do, they will realise that it is monstrous to penalise by over £4 million Mid-Glamorgan, where unemployment, ill health and unfit housing exist to an alarming degree, and, arguably, to a degree not experienced anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

West Glamorgan and Clwyd, the other errant counties, are still reeling from the 1980 steel closures.

Mr. Coleman: My hon. Friend referred to the penalties imposed on local authorities and related them to unemployment. Does he think that next year West Glamorgan and the borough of Neath, which face about 1,000 job losses, will be penalised because the local authority may want to spend money to help unemployment?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend clearly fears the worst. He has received no assurances in response to his recent substantial questioning of the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend may well draw the worst conclusions in view of the Secretary of State's silence tonight and previously.

The Courtaulds closures in Clwyd have made the task of creating a new economy immensely difficult. The loss of 1,100——

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point when he talks about the difficulties which local authorities face with the closure of steel and other plants. I am sure he will agree that any threat to close Llanwern would be a catastrophe for my constituents and the borough of Newport in the county of Gwent. In which case, why did he and so many of his colleagues support the miners' strike, which threatened the future of that plant?

Mr. Jones: At this late hour we should be spared such petty, snivelling interventions. It was a most unworthy intervention. The hon. Gentleman unwittingly makes my case. He concedes that local authorities must face the consequences of closures. Why does he not denounce his right hon. Friend, who has boasted that he wishs to get local authority expenditure back to 1979 levels, which was before the closures took place? The hon. Gentleman's intervention clearly lacked logic. There is clearly a lack of good intent in the right hon. Gentleman's strategic and tactical policy.

The loss of 1,100 Courtaulds manufacturing jobs and the P.D. Cans venture is a major blow. It is perverse of the Government to penalise my county, which has 24,000 jobless citizens, when it is striving ably to improve the social and economic infrastructure.

West Glamorgan, as my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) stressed, suffers in parallel. Neath has lost about 1,000 jobs in two months. The BP job losses rival in seriousness the loss of the Courtaulds jobs.

I wish to raise the issue of council house sales receipts, against the background that these reports release insufficient moneys. The districts are bitter. There are 66,000 renovation grants outstanding. Their cost may exceed £231 million. Four years will be needed before we can attempt to clear the backlog. Why do the Government not release their hold on that cash? Why does Wales suffer a 15 per cent. capital receipts limit? Our valley communities, steel and quarry towns desperately need housing cash. Why can the English authorities use 20 per cent. of their receipts? Why does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge and accept that inequity? He has never explained the discrimination. He should do that tonight if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because my right hon. and hon. Friends are deeply worried by the Augean stable of rotten housing in the valleys, and they see no prospect from these reports of ever having the money to put it right. Our people are suffering because of the right hon. Gentleman's failure to win the battle in the Cabinet.

The blunt truth is that the Government come to the House seemingly oblivious to the message from the electors of Brecon and Radnor.

Mr. Rowlands: Are the Government aware that the Green Paper on housing grants proposes moving from grants to loans, but that a condition of that is that all outstanding applications be fulfilled and 90 per cent. grants be made? When do the Government expect to fulfil that agreement?

Mr. Jones: We will look forward with interest, if the Secretary of State catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, to hearing his answer to that important point.

The message of the electors of Brecon and Radnor should be clear to the Government. Ordinary people throughout Powys complained about the decline in the

services delivered by local councils. They said that the councils were without adequate finance, and they knew that services would continue to decline in quality and extent. We noted that parents were at their wits' end because of the never-ending cuts at schools. Residents noted the squalor of the learning environment, were in despair at the dog-eared books, the increasing reliance on work sheets and the narrowing of the curriculum, and the loss of the teaching staff. They complained about all those things, and there is nothing in the report to show that the moneys to stem the adverse tide will become available.

Everybody complains about the increase in vandalism, in burglaries, in theft and fraud, but our police forces are cut or are insufficient. Although these financial reports are abstract and complex, they guarantee a continuing steep decline in the quality of life for the Welsh people. The Secretary of State operates a discredited, unjust local government regime. The Labour party is committed to local government democracy in Wales. We shall dispel the poison in the local government system. Our approach will be based on local democratic control, clear local accountability, and a local choice within a national framework. We will give greater importance to social needs, to economic problems and deprivation.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I notice that behind the Chair some advice is being given to Tory Members. Is that available to Labour Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Powell: I am asking for a ruling on that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am giving a ruling. Nothing has occurred that is out of order.

Mr. Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I go along to the Box and ask for the information that was given to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not for me to advise the hon. Gentleman. Nothing has occurred that is out of order.

Mr. Jones: I respect your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It became clear to my eagle-eyed Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn was going to the Officials' Box to attempt to get answers. The hon. Gentleman knows that if he catches your eye in this debate he will have a difficult task justifying the penalties against his local authority. That is why my hon. Friend intervened.

The Labour party will make sure that the hated Rates Act and the unjust targets and penalties regime will go. The Secretary of State must abandon his penalties and targets, restore democracy to the local government scene, and acknowledge the folly of the system that he has introduced.

11.4 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Nowhere more than in Wales have the Government's unjustified penny-pinching attitudes towards local government been resented, as recent events in Mid-Wales have amply demonstrated. Should I mention Brecon and Radnor here this evening?

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Yes.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Yes.

Mr. Howells: I am delighted that the new hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), my hon. Friend, has been able to join my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and myself on these Benches. I am sure that he will stay with us for many years to come.

I have referred to Brecon and Radnor. The Secretary of State said that the rates have risen very little in Wales during the past 12 months—not higher than the rate of inflation. However, the *Local Government Chronicle* of 14 June 1985, refers on page 678 to

"The rises in Brecknock (13·9 per cent.) and Radnor (15·4 per cent.)".

No wonder the electorate in Brecon and Radnor made sure that the Tories would be ousted in the constituency, and have elected my colleague to represent them.

People are rightly blaming the Government for inadequate and even dangerous school buildings, for the limited facilities offered our schoolchildren, and for the lack of provision of even the most basic materials in some schools in Wales. Highly placed officials in the education service have been quoted as saying how they were first motivated in their work by the desire to bring about an improvement and expansion in education, but were now having to spend their time trying to limit the damage to a whole generation of children that will result from severe cutbacks imposed on local authorities by central Government.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is my hon. Friend aware that teachers in high schools in Wales are now in despair at the amount of time that they have to spend writing and typing out worksheets for their pupils because there is not money available to buy textbooks for those pupils? Is he further aware that that is even so with students who are studying specialist subjects for A-level?

Mr. Howells: I entirely agree with the sentiments expressed by my hon. and learned Friend. It makes us wonder whether the Secretary of State is aware of the problems in many of the high schools and whether he cares for the children who live in our communities.

Likewise, the money for road improvements is not being made available, and the tremendous backlog in housing maintenance and repair throughout Wales is rapidly becoming a national scandal. Various Ministers have been trying to stem the tide of discontent against the Government by blaming the local authorities, but that is manifestly unfair. Local authorities in Wales, as elsewhere, have been forced to budget in the most insecure conditions. They must feel at times that they are treading on quicksands. It is now surely time that the Government tried to build greater stability into the rate support grant formula to give local authorities greater certainty about their block grant entitlement. It is now 12 months since local authorities closed their accounts for 1983-84, yet we have before us a report that changes the grant entitlement for individual authorities quite significantly in some cases. For example, Ceredigion district council will lose approximately £28,000 this year in respect of 1983-84. It is obvious that since the introduction in 1981 of the present rate support grant system it has been used more and more as an instrument by which central Government are attempting to control the level of local authority spending and, by that means, undermining local democracy. Do the Government intend to perpetuate this policy?

[Mr. Howells]

In the shorter term, will the Minister assure the House that provision for education, roads and housing will not be further damaged by the Government's short-sighted policy towards the funding of local government?

I hope that the Minister will say how many employees in local government have been made redundant in the last 12 months and how many are likely to be made redundant in local government in the coming two years due to the Government's policy, which is having a disastrous effect on Wales and its people.

11.11 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I welcome the opportunity that the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) took of going to the Officials' Box. Any information that might improve the quality of his speeches is a welcome addition, though as he has disappeared so rapidly from the Chamber he can only have received unwelcome news. Judging from the concentrated look of despair that he always seems to wear on his visage, the news that he received could not have been particularly apposite to the case that he might have sought to advance had he chosen to remain in his place. However, one must not be too beastly towards him.

Mr. Hubbard-Miles: Does my hon. Friend think that the news he got was that in 1983-84, when the figure was withheld, Ogwr borough council borrowed £6 million from merchant bankers, not to provide housing for the needy but to provide new council offices and a leisure centre?

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, because his knowledge of these matters is profound. One reason why the hon. Member for Ogmore may have disappeared so rapidly from the Chamber is that not only his local authority but most Labour-controlled local authorities in the Principality do not have a happy story to tell about the way in which they spend their ratepayers' money.

Ynys Môn, my local authority, has been mentioned as one of those which will suffer a penalty. I wish to place on record the exact nature of that overspend. From a target of £5,149,000, the total expenditure comes out at £5,318,720, an overspend of £169,720. I hope that the Secretary of State acknowledges that that is a good attempt to stay within the target.

The Secretary of State will be the first to acknowledge that the borough of Ynys Môn has particular difficulties to confront, especially in housing, with about 900 applications for housing improvement grants waiting to be satisfied. There is little prospect of their being satisfied in the near future unless further money is made available, and my right hon. Friend knows my views on the release of further capital receipts to try to satisfy that demand. He will also be aware of the severe unemployment problem in Ynys Môn, with 22 per cent. male unemployment.

My local authority has concentrated on alleviating the unemployment problem. The establishment of an economic development unit has been the latest step in that endeavour. A local authority in an area where there is high unemployment can be expected to spend more than authorities in areas where the problem is not so severe. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will soon be able to announce what we would both like—targets will be done away with and we will return to a more sensible element of establishing local government expenditure.

Targets are only a temporary measure, as has been repeatedly acknowledged. They are an unwelcome measure, however necessary they are. I hope that the time when they can be done away with altogether is rapidly approaching. This does not detract from central Government's problem of trying to resolve the conflict between local government autonomy — every hon. Member believes that every local authority should have as much say as is commensurate with central Government's overall duty — namely control of overall identifiable public expenditure.

The manifest failure of the Opposition parties to address their minds to that central question removes all credibility from the speeches by the Opposition. Until they address their minds to how to enable central Government to control overall public expenditure, of which local government expenditure is a significant part, and give local government autonomy that is commensurate with the expression of will of the ratepayers through the ballot box, there will not be a comprehensive and cohesive Opposition policy. At least the Government have tried to resolve that difficulty in a short-term, in many ways unsatisfactory, measure by the introduction of targets. There seemed to be little alternative to that measure.

I hope that, because of the responsibility that local government has shown in the Principality—to a greater extent than in England—we are approaching a period when the Principality will return to a more sensible resolution of local government finance. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not need me to remind him that the local authorities' success in Wales is his success, and vice versa. Central and local government must work hand in glove, because it is to the overall benefit of the people—whether taxpayers or ratepayers — that expenditure should be kept to levels that the country can afford.

That point must not escape the notice of every hon. Member participating in this debate. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and the hon. Member for Ogmore, who has rapidly departed rabbit-like, have not addressed their minds to that aspect. They do not therefore provide a credible alternative to the Government's measures.

11.18 pm

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): I very much regret the last couple of sentences by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). Perhaps they were uncharacteristic of him.

It is essential to allow democratically elected members to put into operation services that are compatible with local needs and interests at levels of provision thought necessary by those with local government concerns. That proviso should be accepted by all honest, decent-thinking people. Restrictions in this direction have to be resisted.

One must admit that RSGs and GREs are complex. Earlier in the debate they were regarded as being Byzantine, and that is possibly under-estimating the situation. But they are affecting more and more the lives of every elector in the electorates we serve. Political issues these days are often divided into national and domestic issues. It was said that at the recent by-election domestic

issues took precedence over national issues. That is not surprising, because the community is becoming more and more sophisticated, and more and more it thinks for itself.

One of the things I have noticed is that these days the community values, to a greater extent than ever before, the wide range of services provided under the auspices of local authorities, and there is now solidifying a determination to defend those services against the onslaught of central government. Nowhere is this more clearly defined than in the defending of services provided by social service departments. Yet within county councils a continuing battle goes on to tailor restricted finances to growing demands. It is a miserable sight to behold the genuine and heart-searching efforts of elected councillors being belittled and sometimes denigrated by those pursuing political dogma.

Restricted local government financing has the most widespread repercussions and ramifications. Ministers, and particularly the Minister of State, must be sick and tired of representations which I and other hon. Members make about the effect of unemployment upon certain areas within the county of Dyfed. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the fact that Dyfed county council does not have enough money to spend on roads leading north and west from Carmarthen, north and west from the termination of the A4, in order to bring down unemployment rates in that area. We had a disaster in that area when the creamery was closed at Newcastle Emlyn. We are not prepared to accept another disaster if this process of contractorisation, or privatisation under another name, is to take place at Aberforth in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells). We warn the Government that we will not accept that.

We in Dyfed will fight the Government on these issues. The Government are penalising us now, but there will be a solid opposition in Dyfed. I appeal to the Liberal party to have some influence upon Liberal members in Dyfed county council, so that we can present a united front and face these penalties. We will be honoured and supported by farming people in Dyfed..

11.23 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Reference has been made to the Brecon and Radnor by-election, but I do not want to go on too long about that. There is a message which Conservative Members should take to heart, and it is that people put a value on services. They put a greater value on real value for money services than they do on an additional penny on the rates, provided that that penny is being spent in a way which meets their requirements. That is something the Government will forget at their peril in all parts of Wales and elsewhere when it comes to an election.

In the papers before us, we are seeing yet further penalisation of areas, particularly rural areas. We have heard about the position in Dyfed. The position in Gwynedd is not good at all. Gwynedd kept substantially below the target set by the GRE, and that was because of cuts it had to make and further cuts that are threatened in order to keep expenditure down. There is talk of axeing the teaching of musical instruments, and we are seeing the inability of Gwynedd to fulfil the infrastructure needed for the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped people. We are seeing a lack of finance for joint funding of schemes between the social services and the health authority. That is the price we have to pay to meet targets which are not related to the acknowledged level of need in Gwynedd as elsewhere.

We are seeing problems in counties such as Dyfed. Dyfed has a GRE-recognised need of £133·1 million, and an expenditure forecast of £132·4 million, which is less than the GRE, less than the recognised need in Dyfed. In spite of that, the target has been set at £130 million. Dyfed is £2·4 million above the target and is being penalised by £3·1 million.

That is a devastating situation for Dyfed. Interestingly enough, I believe that Dyfed is the only county council in Wales since reorganisation which has not elected an official Conservative county councillor. Is this the price to be paid? *[Interruption.]* I hear someone say that that is because no one will stand as a Conservative candidate. That is a fascinating reflection on the situation. I wonder whether that is why the county is being clobbered in the settlement? Or is it because Dyfed county council recently passed a vote of no confidence in the Secretary of State and called for his resignation? The people in the right hon. Gentleman's own area will have to pay for the Government's imposition on the county council and the people of south Pembroke should bear in mind that the actions of their own Member of Parliament have led to this.

Dyfed faces the possibility of having to cut 103 teaching posts, although the need for them is very great. If the Secretary of State thinks that the council can dip into its reserves, I should inform him that the reserves amount to about £900,000. If the teachers' pay increase is 5¾ per cent. instead of the 4¼ per cent. that has been budgeted, that will take a further £600,000 from the reserves and the council will have virtually nothing left. Central Government must take responsibility for the full pay settlement, because with a financial régime of this kind it would be utterly unfair to pass the burden on to local authorities which do not have the resources to meet it.

If the same pattern of increased burdens continues next year Dyfed will need a further £10 million. The ratepayers will then have to face a 30 per cent. or 40 per cent. increase in rates or the county will face bankruptcy. That is the crazy logic of a régime which penalises a county which is spending less, not more, than its GREA but which cannot meet the unrealistic targets set by the Government.

The same applies to Mid-Glamorgan, an area of tremendous social need. Again, if any part of Wales has enormous social needs it is Merthyr Tydfil, an area which I know well. In Wrexham, unemployment is constantly increasing. Then there are the problems of Ynys Môn. As we have heard, members of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs were in Llanfair P.G. looking at what was supposed to be a prime tourist sight and seeing the grotesque need for expenditure on developing the station forecourt, car parking facilities, and so on. Yet the local authority is being penalised not for spending more than its GREA but for spending more than the iniquitous target imposed by the Government.

The present arrangements for local government expenditure in Wales do not give people the responsibility and the right to develop services in response to the needs of each locality. The sooner that system is changed, the better.

11.27 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): As always, I listened with interest to what the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) had to say from the Opposition Front Bench, but I was even more interested in what he did not say. As a year has passed since we last had a similar debate I thought that the hon. Gentleman might have answered the following quotation which was given in last year's debate:

"the Chancellor spoke the truth in his Budget speech. His message on public expenditure was loud and clear. We cannot afford it.

I am sorry, but the fact is that nearly everyone is in favour of cuts in public expenditure as a means of helping to solve our economic problems, but very few are prepared to accept the local implications of such a policy." — [*Official Report*, 18 July 1984; Vol. 64, c. 431.]

In fact, that quotation is from the hon. Gentleman himself, addressing the Welsh Grand Committee on 7 May 1975.

I have nothing new from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside today. Instead, he gave the familiar litany of statistics and unemployment figures that are trotted out on every occasion in Welsh debates. In the Chamber, in Welsh Grand Committee debates and at Welsh Question Time, as though the hon. Gentleman wished to convince us that he revels in ever higher unemployment.

I have recently had the privilege of visiting the hon. Gentleman's part of the world. I was in his constituency with the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs last week looking into matters of tourism. The week before we were taking evidence about the closure of Courtaulds in Wrexham. I was somewhat gratified to receive the assurance of Wrexham Maelor Council that it was convinced of the need to hold back the lunatic fringe in Wales.

It is almost heartening that the Labour party has changed its view about council house sales and that tenants should not be denied their right to buy. However, councils often complain that they cannot spend their own money. Is it their own money? Surely it is their ratepayer's money. That money has been borrowed and ratepayers have repaid the capital and the interest on it. They are trying to spend the money twice instead of seeking to return that money to the ratepayers and eliminate interest charges.

We would all agree in wanting to see the backlog of renovation grants taking less than the four years described by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. Such small works are important because they create work and employment. We must not neglect such opportunities. We all want effective and efficient spending. I fully support the Government's policies for council spending. While I realise that they are necessary. I look forward to when the implications for council spending are somewhat different. I hope that we can look forward to a greater freedom, particularly in renovation grants for small works.

I was pleased to hear how near local authorities are to achieving the targets set by responsible rating decisions. I noted my right hon. Friend's hope that the 1 per cent. difference between targets and expenditure will soon be eliminated. I welcome the move towards more responsible rating decisions. However, I warn my right hon. Friend that there is a cynical, cycle in Wales which is based on the frequency of two-year local government elections. Certainly in south Glamorgan the rates increase was artificially held down in election year. Many Cardiff ratepayers know that we can expect a big increase in rates next year. This will be a savage burden on the ratepayers in Cardiff, domestic and industrial, and I warn that the Minister might have to make use of his powers to cut back on excessive spending in south Glamorgan.

11.34 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): This debate is a hardy annual. The Secretary of State presents his proposals as if he were dealing with a bunch of unruly schoolchildren. He threatens to use his authoritarian powers against Welsh local authorities which have to deal with the most terrible social problems in the whole of Great Britain. It cannot be said too often that local authorities in the Principality have always acted with the utmost restraint and sense of responsibility. They deserve better treatment from the Secretary of State.

The councils believe that they could achieve greater efficiency if there were fewer controls on them. The 37 Welsh district councils in the Association of District Councils would like autonomy over their financial affairs. That request was turned down; the councils are getting nowhere in their consultations with the Secretary of State. Hard-pressed authorities such as Wrexham and Merthyr, which has terrible unemployment problems, get nothing but penalties and the money goes into the Treasury coffers.

The Secretary of State tries to make out that his proposals are fair and reasonable. Why, then, do our district councils protest that the rate support grant report will withhold £10 million of block grant from Welsh ratepayers? It is highway robbery and the Secretary of State has become the Dick Turpin of Welsh politics. Money is urgently needed for many public projects throughout Wales.

The district councils allege that the report reduces the relevant expenditure of Welsh local authorities by £6 million and reduces grants by £5·5 million. Those figures illustrate the pressure on our local authorities who have to cope with overwhelming problems.

When the Secretary of State exercises his power to redistribute grants to Welsh districts there will, of course, be winners and losers. Afan, which covers the Port Talbot area, is adversely affected. When a local authority embraces a pattern of expenditure, it is often difficult for it to cut back on projects that it has undertaken. When it attempts to rectify the situation by putting up the rates, there is invariably a public outcry. The Secretary of State is passing the buck to our local authorities. They are having to carry the can for his deficiencies and errors.

We know that the favourite target of the Secretary of State is the Mid-Glamorgan county council in perhaps the most socially deprived county in Great Britain. Umpteen reports have set out all the details of the county's terrible problems, but apparently it is to be penalised.

The story tonight is a depressing one of cuts, cutbacks and restrictions. The message from Brecon and Radnor was that people are calling for improved social services. That is a call of enlightened self-interest and the Opposition fully endorse it. A future Labour Government will restore the freedom of local government and increase the functions of our local authorities. That is the best course for Wales.

11.39 pm

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said that it was unfortunate that this information came 18 months after the event and the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr.

Howells) asked why there had been delay. We wait until after the local authorities' accounts have been audited and we have the final figures so that we can make the final adjustments.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside said that it requires a special kind of financial incompetence to produce figures at this late stage. It would require a special kind of financial incompetence for any treasurer not to be aware of the effect of grant on the changes in expenditure, especially changes resulting from interest charges.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) asked about the change. In 1983-84, there was a fall from the assumption of 11·5 per cent. to the actual interest rate of 10·5 per cent. It is that adjustment with which we are dealing. The total resulting from that change was £6,261,000 in Wales. Of the £10 million that has been referred to, £3·8 million was accounted for by holdback. Of the £140,000 difference between the first and the second report in Alyn and Deeside, £63,000 was due to the interest rate change.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) talked of his constituency's special problems. His local authority has increased rates faster than inflation since 1979 and has the highest manpower growth in any district council in Wales. There has been a 5 per cent. growth in full-time equivalent since 1979. Most districts find that they can provide the same services with less manpower. I wonder whether the increase in manpower is a proper use of expenditure. He was right to say that we are anxious to move away from a system of targets.

I have just completed the consultation process with local government that will lead to the statement on RSG next week. I have already told local authorities that, thanks to that consultation process and the views that they expressed, I hope to be able to get away from the target system in Wales. I believe that both sides of the House will welcome that.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) rightly emphasised that people care about services. His local authority has increased expenditure on services above the rate of inflation during the past few years. No doubt it has therefore been able to improve services. Several local authorities have been mentioned. Ogwr has got into the extraordinary state of apparently doing some creative accounting against itself, and it has paid money back into reserves and therefore incurred penalty. That seems a clumsy action which reveals a need for advice. I hope that that will be drawn to its attention.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1983-84 (House of Commons Paper No. 448), which was laid before this House on 4th July, be approved.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 449), which was laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Edwards.]*

The House divided: Ayes 240, Noes 180.

Division No. 280] **[11.43 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigg-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven

Oppenheim, Phillip
Powley, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Roger Thomas and
Mr. Roger Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lloyd's

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.55 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): It is regrettably true that over the past decade or so Lloyd's, the world's premier insurer, has been wracked by a succession of scandals. No one doubts that Lloyd's is now painfully, if somewhat belatedly, grappling with those problems and is doing a great deal to put its house in order, but the consequences of those earlier failures are still emerging, and Lloyd's is inevitably caught up in the need to resolve those outstanding difficulties fairly and effectively.

The most significant of the recent troubles is that involving the PCW syndicates. The way in which Lloyd's and other authorities respond to this case raises at least two matters of substantial public interest.

First, in a case where a number of people at the heart of Lloyd's perpetrated frauds and thefts involving up to £40 million over some years, why have no charges yet been brought? After all, these matters came to light well over two years ago. Fraud cases are admittedly complicated, and the major figures have admittedly fled the jurisdiction, but that should not have prevented the bringing of prosecutions, which in itself would have done a great deal to reassure City opinion — and, indeed, opinion beyond the City — that the authorities were taking these matters seriously.

The dilatoriness of the Director of Public Prosecutions leaves a real question mark over the Government's determination to deal with City fraud. There is a sharp contrast between the huge police operation which was mounted in Oxford a year or so ago to bring to heel a handful of some of the most vulnerable people in our society—those who had allegedly been party to minor social security frauds — and the zeal shown in apprehending them, and the failure so far to take any action whatever in the courts in respect of fraud on a truly massive scale. That sharp contrast must leave the Government open to charges of double standards. They must answer the question: why is it that there appears to be one rule for those who transgress in a minor way, but apparently a quite different rule—and one which does not seem to be applied — for those involved in substantial fraud in the City?

The second major issue of public interest arising from the PCW affair is the damage which has been done to Lloyd's and to the City's reputation. It is damage which arises not just because of the original fraud and Lloyd's failure to prevent or detect it, but now also by virtue of the inadequacy of Lloyd's response to the substantial losses which have since emerged.

It might be useful if I briefly recount the history. In 1982 it became clear that two underwriters, Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon, had over a long period defrauded the names for whom they managed underwriting syndicates, and defrauded them of as much as £40 million. The chairman of the parent company of the managing agent, the brokers Minet, was involved also in the frauds to a minor degree. When this came to light, Minet was active immediately in recovering some of the money, and with another major broking firm contributed some of its own money to make good and cover the losses. The names who accepted the offer of money from Minet under the arrangement — over 99 per cent. of those involved accepted — did so on condition that they signed an agreement which prevented them from bringing any further legal proceedings against Minet or anyone else in respect of the losses. In effect, they assigned their legal rights to a company set up jointly by Minet and the other broking firm which was involved.

The Department of Trade and Industry, Lloyd's and Minet all set up inquiries into what had gone wrong; little has emerged as a consequence of the inquiries so far. All those institutions, including the Department, have purported to regard the £40 million loss which became apparent in 1982, and the arrangement which was then made to reimburse those who were defrauded, as a self-contained episode under which a line could safely be drawn. Unfortunately, that does not seem possible any longer. It has now emerged that substantial further losses have emerged. The names have been called upon in recent months to contribute over £60 million this year, and it is estimated that their total liabilities may be as much as £130 million.

It is the question of how to treat the new development which is the real issue in the debate. Lloyd's takes the view that these further and potential losses are to be regarded as ordinary trading losses, that they have nothing to do with the earlier fraud, and that the principle of unlimited liability must therefore apply to them. The Minister wrote in a recent letter that he sees no case for extending his departmental inquiry into the original fraud to cover the new situation which has been revealed. Minet, whose chairman I met a day or two ago, says that it did all that could be expected of it to resolve the problems caused by the PCW fraud and that subsequent losses are little to do with it and not its responsibility.

These attitudes cannot be supported. They are fatally undermined by what we now know about the way in which the PCW syndicates were operated and by the way in which the victims of the fraud have been dealt with. First, there is the deal which the names were told would resolve the problems and which involved their signing away any further rights that they might have. That deal is now seen to have been seriously deficient. If it were tested in the courts, it would in all probability be found to be invalid. This is because information which was available to Minet and Lloyd's at the time that the deal was signed last year, and which was material to the question of further losses, was at the very least not properly interpreted by Lloyd's and Minet, and was certainly not disclosed to the names. The deal is almost certainly vitiated by the fact of non-disclosure to the names.

Secondly, an independent inquiry carried out by Price Waterhouse, and recently handed over to the steering committee of names affected, shows that the accounts of the syndicates over a long period were "grossly manipulated" and that material facts were concealed. Those are matters for which Minet, as the parent company, and Lloyd's, as the supervising authority, must surely bear some responsibility.

Further, the money which was recovered by Minet and used by it to reimburse names for the originally disclosed losses of £40 million was obtained by the cancellation of certain reinsurance contracts. In view of the way in which other reinsurance arrangements operated, which were conducted through PCW-controlled companies and which were described by Price Waterhouse as extremely prejudicial to the interests of the names mainly affected by

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

the losses, and because of the underlying context of the way in which the reinsurance arrangements worked, the consequence of the deal and the cancellation and return of premiums on some reinsurance contracts was to leave the names without any effective reinsurance cover. The fact that the price of accepting the deal was to leave them without that cover was not made clear to the names at that time.

The fourth point—admittedly it affects only a small group of names—is that that minority of names which insisted, despite strong pressure to dissuade them from doing so, on taking out stop-loss policies, have now discovered that those policies were placed with PCW baby syndicates and were framed in terms which makes them worthless. As ordinary Lloyd's policyholders, therefore, as well as in their capacity as investors in Lloyd's, those names who took out those policies have good reason to feel aggrieved.

Fifthly, it is clear that much of the underwriting done on behalf of the names over that period, which involved a high proportion of long-tail business, much of it to do with insuring against asbestosis claims in the United States and in respect of which the recently disclosed losses principally arise, was done in breach of Lloyd's rules and limits on the amount of underwriting to be done. That was something, again, that Lloyd's failed to detect or prevent.

The whole miasma of accounts being manipulated, of reinsurance arrangements which were fraudulent and prejudicial, of insurance policies which turned out to be worthless, of failure to disclose material facts and of breach of some of the most fundamental rules, leave the names, who are now required, according to Lloyd's to pick up the bill for losses which might amount to £130 million —all arising as the result of a succession of nefarious practices — feeling not a little hard done by. Few objective observers would not conclude that they have justice on their side.

What is more important, the combination of events makes it extremely difficult for Lloyd's to adhere to its position of disclaiming responsibility for what has happened and of maintaining, with the Department, that the losses arose from an ordinary course of trading.

The truth is surely that those further losses arose, as did the earlier ones, which are plainly attributable to fraud, from one continuous course of conduct. There were fraudulent defalcations which had the inevitable consequence that the underwriters involved in that fraud were then compelled to give top priority to maximising immediate premium income—irrespective of the nature of the business, the risk undertaken and the Lloyd's rules —with the prime and overriding objective of getting in the money so that they could conceal the fraud and escape detection for as long as possible.

It is not possible to draw a line under the £40 million loss, which is attributed to fraud, and then to say that any further losses were unrelated and that the ordinary principles of unlimited liability should apply.

Lloyd's responsibility is engaged, because throughout the period it was, and claimed to be, the regulatory and supervisory authority. It was its responsibility to ensure that the rules were enforced, that fraud was detected and that the managing agents were not just competent but honest. I make that latter point because I believe that the chairman of Lloyd's is on record as saying that the responsibility of Lloyd's is to ensure that managing agents are competent, but he stopped short of saying anything about honesty. I cannot believe, according to the principles applied by Lloyd's, that it is possible to be competent and yet to be dishonest.

Lloyd's has not so far faced its responsibilities, and the consequences of a continuing failure to do so will be extremely damaging, not least to Lloyd's. There is the prospect of protracted and expensive litigation, dragging through the courts for years to come, guaranteeing unfavourable publicity for Lloyd's throughout that period.

The whole process will certainly be repeated on a much grander scale in the American courts, as a number of American names are also involved. It remains to be seen whether in any litigation Lloyd's would attempt to avail itself of the defence available under section 14 of the Lloyd's Act 1982, which grants Lloyd's immunity against legal action. That provision may be held not to apply retrospectively to acts and omissions which arose before 1982.

If Lloyd's were to attempt to rely upon that defence it would be ironic, because it insisted on that provision when the 1982 Act was being discussed, on the ground that it was essential to provide it with a important instrument for carrying out that supervisory function. It would be ironic, to say the least, if it were now to use that provision as a shield to protect themselves against the consequences of the failure of carrying out that duty to supervise.

The City of London is going through a difficult period of rapid change. Therefore, it is important that City institutions are seen to be operating properly in the interests of investors and the wider public. Lloyd's can, if it wishes, continue to bury its head in the sand for a time, but the losers would be not only those who have been the victims of the fraud, which it was Lloyd's responsibility to prevent, but the good name of Lloyd's and the City of London.

One consequence would be the discrediting of the principle of self-regulation. Why should anyone in these circumstances be prepared to entrust to Lloyd's the privilege of self-regulation when the record shows not only its failure to prevent abuses—a failure that involves not just a few crooks at the margin but some of those at the heart of the Lloyd's establishment, which is what is such a cause for concern — but its failure to take responsibility for the fact that it has not carried out its supervisory duties effectively?

The consequence of this is that a new Labour Government would be obliged to look again at how Lloyd's is regulated, just as we would wish to see self-regulation in the City looked at again. In the new circumstances arising in the City, with such a rapid change of institutions and technology, there is likely to be a premium on the dearest and most direct form of statutory provision, without undue bureaucracy, but at least guaranteeing to investors adequate protection.

In the meantime, the Minister has a major responsibility. His Department has the overall responsibility for supervising the insurance industry. He must talk to the Lloyd's council and extend the ambit of his inquiry to cover the events that have occurred subsequently. He must knock some heads together. The future operation and good name of the City are at stake. No one suggests that Lloyd's should take the full financial burden of what is happening. Lloyd's must at the least take the responsibility of

negotiating an agreement that is seen to be fair and acceptable to all the parties. The Minister's duty is to guide Lloyd's towards that point.

12.12 am

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I piloted through the Lloyds Act in 1982. That Act was supported by the Opposition, most notably and competently by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). The Lloyd's council has exercised its powers under the new legislation responsibly. It is right to have an inquiry, but it must not be unduly delayed. The worst thing for the good name of Lloyd's, and for everybody else, would be a prosecution that failed. That would be disastrous. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will deal with that.

The only point that should be stressed—and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will stress it for the good name of Lloyd's and the City—is that the scandal and dreadful plight of the syndicate names is internal. No policyholder outside has suffered the loss of a single penny.

12.13 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Alex Fletcher): I am glad that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) acknowledged that Lloyd's has been reviewing the rules and regulatory procedures with great energy for some time, and it is putting its house in order. However, I cannot agree to any suggestion to the effect that it is burying its head in the sand.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Government's monitoring of Lloyd's, concentrating particularly on the developments surrounding the syndicates that are under pressure. The hon. Gentleman gave an account of the events that took place at Lloyd's, which is helpful because it saves me from doing so in the short time available, even if it was his version of events.

It is plain that the matters connected for example with the Richard Beckett Underwriting Agencies Ltd. involve a complicated chain of circumstances. However, I refer immediately to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) because it is a very important and basic point for the House to remember. The policyholders, the consumers, are not at risk in any of the matters that are causing concern in the House and elsewhere.

Mr. Gould: I think that the Minister will accept that those who took out stop-loss policies are in a special category, and are at present at risk as Lloyd's policyholders.

Mr. Fletcher: I accept that those people are in a special category.

Against that background, I should like to summarise the actions that have been taken by the Government and Lloyd's. Allegations of irregularities in the conduct of companies within the Alexander Howden Group PLC and Minet Holdings PLC Groups emerged in the autumn of 1982. Inspectors were appointed by the Department of Trade and Industry in September and November 1982, under section 165 of the Companies Act 1948, to investigate the affairs of both groups.

I should like to make it clear that the Department maintains close contact with the inspectors. Their investigations are well advanced and they are keeping in close touch with current developments, including the recent report by Price Waterhouse, which has been made available to them and the Department. The matters dealt with in the report are within the scope of the inspectors' investigation. If it were necessary to extend the inspectors' powers in any of those matters, that would be done.

I expect to receive the inspectors' reports early next year. It is my expectation that both reports will be published, with the qualification that to avoid any possible prejudice, publication would be delayed while prosecutions were under consideration or in progress.

As the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, the question of prosecution is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions, but my Department is in close touch with the DPP, and police investigations are continuing.

As a self-regulating market, Lloyd's has its own powers to deal with irregularities. In the Howden and Minet matters, the initial step was to appoint committees of inquiry comprising leading counsel and an accountant. Both inquiries have reported, the reports were made available to the Department, the Department's inspectors and the Director of Public Prosecutions. The investigations have led to disciplinary action by Lloyd's against a number of individuals.

Looking at the position generally, one sees that there have been a number of other matters where investigations have been initiated. Lloyd's keeps the Department informed of those matters, and the police or the Director of Public Prosecutions are also informed by Lloyd's where necessary.

The council of Lloyd's has taken other actions in relation to RBUA and its syndicates. There has been the decision to introduce a new agency company, headed by Sir Ian Morrow and others from outside Lloyd's. There is the new fact-finding investigation into RBUA's operations from 1983 onwards, and there is the extension of the date for members to show their ability to comply with the solvency test.

The normal date for the test cannot be extended for long, because Lloyd's has to prepare statements of the whole business of Lloyd's and other documents for submission to regulatory authorities in many parts of the world to comply with local legislation. I understand that a majority of the 375 members affected by RBUA's losses have now met the solvency test.

It appears that some of the latest problems stem from the particular sort of risks underwritten. Insurance companies around the world bear the financial scars of some business underwriten in the United States of America. The size of the wound became clearer to many during 1984. Members of Lloyd's participating in syndicates with a substantial exposure to this business are not free from the consequences.

I emphasise, therefore, that both Lloyd's and the Government took action when it became apparent that there were problems. Lloyd's has taken disciplinary action where appropriate and has launched its own inquiry into the latest difficulties of the affected syndicates, as well as taking various other measures to help the names involved.

We are keeping in close touch with Lloyd's and we promptly sent in Companies Act inspectors to the Peter Cameron Webb syndicates when it was clear that there

[Mr. Fletcher]

might be fraud or malpractice. I repeat that we can extend the investigations should other matters come to light which make it necessary to do so.

The DPP is considering the evidence gathered in the course of the inspections and, as I said, police investigations are in progress. These are, however, complex areas and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate the need for a proper case before bringing criminal charges, frustrating though that may be to those who, clearly, would like to see justice being done. While we regret the fact that some names are facing substantial losses, there is nothing to imply that a Government inquiry into Lloyd's generally is either necessary or desirable at this stage.

To put matters into perspective, it is worth making two points. First, in respect of the 1982 year of account, there were 431 syndicates trading at Lloyd's and the losses disclosed by the Beckett agency involved three of those syndicates. Secondly, the total number of members of Lloyd's in 1982 was 20,145 and in 1985 there are 26,050. The number of members affected by the Beckett agency syndicate's losses is 375.

I appreciate the concern that has been expressed in the House about the situation at Lloyd's, and of course we are all concerned about the reputation of Lloyd's which is important to the national economy and which is worldwide, although I understand, somewhat from my own experience of travelling abroad and from information I have from Lloyd's, that its business is not suffering in any way from the inevitably bad publicity that is following on these matters. It is sometimes necessary when travelling abroad to make the point that my hon. Friend mentioned, namely, that the consumer, the policyholder, is not in any way at risk as a result of the matters that have taken place at Lloyd's.

I believe that proper action is being taken by Lloyd's and by the Government and, as I said, we shall use the powers available to us if events prove that a further extension of the investigation or some other action is required by the Department. But I cannot accept the suggestion, put albeit mildly, by the hon. Gentleman that the events at Lloyd's are in any way a criticism of self-regulation. Since the new powers were made available to Lloyd's in 1982 by Parliament, Lloyd's has moved vigorously and effectively to improve its procedures, and the further need for self-regulation and the extension of powers in this sphere which I expect will from part of legislation next year, covering the whole of the financial services industry——

Mr. Gould: And Lloyd's?

Mr. Fletcher: No, because Lloyd's already has its own powers and, as I said, is exercising those extremely effectively, not least in its attempt to get to the bottom of the difficulties that are the subject of this debate.

In the legislation that I hope will come before the House next year, covering financial services generally, lessons will be learnt. Lloyd's will learn lessons from what has occurred and we in the Department and others in the city will learn lessons from these events from the point of view of rule-making and regulation, and I assure the House that we shall put those lessons to good use.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

EAST LOTHIAN DISTRICT COUNCIL (MUSSELBURGH LINKS, ETC.) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Football Grounds (Safety)

1. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Football Association, and chief fire officers in Scotland, on the safety of football grounds in both senior and junior leagues; and what steps are being taken before the new football season commences in August.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I met representatives of the Scottish Football Association, the Scottish Football League, the British Transport Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) on 1 July to review crowd control measures. Scottish fire brigades have at my request recently visited football grounds and other stadiums in their areas. Managements are being advised of any measures needed to improve fire safety in their grounds. The committee of inquiry into crowd safety and control at sports grounds will provide interim advice about crowd safety before the opening of the new season.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply. I welcome the steps that the Scottish Office has taken towards improving crowd control and safety at football grounds. Can he say when the Popplewell report will be published? Can he also say whether there is the possibility of financial support being provided by the Football Trust to clubs which are not eligible for assistance from that source because they are not included on the football pools list? The smaller clubs are experiencing difficulty over their stands because of the recommendations of the fire officers.

Mr. Stewart: The interim report of the committee under Mr. Justic Popplewell's chairmanship has just been received by the Government, and we hope to publish it before the House rises for the summer recess. The non-league grounds to which my hon. Friend referred, such as Peterhead in his constituency, are covered by the fire masters' review. I am sure my hon. Friend will accept that the primary responsibility for the safety of individual facilities must lie with the operators of those grounds. However, the position of non-league clubs has been drawn to the attention of the Football Trust by the Scottish Sports Council.

Sir Hector Monro: Scotland can rightly take a great deal of credit for the steps that it has taken to improve its football grounds and to reduce alcohol abuse. However, does my hon. Friend accept that there are absolutely no grounds for complacency? Can he say what steps are being taken this summer, before the start of the football season next month, to improve grounds in the interests of sports safety?

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I do not believe that there is any complacency whatsoever in Scotland. There was no complacency at the meeting that I held on 1 July. I can assure my hon. Friend that the review of safety by the Football Grounds Improvement Trust includes all league grounds in Scotland; and safety is, of course, being considered by Mr. Justice Popplewell's committee.

Mr. Ewing: I congratulate the Under-Secretary of State and the Secretary of State on winning the argument against Home Office Ministers in relation to clause 1 versus clause 10 of the Bill which is at present before another place. It would have been preposterous if the staff of British Rail had been held responsible for alcohol being carried on trains going to football matches. Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that during his recent visit Mr. Justice Popplewell praised highly the safety standards at Scottish football grounds? May I also ask him not to single out football? The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) will appreciate that attendances at many rugby matches in Scotland are far higher than attendances at football matches. It is important to consider safety at all sports grounds.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, as a result of his request to the fire brigades and the police, there is a distinct possibility of one senior Scottish club—I shall not name it—not being able to start the new season?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman raised the first part of his question on Second Reading of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Bill. Home Office Ministers have reached agreement with us on appropriate changes to clause 1.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the problem is not limited to football. That is why the Scottish fire brigades were asked to visit other stadiums.

On the hon. Gentleman's final point, following the surveys by the fire masters, concern has been expressed about four Scottish league grounds. At one club the matter has been rectified, and at another measures are in hand. At two other clubs there could be restrictions on numbers in the new season.

Employment Policy

2. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, when he next meets the Scottish Trades Union

Congress he will discuss the implications for Government policy on employment in Scotland of the recent miners' strike.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): I am always willing to discuss with the STUC the implications for Government policy of important events. The most damaging effects of the recent miners' strike have been on employment in the industry itself.

Mr. Brown: As Ian MacGregor represents man's inhumanity to man—not forgetting wives and bairns—will the Secretary of State intervene to ensure that victimised miners are returned to work? Or is the highly placed, highly salaried chairman of the NCB doing the dirty work for the Government? When I met Mr. MacGregor at Edinburgh airport on Thursday, he was not interested in fair play. Indeed, when I mentioned conciliation, he thought that that was a brand of rye whisky. Will the Secretary of State intervene and do something to resolve this almighty problem, which affects a large section of the community in Scotland?

Mr. Younger: Dismissed miners who have complaints can go to industrial tribunals. They have a perfectly good course under the normal law.

As for the other effects of the strike, I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman said about Mr. MacGregor. The severe responsibility for the effects of the strike lies firmly on the NUM, which has not only done lasting damage to the Scottish coal industry, but has destroyed a large number of jobs.

Mrs. McCurley: When my right hon. Friend meets the STUC, will he emphasise to the congress that the steel industry in Scotland would be in a much safer position and that the BSC would be in profit if it had not been for the destructive effects of the coal strike? The example which the STUC set in wanting the steelworkers to come out was highly destructive for other jobs.

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that the splendid efforts of the steelworkers in Scotland were made considerably more difficult by the efforts of the NUM, which tried and failed to close Ravenscraig.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal for brief supplementary questions.

Mr. Strang: Why is the NCB pursuing its policy of victimisation with such vengeance, particularly in Scotland? Surely the Secretary of State must recognise that innocent men and their families are being sacrificed and that this is a human rights issue. When will the right hon. Gentleman face up to that fact?

Mr. Younger: The truly innocent men, and their families, are the working miners who have been victimised shamefully. If striking miners have a case against them in law, they should come before the courts in the proper way. If they have complaints about their treatment by the NCB, they have recourse to an industrial tribunal, which is a perfectly fair process.

Mr. Henderson: Will my right hon. Friend stress to the STUC that the disastrous consequences of the strike for the potentially profitable coal faces at Frances and Seafield collieries have resulted in a considerable loss of jobs and opportunities for the Fife economy? Does that not show that strikes rarely do anyone any good, and frequently do many people a great deal of harm?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Those coal faces and jobs in Fife were lost by the deliberate actions of the NUM in calling a strike. I am extremely apprehensive that for many years to come there will be many effects from this disastrous strike.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State reflect on his answers? We have moved from the strike and are anxious that the union should be allowed to represent its members on an individual basis. Will the right hon. Gentleman lend his good offices to ensure, with the STUC and the NUM, that the NCB considers each of the more than 200 cases individually? Will he further lend his good offices to ensure that good industrial relations are reinstated in the Scottish coalfield, in the interests of the coalfield, of the Scottish economy and of re-establishing a good coal industry in Scotland?

Mr. Younger: The question of relations between the NCB and its employees is one which must be pursued with the NCB. If the unions wish to do so, they can represent members who appear before industrial tribunals. The NUM has caused the real damage. It would be much better if it put its weight behind recovery in the industry.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the cost of an inefficient mining industry is unnecessarily high coal prices, and that that is potentially far more damaging to the many industries in Scotland which depend on energy? Does he further agree that if the NCB does not have the resources available to invest in uneconomic pits, they should be offered to private buyers? Will he say that when he next meets the STUC?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his suggestions. A few weeks ago I had a long discussion with the STUC about the effects of the miners' strike. My hon. Friend is right to point out that if coal prices are made higher by industrial action, that must reduce the potential market for coal and jobs arising from the mining of coal. That comes back to the point that the NUM's actions have done a great deal of damage to the Scottish coalfield.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State cast his mind back to his meeting with the officials of the Polmaise colliery, Stirling district council and the central region, before the miners' strike started, about the potential closure of that colliery—the reason why the strike was started in the first place? Will he assure the House, as he did my constituents and local government colleagues, that he will do everything in his power to support that colliery and enable it to produce the coal that is so desperately needed in the central region? Will he assure us that the Scottish Office will back the colliery against Mr. MacGregor's wishes for closure?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman's reference to that meeting makes me feel extremely sad, as it took place shortly before the strike, and I offered to do all that I could to help. I shall always try to do anything that I can to help employment in Scotland, wherever it is. However, since then the same people whom I met and to whom I offered help were solidly on strike for almost a year and did immense damage both to their pit and to the entire

industry. They cannot wipe the slate clean. The blame for the disastrous effects on the Scottish coal industry lies with Mr. Scargill and the entire NUM.

Mr. Dewar: Can the Minister confirm that, as has been stated recently by the Secretaries of State for Energy and for Employment, an individual review is being conducted by the board? If so, does he agree that the rules of natural justice should be observed and that the men concerned should have the right to a hearing and to representation? Without that, we shall never escape from the conclusion that any review is merely tokenism and a gesture to get the board out of a difficult position over a wide spectrum of Scottish opinion.

Mr. Younger: I think the hon. Gentleman knows that the Secretary of State for Energy wrote me a letter, which was publicised, in which he said that he had made it clear that the National Coal Board would be examining the cases which had been in dispute, but that that did not alter the fact that the proper course is to go before the industrial tribunals. There is a right to representation before the tribunals and the men concerned have recourse to proper procedure in that way.

Teachers Superannuation Scheme

3. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the report on the quinquennial review of the Teachers Superannuation Scheme (Scotland) has been received by him; and if he will give a date when it will be laid before Parliament.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): My right hon. Friend has not yet received the report from the Government Actuary. I am not therefore in a position to say when it will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. McKelvey: You must be outraged by that answer, Mr. Speaker. The English counterpart for this period, which is 1976 to 1981, was dealt with in December 1983, and the Scottish Office is dragging almost four years behind. I ask for an assurance that no sort of Machiavellian trick will feature in the negotiations over teachers' conditions. It is a disgrace that teachers' working conditions and pensions have not been reported on and that the current information is four years out of date. Will the Minister give an assurance that if the employers have to increase their contributions, the Scottish Office will back the additional contributions with increased budgets?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman will know from his obviously deep knowledge of the subject that the production of the report is a matter for the independent Government Actuary. It is not a matter over which we in the Scottish Office have direct control. However, I expect to receive the report shortly.

Mr. Lamble: As a teacher's superannuation is dependent on his final year's salary, will the Minister give an assurance that he will begin a new initiative to try to resolve the present industrial dispute within Scottish schools following the decisions reached at the recent annual conference of the Educational Institute of Scotland at Inverness?

Mr. MacKay: Negotiations on teachers' pay do not fall within my responsibility when they involve superannuation matters. Such matters are for my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, my right hon. Friend is prepared to meet the teachers and the management side at any time to discuss the way forward.

Agricultural Research and Advisory Services

4. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish National Farmers Union to discuss the impact of cuts in the agricultural research and advisory services on farms in the less favoured areas.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met representatives of the Scottish National Farmers Union on 22 March 1985, when the future funding of agricultural research and development and of the advisory services was discussed. He has arranged to discuss this subject, among others, when he meets the president of the union next week.

Mr. Bruce: I am surprised that it is so long since the Government met the union, in view of the great concern among farmers in Scotland about the Government's policy. Is the Minister aware that I and my colleagues met senior representatives of the Scottish National Farmers Union this week, when they expressed deep concern about Government policy on cutting advisory services and capital grants? Nearly 90 per cent. of Scotland's farmers are in less favoured areas, and they require the Secretary of State and his Ministers to stand up and fight for them. There are problems which are peculiar to Scotland, and so far the Government's policy is causing loss of morale and deep despair. Many farmers will be forced out of business and off the hill, and that will undermine rural communities.

Mr. MacKay: My right hon. and hon. Friends meet the Scottish National Farmers Union at the times that I have stated, and they will meet representatives next week, when they will discuss these matters yet again. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the SNFU briefly at Ingliston, where these matters were discussed. It is worth reporting to the House, before we believe all the histrionics of the hon. Gentleman, that, even after the expenditure reductions are made, almost £29 million will be spent every year on research and development and advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge the need for a comprehensive research and advisory service for Scottish agriculture in the difficult years of change that lie ahead? How can such a comprehensive research and advisory service be established if in the coming 18 months the Government go ahead with a 41 per cent. cut in the budget for this work?

Mr. MacKay: If the hon. Gentleman had listened, he would have realised that I said that, even after the reductions in expenditure, about £29 million will be spent on research and development in 1987-88. That is a considerable sum of public money which is still being spent on research and development.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cutback may be a good measure, as imports of agricultural machinery increased by 112 per cent. during that period?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is correct to point to what has happened during the past few years. The claims of Opposition parties about the effect of research and

development are exaggerated. Research is conducted in many more places than just the Government research institutes. The industry conducts research into a number of matters.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that his reply is causing concern to some of us. I had an Adjournment debate on this subject, because this matter affects my constituents on the Bush estate, Penicuik area. The Monister's colleague, Lord Gray, has written to me saying that the whole matter will be considered in relation to the submissions. Overwhelming Scottish opinion is that the Government's policy is wrong. Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that the Department has reconsidered this matter since Lord Gray wrote to me?

Mr. MacKay: A consultation paper on future strategy for research and development was issued on 30 May. Consideration is being given to the comments that were received. I think that I explained the position to the hon. Gentleman in his Adjournment debate. That is still the position.

Mr. McQuarrie: I accept that £29 million will be available in 1986-87, but is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable concern that has been expressed by universities, colleges and farmers in the less favoured areas? Will my hon. Friend continue with the consultation to which he referred in a written parliamentary answer to ensure that that cut is not implemented until there is a satisfactory solution to the problem?

Mr. MacKay: We shall take account of all the observations made to us as a result of the research and development consultative paper. A similar paper on the advisory service will be published shortly. We shall take account of all those matters. I am sure that the colleges, in their observations, will be mindful of the importance of the advisory services keeping a high profile in the less favoured areas.

Mr. Wilson: Why did the hon. Gentleman tamely pass on to the Scottish advisory services the cuts that had first been produced in England? Does he realise that a high proportion of the farms in ill favoured areas will not be able to afford the fees for the advice that they need to cope with the changes that will be imposed through the common agricultural policy?

Mr. MacKay: The reductions in expenditure were not passed on from England. They were part and parcel of the negotiations with the Treasury on the total amount of spending on agriculture in England, Wales and Scotland. Even after these reductions are made, £29 million will still be spent on research and development. A total of £34 million will still be spent on research and development and the advisory services.

Mr. Ewing: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that £29 million is 41 per cent. less than the amount being spent at present? Has he and, more importantly, his noble Friend come to understand that the link in Scotland between research and development and the advisory services is much greater than that which prevails in England and Wales? Is he aware that the cuts in Scotland will do irreparable damage to agriculture? The Minister should withdraw these proposals.

Mr. MacKay: I cannot believe that a continuing total expenditure of £34 million for 1987-88 represents irreparable damage. We shall be considering how to make those reductions after discussions with the colleges and research institutes, after taking the advice of the Priorities Board on priorities for research and development and after listening to the observations of the National Farmers Union.

Agriculture Industry

5. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current situation within Scottish agriculture.

Mr. John MacKay: Last year good weather conditions and improved efficiency contributed towards the significant recovery in Scottish farm incomes.

It is too early to predict income levels for 1985.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister aware that the new capital grants scheme which has just been announced by the Government has already been described by the president of the National Farmers Union in Scotland as a further attack on United Kingdom farm competitiveness? As some of the more marginal smaller farmers in Rossshire are going to the wall, will he explain why the cuts which have been announced in the new scheme go far beyond what was anticipated or expected by Europe?

Mr. MacKay: The new scheme, which gives grant rates of 30 per cent. for the less favoured areas and 15 per cent. for other areas, provides meaningful levels of assistance which will allow adequate investment in farming.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware that barley is important to Scottish agriculture. He will also realise that it is an essential ingredient in the manufacture of Scotch. When distilleries close, that affects the market for barley. Is my hon. Friend aware that Arthur Bell and Sons is the only company in Scotland which has been opening distilleries? Will he advise Mr. Ernest Saunders of Guinness that hon. Members on both sides of the House are interested in the current problem, which is of importance to us all?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend has rather ingeniously introduced matters that are rather far from agriculture. I shall leave the matter at my boundary of responsibility by confirming that barley makes splendid whisky.

Polkemmet

6. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has sent to the West Lothian district council evidence to the Cooper committee on Polkemmet, a copy of which has been sent to him by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend does not propose to comment on this document. The closure of collieries is a management matter for the NCB in which it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene.

Mr. Dalyell: Do Ministers dispute the West Lothian figures?

Mr. Stewart: As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy told the hon. Gentleman on Monday, he will be responding to the council's statement and the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Dewar: Surely the Minister recognises that it is unsatisfactory to say that he will not respond. It sounds almost as if he is saying that he has no interest in the matter. It is an area which has already been traumatised by the British Leyland closure at Bathgate, where unemployment is appallingly high, where Polkemmet is an important source of jobs, and which is interrelated with the whole Ravenscraig issue. Does he not recognise that the Government have a duty to take an interest and to make it clear that they will help an area which is determined to help itself, as the Cooper report underlines?

Mr. Stewart: I can only repeat what I have told the House, that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy will be responding to the point about that document. I shall underline the Government's commitment to the Bathgate area. Good progress has been made on the Bathgate working party's various recommendations. For example, I am pleased to note that agreement has been reached on the financing of the restoration work on the Bathgate-Edinburgh rail link, which will commence shortly with a view to the line re-opening in about May 1986. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the range of other measures that have resulted from the joint working party on Bathgate.

Trout Protection

7. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further consideration he has given to imposing a trout protection order on the Tay system under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend has before him the formal proposals for a protection order, the objections and representations resulting from the advertisement of the proposals, and the views of the consultative committee on freshwater fisheries, which met recently.

Mr. Hunter: Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity to clarify the Government's attitude to the widespread concern felt about trout stock levels in the Tay, and also more generally about salmon and freshwater fish stock levels?

Mr. MacKay: I assure my hon. Friend that we are taking this order, as we do all others, seriously. As he correctly points out, there will be a danger to the future of brown trout fishing if the current rise in various unsavoury fishing practices using set lines and the like continue.

Mr. Corrie: Does my hon. Friend agree that bringing in an order in one area merely puts pressure on other areas throughout Scotland? We must be careful to ensure that we do not slowly shut off some places as a result of the dreadful pressure on areas such as the south-west of Scotland.

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. We have some experience of it in my constituency. But, simply because of the drawback, we should not decline to implement the Labour Government's Act and put protection orders on those parts of the country which come forward with them.

I suggest to my hon. Friend that in his part of the country the angling clubs and the owners might consider getting together and putting forward protection orders of their own.

Springburn (Job Creation)

8. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to attract new industries to Springburn in view of the British Rail Engineering Ltd., redundancy announcements.

Mr. Younger: A contract was recently placed for a privately funded 130,000 sq ft business park at Port Dundas, which is expected to accommodate 300 jobs. In addition, the SDA and BREL have jointly funded a study into alternative employment opportunities in Springburn.

Mr. Martin: When the Secretary of State last spoke to this House about Springburn, he said that a study would be before the House soon. Exactly when will we get the results of the study? He knows full well that it will take more than an industrial park at Port Dundas to resolve the problems of Springburn.

Mr. Younger: I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's concern that the study is urgently needed. I understand that the agency has received a draft report and expects the final version any time now. It will then move to assess the recommendations as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hirst: As I also have constituents in Bishopbriggs and Kirkintilloch who will be affected by the proposed redundancies at BREL, will my right hon. Friend make representations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider the establishment of an enterprise zone at Springburn?

Mr. Younger: I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. He may be aware that a great deal of good news has been apparent in Glasgow in recent months. Glasgow-based companies have been winning contracts or committing investment at the rate of a staggering £33 million a month. Many of the projects are designed to refurbish the city—a £5 million contract for the business park at Port Dundas, a new £2·5 million meat market, £7 million to refurbish Gartnavel hospital, a multi-channel cable system costing £15 million, new investment at Glasgow airport, a new commercial centre for Bridgeton, and a £10 million extension to a city centre hotel.

Mr. Craigen: In view of the despairingly high level of unemployment in the north of the city—and particularly of a long-term nature—will the Secretary of State give us an assurance that he will take a personal interest in trying to generate more employment in the north of the city?

Will the Secretary of State agree to look again at BREL, in view of its importance to the Springburn area?

Mr. Younger: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will be taking a very close interest. It is for BREL to decide on its operations. As the hon. Gentleman will probably know, there has been a great deal of help for Glasgow recently. In the past six years there has been over £735 million of new investment, and 33,000 new and safeguarded jobs in the Glasgow travel-to-work area.

Royal Highland Show (Ministerial Speech)

9. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of his speech delivered at the Royal Highland Show on 17 June.

Mr. John MacKay: No speech was delivered, but my right hon. Friend answered some questions asked by representatives of the press.

Mr. Maclennan: When, in those summarised remarks, the Secretary of State accepted that the Government still intended to support the farming industry, he was greeted with total incredulity. Does the Minister realise that, since the announcement of the capital grant cuts of a week ago, with reductions from 70 to 30 per cent. in the less favoured areas, in grants available for re-seeding, fencing and drainage, the Government will be regarded as completely opposed to the interests of farming in 87 per cent. of the areas covered?

Mr. MacKay: I think that I answered the hon. Gentleman's point about 30 and 15 per cent. still being fairly high levels of grant, which we believe will keep up agricultural investment. On the livestock compensatory allowances the Government spent £37·9 million; on the beef premium scheme we spent £22·4 million; on the suckler cow premium scheme £9·4 million; and on the sheep variable premium scheme £23·9 million. I suggest that the hon. Member takes a more balanced view.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Had my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State been able to make a speech at the Royal Highland Show, would he have taken the opportunity to respond to the remarks by the chairman of the Countryside Commission, who has expressed considerable concern that tax avoidance schemes are resulting in the development of large-scale commercial forestry operations in Scotland? These are threatening fishing and tourist interests, and are resulting in inflated land values which threaten the future of hill farming. As he did not have an opportunity to make such a speech, will he undertake to investigate this matter?

Mr. MacKay: I shall not attempt to say what my right hon. Friend would have said if he had made a speech. Forestry has an important role to play in the countryside. I accept that forests must be planted in such a way as to be compatible with the interests of agriculture and with the environment in general. For the long term benefit of the country and for employment, the forestry industry has an important role to play.

Drunkenness (Designated Places)

10. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many designated places under section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 have been established; whether any current applications are being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: One, at Albyn House, Aberdeen. Applications for grant are currently being considered for designated places in Dundee, Paisley and Peterhead.

Mr. Brown: Where does the Minister place most of the blame for the delay and poor response to an idea that has been accepted by everyone in the field as being urgent, necessary and useful?

Mr. MacKay: I shall resist the temptation to place blame. As the hon. Member knows, I have encouraged the concept of these places. The Government's powers are restricted to helping voluntary organisations, and local authorities are expected to play their part in assisting schemes of direct local benefit. I hope that some of the schemes which are currently coming to us will prove to be ones we can support, and which local authorities can also play their part in supporting.

Dr. Godman: Designated places, while most welcome, tackle only a small area of alcohol abuse—public drunkenness. When will the Government consider giving a part of the massive revenues which accrue from the sale of alcohol to educational programmes, particularly those for the young?

Mr. MacKay: It is important that we convince people that drinking sensibly and in moderation is perfectly satisfactory, and that alcohol abuse can be dangerous. The Scottish health education group carries out advertising campaigns and distributes packs of various kinds to help on the issue. We also encourage schools, as part and parcel of their general health education scheme, to draw attention to that programme.

Mr. McQuarrie: My hon. Friend mentioned Peterhead. He will be aware that there is an application from Whitehill House in Peterhead which is run by a voluntary organisation. The application was made in May this year. When is my hon. Friend likely to come to a decision on that application? I hope that the answer will be favourable.

Mr. MacKay: We are looking carefully at the applications from Peterhead, Dundee and Paisley. I cannot say when I shall reach a conclusion. We shall try to do it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Craigen: The Minister said that he had three proposals before him. How many applications have there been in total from voluntary bodies and local authorities for detoxification centres? Will the Minister have another look at the three-year funding arrangements?

Mr. MacKay: I cannot answer in detail the first part of the hon. Member's question. I have no evidence that the funding arrangements are stopping the programmes from coming forward. If there were evidence that that was the case I would look at that as I have looked recently at joint funding between health boards and local authorities.

Rate Relief

11. **Mr. Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received about the operation of the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I have received a small number of representations on various points. Many of these points were the subject of debates in both Houses of Parliament before the passage of the Act last month. The others, relating more to the detail of the rebate scheme, have all been the subject of discussion with officials of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, rating authorities and assessors.

Mr. Marshall: What has happened to the £20 million shortfall of the £50 million promised at Perth to hard-pressed ratepayers? Will the Minister reconsider the matter in the light of the statement by the Solicitor-General for Scotland, who said publicly that he is in favour, as we are, of the entire £50 million being used? Has the Minister received any representations to that effect from the Solicitor-General?

Mr. Ancram: First, there is no £20 million shortfall. The scheme was always designed to be demand-led—*[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may mock that, but I remember that about three months ago they were talking

about figures considerably below £30 million, which is unprecedented and generous support at this time. I have discussed the matter with my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. He is content with the scheme that we shall debate tonight, and he assures me that he will join us in the Lobby.

Mr. Fairbairn: As my hon. Friend is in the almost unique position of having been promised more money by the Treasury than he needs, will he use that example to ensure that the Treasury agrees forthwith with the Secretary of State and abolishes the distinction between guidelines and assessed needs, so that the inequity suffered by those who are above the guidelines but below the assessed needs can also be abolished forthwith?

Mr. Ancram: My hon. and learned Friend has raised this matter previously. He will be aware from statements by me and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that this matter is being seriously considered by the Government.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: Do the Government still intend to replace the rating system during this Parliament?

Mr. Ancram: The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Government are reviewing the system of local government finance. We have made it clear that we hope to introduce proposals at about the year end. It would not be right for me to pre-empt the consideration that leads to those proposals.

Mr. Corrie: Is my hon. Friend aware that several large companies, including Roche and Shell in my area, will receive no rebate under this order? Will he ensure that their appeals are heard reasonably soon, because they face large rate increases this year?

Mr. Ancram: I appreciate the need for appeals to be heard as swiftly as possible. Obviously, that is in the interests not only of the appellants but of the assessors, and I shall try to keep an eye on the matter.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister stand by the statement of the Secretary of State that a manifesto pledge on rating reform will not be good enough for Scottish Conservatives at the next election? Does the Minister accept that he cannot shrug off the £20 million as though it was small change? Is it not a scandal that the Secretary of State should parade the £50 million that he extracted from the Treasury as a battle honour at the Conservative party conference, and then simply not deliver? What does the Minister mean by the phrase "demand-led"? Is he trying to say that there is no demand from Scotland's hard-pressed ratepayers for the additional £20 million which they were promised, but out of which they are now being cheated?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman will be aware, because we have debated the matter several times, that the Government had to decide on a multiplier beyond which the effects of revaluation would be unfair on those who had to bear them. We decided to have a multiplier of three, which was below the overall effect of the Labour Government's revaluation, when no help was given to ratepayers. It is a fair figure. When I say that the system is demand-led, I mean that the amount spent under the scheme depends on the number of those eligible under that multiplier.

As to my right hon. Friend's statement, the hon. Gentleman will have heard what he said. That remains the case.

Economic Prospects

12. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about current economic prospects in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: Last month the Scottish CBI reported optimism in manufacturing continuing to grow, with orders and output showing strong positive trends, investment in plant and machinery showing an upturn, and employment trends strengthening.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply and I welcome the action that the Government have taken to stimulate the creation of new jobs in Scotland. Does he agree, however, that uncertainty over the future of Ravenscraig is casting a long shadow over economic and employment prospects in Scotland? While I accept that the BSC corporate plan is not yet available, will he reassure me and the House that he and his ministerial colleagues will fight like tigers for steel jobs in Scotland?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate that there is widespread concern about the future of Ravenscraig and, when the BSC has submitted its corporate plan, I can assure my hon. Friend that Ministers will have to consider it very carefully. At present, however, there are many other good developments in the Scottish economy, including a record level of investment in new projects, which I expect to continue.

Mr. Millan: Is the Secretary of State aware that, contrary to some suggestions in the press and elsewhere, there is widespread concern in Scotland at the Guinness takeover bid for the highly successful Scottish company of Arthur Bell and Sons, and that some of the statements by Guinness are not only unpersuasive but positively misleading? Will he put his weight behind the pressure for a reference of this bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Younger: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, this is a strictly a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who will take note of what the right hon. Gentleman has said. I of course remain extremely interested in the subject, and I have personally seen representatives of both companies.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Terrorism

38. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will give details of the instructions which his Department has given to procurators fiscal in connection with the prosecution of individuals charged with acts of terrorism.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): No, Sir.

Mr. Walker: I realise that my hon. and learned Friend cannot make a statement on specific cases, but does he agree that, had it not been for the powers which the police in Strathclyde had under the Prevention of Terrorism

(Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, the explosives which were discovered there recently would never have been found?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Clearly, I cannot comment on any individual case. However, I think that my hon. Friend's more general proposition is correct. We have a very real problem with terrorism, and the powers which are now given under the Act to allow for detention for a longer period seem in many circumstances to be more than justified.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is the Solicitor-General aware that not so long ago an hon. Member was detained and roughed up by the Glasgow police—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] I refer of course to myself. Will the Solicitor-General ensure that this does not happen again to other Members of Parliament or to trade unionists, because repeatedly the Prevention of Terrorism Act is used against trade unionists?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I certainly was not aware that the hon. Gentleman had ever been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. However, if he has a complaint to make against the police he should, as a responsible Member of Parliament, make that complaint properly so that it can be investigated, so that such allegations do not remain unsubstantiated and, if necessary, can be properly tested in the courts.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Solicitor-General resist any temptations from the extreme Right or the extreme Left to put political pressure on the procurators fiscal?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am wholly at one with the hon. Gentleman in believing that the system of procurators fiscal in Scotland is a fine feature of our legal system. They stand independent and objective in the prosecution of crime in Scotland. Both my noble and learned Friend and I would be very anxious to ensure that that status is always maintained.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. and learned Friend have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, and urge them to urge on the Metropolitan police the discretion of the Strathclyde police? The apparent desire of the Metropolitan police to advertise their genius in London did a great deal to undermine the magnificent work of the Strathclyde police force, which would probably have resulted in more arrests and more fines in the matter which it had under review.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I take the point that my hon. and learned Friend makes, but I cannot comment on the individual case. He will be aware that where people are awaiting trial, given the provisions of the Contempt of Court Act, it would be extremely ill-advised for anyone—police officer, Minister or anyone else—to comment on such cases lest, in one way or another, that might prejudice the right to a fair trial.

Rape

39. **Dr. Godman** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland against how many people proceedings have been instituted for rape and related offences in the last three months.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Proceedings were taken against 76 people in April, May and June.

Dr. Godman: During the course of a recent rape trial in the High Court at Paisley, the names and addresses of the the two accused were published in the *Greenock Telegraph*. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, in the interests of fairness, the names and addresses of the accused in rape trials should not be permitted to be published unless or until they are found guilty?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have seen the press reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I see no breach of the law in the way in which publication was made in the journal concerned. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that during our proceedings on the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill, we considered that very matter in Committee. A new clause was moved to deal with it but, after consideration, it was withdrawn. Provision is made for the anonymity of complainers, but in Scotland, if the accused are adults, the giving of names and addresses is permitted.

Coal Mining Dispute

40. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what are the most recent conveniently available statistics he has for prosecutions during the miners' dispute.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In all, 1,012 people have been prosecuted for incidents arising out of the miners' dispute; 721 of those have been convicted; while 227 have been acquitted. There are still 64 cases pending.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the Minister's attitude towards the forthcoming Ealing meeting between Mr. McGahey and Mr. Loudon on this subject.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As Solicitor-General for Scotland, I have no opinion on that matter. As I have said repeatedly in answers to questions on the subject, it is a matter of prosecutions before the criminal courts. Issues of industrial dispute and questions of unfair dismissal are to be resolved either as a matter of negotiation or before the tribunals that are established to determine whether there has been an unfair dismissal. It is not for me to comment on that.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, among those acquitted, there have been reported instances of people who have also been dismissed? Will he, with his legal background and training, explain to the Secretary of State for Energy the distinction between unfair dismissal cases, which can lead to compensation but not necessarily to reinstatement, and the conciliation procedure, which can lead to people who have been unfairly dismissed being reinstated in their jobs?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I appreciate the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but he is wrong to assume that either the Secretary of State for Scotland or the Secretary of State for Energy fails to understand the issues. My right hon. Friends and I have said repeatedly that it is a matter for the National Coal Board to determine. If it has it wrong, there are tribunals that deal with matters of unfair dismissal, where remedies of one sort or another are available to those who complain.

Mr. Henderson: In view of persistent rumours that there has been harassment of miners who worked during

the strike and their families, will my hon. and learned Friend say whether there have been any prosecutions of that nature since the dispute?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is obviously difficult for me to identify that or to give any statistical information. However, on an anecdotal basis, I am aware that cases have come before the courts involving assaults and breach of the peace in which those who were involved have been working miners or those who have been on strike. How directly those come out of the miners' strike is an issue on which I cannot give a concluded view.

Mr. Eadie: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the NCB has written to chief constables asking that the NCB be allowed to precognosce police officers before they attend industrial tribunals? Apart from any question concerning the legality of that, does the hon. and learned Gentleman not think that it would be a waste of time as well as interference?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No. Generally, in Scotland, if people are to be required as witnesses before courts or tribunals, it would seem good sense that before they come into the court or the tribunal to give evidence, some sign as to what their evidence is likely to be should be given. If people are seeking to precognosce policemen, that would seem a sensible step.

Mr. Dick Douglas: The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that I have written to him about a specific case that is illustrative of the issue generally, the case of Mr. Allan Collins. Sheriff Reid in Dunfermline has shown his concern that the miner involved in that case should not suffer the double jeopardy of being fined by the court and being dismissed by the Coal Board. Whatever else may be at issue, the Solicitor-General has some responsibility for saying clearly to the House and the country that, in the interests of justice, miners who have expunged their responsibilities to society should not suffer the severe penalty of being dismissed by the Coal Board.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman used the term double jeopardy, which I might use in a rather more technical sense. I am aware of the case, and the hon. Gentleman is aware that, following the concern that the sheriff has shown, steps were taken to have that case adjourned and brought before him at a later stage. I understand that that later stage has not yet occurred. Once again, I have to say that in those circumstances it would be wholly inappropriate for me in any way to express a view on it.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Hamilton: It arises directly out of questions, Mr. Speaker, and you will probably know the point that I am about to raise.

You might recall, as I do, when Prime Minister's questions came after question No. 45, and that question was often reached. Today, and this is not for the first time in Scottish questions, we reached only No. 12 by 3.20 and we had no less than 10 minutes on question No. 2 on the miners' strike, which is as important to me as to other hon. Members. However, there are more nurses in Scotland than miners, and some of us attach as much importance to nurses' conditions as we do to those of miners.

My point of order is simple. My question is No. 13, which was not reached. It relates specifically to nurses' wages and how that the interests of patients will be jeopardised because of the way in which the wage increase is to be financed. This is extremely important. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, consider questions carefully before you come to the Chamber, and I hope that next time you will assess the relative importance of questions. I hope that when next I table a question on this important matter you will take this occasion into account and take steps to see that my question is reached.

Mr. Speaker: In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, I agree that we did not make good progress. I interrupted on two occasions, and many times from a sedentary position, as both questions and answers were very long.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the dispute on teachers' pay following the adjournment of the talks in the early hours of this morning.

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I regret that there was not a settlement to the teachers' pay dispute by early this morning. I am sure that the whole House shares that regret. The Government are clear that they want the dispute settled and our schools back to normal, but not at any price.

Yesterday, the management side made clear its willingness to see a settlement involving 5 per cent. for all teachers from 1 April this year, with an underpinning figure of £480 a year. In addition, it was willing to contemplate a merger of scales 1 and 2 with effect from 1 September and a further 1 per cent. on all scale points with effect from 1 November, provided that agreement could be reached in principle with the teachers on a total structure package covering pay and conditions to be discussed with me in time for any resulting agreement to be built into next October's rate support grant decisions. That would have given teachers a money increase of a little over 5·8 per cent. this year and the base line for teacher salary negotiaions beyond November 1985 would have been increased by over 6·4 per cent.

I understand that the employers made it clear that those figures took them to, and in many cases beyond, the limit of their ability to pay. The teachers were not willing to accept. The House is aware that I wrote on 21 May to the then chairman of the management panel about pay and conditions of service. I have since repeated the Government's position. We are not willing to make additional resources available for 1985-86 or to relax expenditure targets and grant holdback arrangements for that year, but we are willing to make extra resources available for teachers' pay in 1986-87 and to help meet the cost of removing midday supervision of schools from teachers' standard duties provided — I must emphasise this — that there is satisfactory progress by October towards the Government's objectives for improving quality and standards in the education service.

I have made it plain that October is the critical period because of the timing of Government decisions on rate support grant. After yesterday's meeting, it is all the more important for local authorities and teachers, as well as the Government, that acceptable progress be made by October, thus allowing additional resources to be unlocked for the education service. As a result, local authorities would be able to offer substantially improved career and promotion prospects based on consideration of all of the relevant factors such as teachers' qualifications, skills and experience, the quality of the work done and the demands of particular teaching posts and the difficulty of filling them. Linked with that, the Government would want a clearer statement of teachers' duties. The Government are willing to consider whether midday supervision might not be outside the standard expectation and be arranged and paid for separately. I dearly invite local authority employers and teachers to make progress in those directions.

Mr. Radice: The Secretary of State has once again told the House about the contribution that he is prepared to make towards an agreement with the teachers next year, but parents want to know what, apart from general exhortation, he is doing to solve this year's dispute. I am disappointed that the Labour-led employers' imaginative new approach has not yet produced a settlement — [*Laughter.*] It is quite clear that Conservative Members are not interested in a settlement.

Does the Secretary of State agree that, during the 13-hour marathon session, the employers and the teachers demonstrated flexibility? Should not the Secretary of State show equal flexibility and help teachers and employers to bridge the gap that is still between them? Could he at least relax the RSG penalties? The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Labour party is doing everything in its power to bring about an agreement.

Is it not about time that the Secretary of State descended from his ivory tower and did everything in his power to solve this dispute, which is proving to be so damaging to our education?

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government will not relax the target and penalty framework. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that I have been offering on behalf of the Government the same sort of contribution towards the financing of education on the same conditions as have been repeated frequently since 21 May for well over a year. The teachers have consistently refused to discuss it. It is not I who have lacked flexibility. As for the opportunities of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues in the Labour Party, I would remind both him and them that they have allies in the teacher associations. What is he, and what are they, doing to bring the teacher associations, in particular the National Union of Teachers and their leaders —[HON. MEMBERS: "You are the Secretary of State."] The hon. Gentleman laid himself open to this question, since he asserted that he and his party are doing their best to bring the dispute to an end. I have to remind him, and it, that they have allies among the teacher unions, in particular among the leadership of the National Union of Teachers. What are they doing to bring those individuals to their senses and face reality? The pupils must come first. I should like for once to hear the hon. Gentleman put their interests before those of the unions.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Should not the employers make sure that each individual teacher understands precisely what the latest offer is? Then the unions, with the help of ACAS, should ballot the teachers not only on the latest offer but on the wider issue of restructuring salaries.

Sir Keith Joseph: Mr. Teacher — Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter.*] Your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, was a teacher, but that does not justify my slip of the tongue. My hon. Friend has made a valid point. I am not at all convinced that every individual teacher knows what is on offer from the Government. If I could find a way of making sure that all teachers did, I should pursue it. It would then be up to the teacher unions to pursue the idea of balloting, again in some cases, if they so decided.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): We agree that pay and conditions must be linked, but would not the Secretary of State agree that he must show a little more flexibility? Nobody will come out of this

dispute getting what he wants. Might he not think again about the 14 points in his letter of 21 May and at least agree some of the uncontentious points? It seems that the Government have two alternatives. The first is to do nothing and let the teachers and the employers stew. The other is to show a little understanding of what is going on and to depart a little from their inflexible position.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is ignoring the fact that I have offered, on behalf of the Government, additional money for teachers on condition that they co-operate in improving the effectiveness of schooling, which is, after all, for the benefit of the children.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Since it must by now be abundantly clear to everyone, first that the Government will not add further funding this year for teachers' pay, and, secondly, that the employers have gone as far as they possibly can, as they said last night, within those limits is it not now in the teachers' own interests that they should start to talk immediately about restructuring pay and conditions so as to take advantage of what the Secretary of State has said about next year? Could my right hon. Friend consider whether it would help in that direction if he indicated the sort of figures that he might have in mind, should a suitable agreement be reached?

Sir Keith Joseph: I entirely agree with my right hon. and learned Friend, but I shall be unable to give an indication of a figure for what might be available until some willingness to negotiate is shown and some progress has been made.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not a fact that the Government are grossly undervaluing teachers in the state sector and are responsible for the lack of the education that children would have received if the Government paid teachers a proper wage?

Why has the Secretary of State, at this time of all times, linked conditions of service with teachers' wages for the first time when they are saying that they should get their proper wage now and that they would be willing to discuss conditions of service and restructuring afterwards? Most people do not know that, because the press does not tell them. It is disgraceful that the alliance should have gone along with the Government in this.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government are above all concerned with the effectiveness of schooling for the children. It is on that basis that we seek the co-operation of the teachers.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that the time has come to discuss the salaries of head teachers and deputy head teachers separately? Will he bear in mind that for one spell of 13.5 hours last week, teachers' unions and the employers were talking separately and came together for only 18 minutes of negotiation? Does not that show that the Burnham structure has decayed and should be dispensed with?

Does my right hon. Friend know that the Labour education spokesman, the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), shared a platform in outer London the other day with Militant Tendency and sacked miners and said that he was delighted that there were strikes in 14 schools, including two special schools? The Labour party, and especially the hon. Member for Durham, North, is damaging children. It is time that it stopped.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have to agree with my hon. Friend that the Labour party seems to choose to support teachers the whole while, in conflict with the interests of the children. I am concerned that, as far as I can gather, the differentials of head teachers seem to have come under pressure during the negotiations. I hope that the importance of adequate differentials for heads and their deputies will be borne in mind.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the Secretary of State take on board the fact that if he were negotiating on behalf of a private organisation or company, he would rightly have been sacked many months ago? Will he also take on board the fact that the choice that he is giving teachers is either more flexibility from the Government or that they should leave the profession if they want an adequate standard of living?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, there is a third alternative, which is to negotiate to secure additional money from the taxpayer so that transformed career and promotion prospects may be made available to teachers.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is it not clear that my right hon. Friend's letter of 21 May offers a sensible basis for the settlement of this difficult and long-running dispute? Would not it be helpful if the proposals in that letter were made more publicly available to the people who should know about them?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, indeed. If I could find a way to make them more publicly available, I should wish to pursue it, but my hon. Friend must remember that, as Secretary of State, I do not employ the teachers.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): If the Secretary of State will not stir a finger to achieve a settlement, will he stop denigrating the teachers and admit that, by his own action, he has forfeited their co-operation which he says is essential to what he wants to achieve?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am constantly paying tribute to the hard work, dedication and effectiveness of most teachers. I have stirred a finger to offer additional money in return for co-operation.

Mr. Radice: For next year.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): For next year.

Sir Keith Joseph: No, I have been offering it for the past year, in return for arrangements that would provide teachers with much better career and promotion prospects.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): While I acknowledge that the entry pay for qualified teachers is not high, and that many teachers feel that they must take on administrative duties to enhance their top salary level, does my right hon. Friend agree that both parents and pupils will rightly feel dismayed at the breakdown of last night's talks, when they might otherwise have hoped that the new school year which begins in September would not be disrupted, especially pastoral and extramural studies?

Sir Keith Joseph: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Is the Secretary of State aware that, as a consultant to the NUT, I have plenty of allies in the union, and, indeed, sufficient contact with teachers to know the measure of anger that they feel and

[Mr. Guy Barnett]

the degree to which teachers, including some of our best teachers, are voting with their feet? How often has the right hon. Gentleman met the teachers to discover those facts for himself?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am in the habit of accepting practically every opportunity given me to meet teachers. When I visit schools I always make plain my willingness to meet deputations of the staff. The hon. Gentleman should take account of the doubts expressed by some of my hon. Friends. Do all teachers know the shape of what the Government are offering? I wonder whether they do.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

3.51 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement. I told the House on 20 June that if further investigations into the affairs of Johnson Matthey Bankers were to turn up any evidence of fraud, appropriate action would be taken. Investigations have been continuing since then. Although, strictly speaking, they have not so far established prima facie evidence of fraud, they have revealed serious and unexplained gaps in the records of Johnson Matthey Bankers, including the possibility of missing documents relating to substantial past transactions on certain accounts that are the subject of large losses.

In the light of that, Johnson Matthey Bankers has today requested the Commissioner of the City of London police to conduct a preliminary inquiry with a view to establishing whether any criminal offences may have been committed. The result of the inquiry will be reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who will advise what, if any, further action should be taken. The House will, of course, be kept informed.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Chancellor of the Exchequer was wholly right to inform the House of this latest development in the Johnson Matthey affair at the first opportunity, and I thank him for that. Obviously, it is not possible to speculate about the outcome of the police inquiry — [HON. MEMBERS: "But."] It is, however, essential to clarify the procedure which now follows. Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirm that two prosecutions may now result from the unhappy affair: first, regarding the auditors, about which he told the House a month ago, and now Johnson Matthey Bankers? What is more, because of their mutual mismanagement, the Bank of England and the Government are involved in the whole episode. It grows increasingly difficult to answer the question why Johnson Matthey Bankers was bailed out in the first place, and so quickly.

Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer agree that the fullest revelation of all the facts is essential? Will he promise that after the police inquiries there will be a general inquiry into the whole Johnson Matthey Bankers' scandal, either by a Select Committee of the House or under the Tribunals of Inquiry of (Evidence) Act 1921?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) for his initial welcome. He referred to the two matters which are now under way as if they are somehow similar. In fact, they are very different. There is the prospect of civil action by JMB, which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the Bank of England, against the auditors Arthur Young McClelland Moores and Co. Secondly, there is the separate preliminary police inquiry.

The right hon. Gentleman asked why Johnson Matthey Bankers was bailed out. I gave a full explanation of that when I made my statement on 20 June, and the matter was covered fully in the annual report of the Bank of England. As for what might happen in future, I think that it is better at this stage to wait and see.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be very welcome, so

that the whole affair can be cleared up once and for all? Does he agree that if the Bank of England had not intervened in the Johnson Matthey affair there could have been a loss of confidence in the City, which would have been detrimental to the invisibles sector of the economy?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. There were obvious dangers to the London gold market especially, which was a special and important feature of the case. It is striking how open the Government have been in revealing to the House details of this matter, in sharp contrast to what happened under the previous Labour Government during the lifeboat incident.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer explain to the House why it is only now that he is able to tell the House that serious and unexplained gaps in the records have come to light, when various skilled teams of investigators have been engaged in the Johnson Matthey investigation over the past six months? How much longer does he think it will take possibly to produce prima facie evidence?

Mr. Lawson: The fact that the documents were missing was not established until quite recently. Since the Bank of England took over Johnson Matthey it has stopped further out-flows and has been working to establish the full extent of the bad debts, which I reported to the House on 20 June. It has been engaged also in getting Johnson Matthey Bankers back into a shipshape and saleable condition, so as to protect taxpayers' and the Bank of England's money and that of the indemnifiers. The inquiry is not the only matter in which the Bank of England has been engaged, but I am satisfied that it is diligently pursuing the inquiry with the aid of its advisers. I am sure that it is as anxious as the House to have a prosecution for fraud if any evidence of fraud should be found.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the deplorable goings on at Johnson Matthey Bankers have caused the most acute embarrassment to many of my constituents who work successfully and honourably with the chemical division of Johnson Matthey? Will he emphasise that the two companies are quite separate, and in so doing wish every success to those who work in Johnson Matthey chemicals?

Mr. Lawson: I did so when my hon. Friend properly raised the matter on 20 June, and I gladly do so again now.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer aware that if the Attorney-General had acted on 12 November 1984 when I asked him a question about the fraud squad's investigation of this matter there is a fair chance that some of the tracks that have probably since been covered up would have been found and explored thoroughly by the fraud squad?

The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that in the Crown Agents' affair very few people were trapped at the end because there was too long a delay. In the London and Counties Security scandal, Gerald Kaplan managed to get to America because of the delay. The result is that he has got off scot free. In other words, he has obtained an amnesty. If the right hon. Gentleman compares the Johnson Matthey Bankers' affair with the Slater, Walker fiasco, and all the others that arose at about that time, he will find that most of those involved got off scot free. Against that background, is he not open to the charge that, because he has delayed matters and refused to answer my questions and those of my hon. Friends, people such as James Firth, a director, whose son was employed by one of the largest borrowers from Johnson Matthey, have been able to cover up all their tracks? The borrower is a personal friend of the Prime Minister and of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Is it not a scandal that the Chancellor has come to the House eight months after Johnson Matthey's exposure on 30 September? The result is that we will be lucky to get hold of any of the culprits, yet there are so many people to pick on. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not act against the Governor of the Bank of England? Why is the Governor not charged with the fact that he allowed so much neglect to take place? What about Michael Arnold, who worked for the auditors and apparently could not discover anything throughout 1984? One of those auditors is now in charge of looking after the NUM's funds. What a scandal this is.

Is it not a fact——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has taken a special interest in this matter, but he must not make a speech.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not a fact that, by being so laggardly, the Chancellor and the Attorney-General, with the connivance of the Prime Minister, will allow these people to get off scot free while miners have been locked up in gaol for doing absolutely nothing?

Mr. Lawson: I resent and reject the hon. Gentleman's allegations. I had hoped that he would welcome my statement.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most difficult decisions that a central bank has to make from time to time is whether to rescue a particular financial institution? It is, by contrast, extremely easy for the Opposition to cast doubt on those decisions in ignorance of the full facts.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is correct, but, strictly speaking, that is not the issue before the House. This is a serious matter. It concerns the fact that the Bank of England, through Johnson Matthey Bankers, has reached the point where sufficient suspicion has arisen through the missing documents to lead the Bank of England to feel justified in asking the City fraud squad to make a preliminary inquiry.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is it not clear that the rescue of Johnson Matthey Bankers, by comparison with a large number of firms which have been allowed to go to the wall, represents an error of judgment by the Chancellor? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that Johnson Matthey Bankers has shown itself to be the unacceptable face of capitalism, whereas the Chancellor's actions have shown themselves to be the unacceptable face of Government intervention?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong on both counts. First, the decision to rescue JMB was not my decision but that of the Governor of the Bank of England. Secondly, it was not an incorrect decision. In my judgment, the Governor of the Bank of England was correct in taking that decision.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most of us will think that he was right to make this statement, because the invisible earnings of the City of London are important to our balance of payments? Does my right hon. Friend accept that what has happened at Johnson Matthey is a scandal which should be investigated, wherever it goes, and whatever its results? Bearing in mind the City revolution to come, the loss of confidence in the City by events such as the Johnson Matthey incident and the fact that Lloyd's has cast a great cloud over many people's views of the City's reputation, should not the same strictures be applied to Lloyd's, as a police investigation would bear heavily upon many people involved in some of the disgraces there?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend will know that investigations into Lloyd's are going on. The prosperity and future of our people are threatened by the unacceptable face of Socialism. Whereas we are acting properly against what the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) called the "unacceptable face of capitalism", the unacceptable face of Socialism is publicly embraced by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Is the Chancellor aware that Mr. Michael Hepker, the chairman of a public company, Sumrie Clothes Ltd., who today left the country, has been leading the Bank of England auditors, Graham Mark and Robin Collier, up the garden path ever since the collapse of Johnson Matthey in relation to a £1·5 million loan made to Ravensbury Investments, an offshore Isle of Man company, which loan involved a whole series of frauds, including a fraud on Johnson Matthey? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that on 29 June 1982 Eric Ellen, the director of the International Bureau of Maritime Fraud, went to see Ian Fraser, a director of Johnson Matthey, to tell him about various proven misdemeanours in which Mr. Mahmud Sipra, who controls the El Saeed empire which led to the collapse of Johnson Matthey, had been involved? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, on 12 December 1982, he telephoned Mr. Fraser to tell him that Mr. Sipra was caught up in a £3 million fraud and that it was ridiculous to continue to lend him money, only to be met with the reply by Mr. Fraser, "You chaps are all the same. You don't give anyone a chance."? Will the Chancellor give a guarantee that he will come to the House next week, when I hope to present further details of fraud at Johnson Matthey?

Mr. Lawson: If the hon. Gentleman has any relevant evidence, I hope that he will immediately make it available to the police.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend accept that his assurance that if any fraud is uncovered the matter will be brought to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions is little comfort, in view of the repeated lethargy of that department? I remind my right hon. Friend that fraud at Lloyd's was uncovered more than 12 months ago, yet no action has been brought by the DPP.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Wide questions promote wide answers.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Is the Chancellor aware that his statement makes nonsense of the Prime Minister's reply to me last Thursday, which was reinforced in her Monday letter to me, when she said that she saw no purpose in an inquiry into the relationship between Johnson Matthey and companies to which loans had been made? Does not everything that the Chancellor has said today underline the need for such an inquiry? What will the right hon. Gentleman do to shake the Prime Minister's complacency about Johnson Matthey?

Mr. Lawson: There is no question of complacency on the part of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, myself, any member of the Government or the Governor of the Bank of England. We have acted throughout on all the evidence that has been made available. It was impossible to act before there was any evidence. Now that further facts have come to light, the Bank of England and Johnson Matthey Bankers, without any delay, have called in the police, who will report to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Disregarding much of what the Opposition have said, is my right hon. Friend aware that the honesty and integrity of the City of London is at stake? We look to my right hon. Friend to help us in every possible way.

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend that the honesty and integrity of the City of London are of the first importance. As I made clear in my statement of 20 June, it would be wholly wrong to assume that the shambles, and worse, at Johnson Matthey Bankers was in any way characteristic or typical of banking in the City of London. It does no good to this country to pretend otherwise.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, apart from the large companies which were caught, a large number of small businesses are affected? I know of the tragedy of a small concern in Norfolk which had been built up over 30 years and which has gone to the wall. Does the Chancellor's announcement offer any hope that, after a lifetime of work, these small businesses will be rescued from bankruptcy?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That question has nothing to do with Johnson Matthey.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Now that my right hon. Friend has set such a good example in dealing with white collar fraud, can we expect him to encourage the responsible authorities to promote similar investigations into the Lloyd's insurance market?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That question is no good, either.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I ask the Chancellor to give an assurance that every penny of public money expended on rescuing that bank will be returned to the public purse before the company is again privatised? May we now have a copy of the Price Waterhouse report?

Mr. Lawson: As I made clear to the hon. Gentleman earlier, the Price Waterhouse report contains details which, because of the law relating to banking confidentiality, cannot be revealed. It also bears upon the legal action which the Bank of England and Johnson Matthey Bankers contemplate against Arthur Young McClelland Moores and Co. On the hon. Gentleman's point about money being returned before privatisation, the money that will be received by the Bank of England as a

result of the privatisation of Johnson Matthey Bankers will play an important part in the recovery of funds which have been expended.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Did it come to the Chancellor's ears from around the gold market and elsewhere in the City before Christmas that there was a likelihood of fraud being involved? On what date, before or after Christmas, were Sir Robert Armstrong, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor warned of the likelihood of fraud in the Johnson Matthey Bankers case?

Mr. Lawson: I received no such warning at any time. The Bank of England discovered the documents to be missing last week.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): As it becomes increasingly apparant that a large sum of public money has been involved in fraud, will the Chancellor give the House an assurance that if, after the fraud squad's inquiries, the Director of Public Prosecutions reveals that the villians have fled, he will dismiss the Governor of the Bank of England, and resign?

Mr. Lawson: No, Sir.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the Chancellor agree that the exchanges of the past few minutes confirm the need for a general inquiry? At some point, must he not answer the question why, when my hon. Friends below the Gangway suspected fraud six months ago, the Bank of England suspected it only yesterday?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman's colleagues below the Gangway suspect fraud on every occasion, whether or not there happens to be any evidence of it.

Wages Councils

4.11 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The substance of the statement on wages councils which is about to be given to the House was reported in *The London Standard* at 2 o'clock this afternoon. I wonder whether you can say what rules govern these matters, because many Opposition Members read in the evening paper what the Minister was going to say.

Mr. Speaker: The House will be aware that I have the greatest sympathy with what the hon. Member has said. If statements which are embargoed are issued to the press, they should not be printed.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: If they are embargoed, they should not be printed before the statement is given to the House.

Mr. King: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In case there is any misunderstanding, may I say that I share the feelings of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about this matter. No embargoed statement was issued to the press. The House will have to draw its own conclusions as to whether there has been a leak. I take the strongest exception to leaks from my Department. I bitterly regret the fact that this has happened.

Mr. Prescott: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State has acted honourably in giving that statement. Will he look into the matter further and tell us later how the report occurred?

Mr. King: If I can, because I should dearly love to do so.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. King, to make his statement.

4.13 pm

Mr. Tom King: With permission, Mr. Speaker. I should like to make a statement concerning the Government's intentions on the future of wages councils and on international labour convention No. 26.

As the House will know, I published in March a consultation paper on the future of wages councils. That canvassed two main options: either total abolition or reform of the system — including, in particular, the limitation of their powers and duties and the removal of young people from the scope of wages councils.

In addition to the report from the Select Committee on Employment, over 700 organisations and individuals responded to the consultation paper. While the TUC and individual trade unions favoured retention, the consultations confirmed that there is a widespread dissatisfaction among employers with the present wages council system. The majority of them favoured a range of substantial reforms to meet these concerns. I promised to inform the House as soon as the Government had taken decisions on those matters, following the ending of the consultative period.

The Government's overriding concern is to promote employment and to remove any excessive burdens on employers. The present system inhibits the creation of more jobs and that is especially true in the case of young

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people. The present powers of wages councils also undoubtedly impose complex and unnecessary burdens on business. The Government believe that the case for radical reform is clearly made, and propose to introduce early legislation which will, first, remove all young people under 21 from any regulation by wages councils.

Hon. Members: Disgraceful.

Mr. King: Secondly, it will confine wages councils to setting only a single minimum hourly rate and a single overtime rate for those aged 21 and over.

I shall also be proposing new powers which will significantly simplify the procedures under which the Secretary of State may modify or abolish individual councils.

Following consultation, the Government have decided to deratify international labour convention No. 26 and I shall be informing the International Labour Organisation of our decision within the next few days. The window for denunciation opened on 14 June and it is necessary to give 12 months' notice before the convention ceases to apply. That will therefore mean that, subject to the progress of the necessary legislation in this House, it should be possible to bring into effect changes approved by Parliament as soon as they become law.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister without Portfolio, supported by my right hon. Friends and myself, published yesterday the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden". That set out clearly the Government's determination to reduce burdens on business and to seek in every way to improve the prospects for jobs. This statement today of a major package of reforms is directed to precisely those objectives, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Prescott: It is both deplorable and ironic that two statements made to the House today should involve the ever-increasing greed of some of the City wealthy within our society and wages councils. The statement on wages councils represents an unashamed renunciation of Britain's international obligation to maintain minimum protection for the lowest paid in Britain, of whom I have employment experience.

Why does the Secretary of State disagree with the conclusions drawn by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), who, as we are aware from a leaked Cabinet document from 1982, bitterly opposed such mean measures because they would marginally increase the number of jobs at the expense of adult workers and would be portrayed as an attack on those who are particularly vulnerable?

Does the Secretary of State accept that Britain is the only one of 92 civilised countries which is now prepared to renounce its international obligations? The Government's renunciation of the fair wages resolution in 1983, as the evidence presented to the Select Committee on Employment showed, led to a 25 per cent. reduction in wages, holidays and conditions and fewer jobs. Does he accept that some protection is necessary to guarantee minimum holiday periods and paid weekend overtime, as the all-party committee on Sunday shopping recommended that those conditions should be an essential part of any implementation of Sunday shopping? How will these proposals affect that recommendation?

In his statement, the Secretary of State claimed that his proposals would increase jobs. What evidence does he have to support that statement, as he confirmed to the Select Committee only a month ago that he had no such evidence?

As the Secretary of State must know, many of the 2·75 million people covered by the wages councils are women in very low-paid jobs, often earning sums below the supplementary benefit level. What estimate has he of the increase in the family income supplement benefits, which will grow with the downward pressure on wages that the decision is designed to achieve?

In International Youth Year, the Government's contribution is to remove legislation that is covered by international convention. It will mean less pay, shorter holidays and greater exploitation of youth labour by funnelling YTS youngsters into lower-paid industries. It will reduce the unemployment figures by replacing them with low-paid women workers, who will not be eligible to register as unemployed. It is a squalid proposal, consistent with the Government's overall policy of making the wealthy wealthier and the poor poorer, and there is no evidence that it will produce extra jobs.

Mr. King: In his opening comment, the hon. Member complained about a leak from my Department. He then boasted of another leak. I object to all leaks from my Department.

Anyone who has begun to understand the operation of the wages councils will know of the complexity of the orders. They are a major burden on employers. Many of the problems of the present system — and what are alleged to be breaches of it — arise from the sheer complexity of the orders.

We are determined to encourage employers to give the best possible opportunity to young people. We believe that the proposal will help in the employment of young people. That is why we attach importance to it.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Although I believe that the wages councils are marginal to the problem of unemployment, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on proceeding by way of a sensible improvement of the wages councils, rather than by way of abolition, which would have been a grave mistake.

Mr. King: I note what my right hon. Friend says and I understand his point. I believe that our package of proposals is a sensible way to proceed. We attach the highest importance to the creation of new jobs. I may disagree with my right hon. Friend as to the extent to which our proposals may help to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that the removal of young people from the protection of wages councils is based on prejudice, not evidence? Youth wages have declined markedly, both relative to those of adults and absolutely, since 1979, yet youth unemployment has risen disproportionately faster.

Does the Secretary of State know that the young workers scheme—a device to lower youth wages—was singularly ineffective in providing new jobs? Does he realise that, if there is an increase in the employment of young people because of their cheapness, it will be at the expense of adults? Does he realise that that will be additional evidence to young people that the Conservative party is their enemy?

Mr. King: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's last point.

There is clear evidence that, if the wages of young people were more sensibly related in percentage terms to the adult rate — as they are, for example, in West Germany — a number of additional jobs would be created. At the moment, it is impossible in many areas for employers to employ young people of 16 and 17 at 50 per cent. or 60 per cent. of the full adult wage rate. In West Germany, the percentage of the adult wage may be between 15 and 25. My concern is to see the creation of openings and opportunities for young people. When their wages are artificially high, it simply ensures that there are no jobs for them.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Will my right hon. Friend agree that in many respects over the years the wages councils have outlived their purpose? Indeed, they have inhibited new employment and the creation of more wealth.

It is acceptable that young people under 21 should be exempt from the wages councils, but will my right hon. Friend keep under constant review the effect of the revised wages councils provisions on those over 21, and if necessary increase the age limit?

Mr. King: I give an undertaking that we shall keep these matters under review. The modification or abolition of individual wages councils is an important component in my proposals.

My hon. Friend will have noted my comment that the majority of employers within the wages council areas favour reform. Account should be taken of that fact.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Is the Secretary of State aware that, while many may recognise that there is some logic in paying the adult rate at 21 rather than at 18 or 19, the removal of all protection from those under 21 will be seen as outrageous? It will permit exploitation of one of the most vulnerable sections of our society. The whole concept of wages councils was to protect the vulnerable.

Given what is proposed by the Secretary of State, will he say why it was decided to deratify? As I understand international labour convention No. 26, the Government could probably stay within it, even given the proposed changes in the wages councils. What does the Minister see as the advantages of deratification, other than being able to abolish the lot at a later date?

Mr. King: I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to a slightly bizarre feature of the ILO procedure. He said that the changes would "probably" come within the convention. Obviously, we have to ensure that we act entirely in accordance with our international obligation.

Under the ILO system, one has either to give notice now, while the window is open for a year, or for five years one has no opportunity to make any change whatever. In an area that is important for domestic policy-making, it is essential that we should have the opportunity to determine the policy ourselves.

The greatest area of vulnerability for those under 21 is unemployment. I am putting forward proposals to give them the best possible chance of jobs.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on bringing forward the proposals. Do they include the agricultural wages council? What is to become of that council?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is referring to the agricultural wages board, which is dealt with under a separate convention. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has already made a separate statement about that.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Is the Secretary of State aware that thousands of my constituents will regard the Government's statement as offering them a prospect of poverty on benefit or poverty on low wages?

Will the Secretary of State come with me to Merseyside jobcentres, where he will see jobs advertised at £1·20 an hour, £1 an hour, £57·25 a week, and some at princely sums of £70 and £91 a week?

Will the Secretary of State now withdraw his policy of trying to reduce money wages, and for the first time as a Government spokesman bring proposals to the House aimed at raising real wages?

Mr. King: I was on Merseyside on Friday, as the hon. Member may know. His point refers to the present situation. I am not sure whether he is suggesting that my proposals will change it in a significant way.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us will support his proposals, not because they appear to be a compromise—which is no doubt how they will be represented in the press—but because they satisfy the two main concerns at the forefront of our minds, jobs for the young and protection of workers where that is most needed?

Mr. King: I believe that that is right. I believe that small businesses have the potential to be and will increasingly be the source of more jobs. The burden of cost and compliance with the regulations is a major constraint on further employment, and that is the issue to which we give the highest priority.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Does the Secretary of State realise that his proposals will not create one job, and that many unscrupulous employers will sack those over 21 and replace them with youngsters under 21 at lower wages?

Is it not ironic that the Secretary of State for Employment should make a statement attacking those at the bottom of the wage scale when his colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has just made a statement about the fiddlers at the top?

Mr. King: I do not agree with the first comment of the hon. Member. This measure will mean the creation of more jobs. A number of cases are being reported to my Department about young people being dismissed because they have been offered jobs that they are willing to accept at wages which the employer can afford. Inspectors are then saying, "You are not allowed to accept that job." I can recount those instances to the hon. Member. That is an intolerable situation and one which this House should not countenance.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that all comfortable and respectable opinion will congratulate him on his statesmanlike fudge? The only people who will regret his decision are the weakest and the poorest, who will continue to be priced out of work until these councils are abolished.

Mr. King: I note the characteristic question of my hon. Friend. This will be of real help to young people in giving

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them a better chance of avoiding the ultimate degradation of unemployment. It will give them the chance of jobs, and I attach great importance to that.

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): What protection can the Secretary of State offer if, as has been said, a person's 21st birthday becomes the date of his sacking? Is the only redress a young person will have on his 21st birthday the unfair dismissals legislation? If that situation comes about, will the Secretary of State review the policy he is pursuing today?

Mr. King: I do not accept the scenario painted by the right hon. Member. He knows the situation which exists now and knows very well that in this country young people's wages have got out of phase. The evidence I am about to give may be obtained from the Electrical Contractors' Association and the EETPU. An agreement there reduced the wages of first-year apprentices from £42 to £28. As a result, the number of apprentices in that industry trebled.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on proceeding by way of reform rather than abolition. Could he give an assurance that, if abuses or hardships are brought to his notice, he will act swiftly to deal with them?

Mr. King: As instanced by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) there are problems in the present situation. We wish to ensure that we have a system in which employers recognise their responsibilities, and in which we create the maximum number of jobs at wages which employers can afford and which employees are willing to accept. That is our objective in tackling the problems of unemployment. We will obviously keep a close eye on the situation as it develops.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Is it not a fact that poverty wages have a direct effect on people's life cycle? The Minister referred to apprentices' rates of pay, but that has nothing to do with wages councils. The rates are negotiated with the trade unions. On occasion, the Minister has quoted the United States of America as not having wages councils, but is it not a fact that the United States has a minimum wage, which is higher than that recommended in the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: I used the illustration of apprentices because it is the clearest possible illustration of the principle. I know perfectly well that apprentices are not covered by wages councils. I am seeking to make the point that, when the wages of young people are fixed at an economic level, it is likely to lead to more jobs. The hon. Member referred to the problems of poverty. The question from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was about state support, for instance in the form of family income supplement. What we must not do is confuse the two issues.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Is it not clear from the comments of Opposition spokesmen, both official and alliance, that they recognise that these measures will help young people price themselves into jobs? Is it not also clear, and will my right hon. Friend confirm, that the recommendations of the Auld report on the deregulation of Sunday trading, are still available as an option?

Mr. King: The Auld report made recommendations about the retention of wages councils and about the setting of minimum wages. Those matters will need to be considered in whatever legislation comes before this House. I am surprised that the Opposition do not accept what is now widely perceived, that wage rates for young people—even though they have fallen back, as the hon. Member fairly said—are still significantly higher than, for instance, in Germany. It is interesting to note the much higher level of youth employment in Germany as a result.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): In answer to a question put by me on 11 June 1985, asking whether the Department was thinking of attacking the minimum wages paid to people under 21 years of age, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), said no. Can the Minister tell us why his Department has changed its mind in that time, as I suggest it has? The Minister misquoted an agreement with the Electrical Contractors Association about trainees, but that has nothing to do with wages council industries. What evidence does he have that cutting this vital protection for people under 21 will help? In most of the areas we are talking about, people work for £1 an hour; we are not talking about anything lavish. What evidence can the Minister give us that he is going to do anything other than attack low wages and bring them down to YTS levels? I am sure that that is the thinking of this Government.

Mr. King: I am sorry that the hon. Member will not accept the clear illustration I gave. He probably knows, for example, that Ford apprentices in this country are paid twice as much in their first year as Ford apprentices in Germany. There are many more apprentices in Germany. The principle is that an employer fixes wage rates for starting people who in their first years of work make only a limited contribution to the performance of the business. He will not offer them employment if wage rates are fixed at a level way beyond what they are worth.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I welcome my right hon. Friend's recognition that the reform of wages councils will create more jobs. Will he not accept that the abolition of wages councils would increase job opportunities even further? Will he not therefore go further than he is going today?

Mr. King: As I said a little earlier, we took the consultations very seriously. It was significant that a sizeable majority of employers preferred reform and preferred to keep the wages councils. It is important that young people should be exempted and we are also taking these alternative powers to deal with the problems of individual councils. However, we will keep the matter under review.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): How can the Minister seriously suggest that those over 21 need minimum wage protection while those under 21 are to have this protection abolished by law? Is the Minister aware that, in conventions on human rights, this nation is now the pariah of the 21 nations of the Council of Europe? If we depart much further from democracy, our right to be a member of the Council of Europe will be seriously challenged.

Mr. King: I do not know what on earth the hon. Member bases his last assertion on. We are not proposing to introduce universal rights for all those over 21. We have

consulted all the industries covered by wages councils, and they favour reform. There is an urgent need in the case of young people, and we intend to look individually at the other councils.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the thoroughgoing reform which he has announced, and for refusing to be swayed by the unimaginative and heartless advocates of the Opposition. Does he agree that it is quite wrong to present an issue in terms of the withdrawal of protection for young people, when the reality is that wages councils have all too often laid down minimum rates of pay for young and inexperienced people at levels above those which employers can afford? That has been one of the causes of the present serious problem of unemployment.

Mr. King: I suspect that I am not the only Conservative Member who is nauseated by those who preach about the problems of unemployment but will not face up to some of the tough decisions that must be taken, and do not realise what is really happening. I hope that when we see the improvements that will be made by this measure, even some Opposition Members will recognise its merits.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): How many of the industrialised countries with which we are in competition have found it necessary to denounce ILO convention No. 26? If we are out of line, is it because the Government's policy on minimum wages has failed, or because their policy on the employment of the young has failed?

Mr. King: As the hon. Member may know, the ratification of ILO conventions is extremely complex. Several countries ratify very few. The United States, because of its federal structure, has ratified few, if any. We have ratified rather more since we came into office, and have deratified only two. Labour Governments deratified ILO conventions. We shall consider them practically and pragmatically.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many will conclude that the Government have found exactly the right balance between protecting the interests of the weak and lower paid and ensuring that wages councils do not inhibit the creation of new jobs? Does he further agree that it is right to take younger people out of the remit of wages councils, since in this area they have inhibited the creation of new jobs by setting too high wages? It is right to set simple, single adult rates, because wages council orders are far too complex — often running to 30 pages — for employers or employees to understand, and are thus self-defeating. Many will conclude that, after the widest possible consultations, the Government have come to the most sensible conclusion.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know of his close interest in the subject and the work that he has done. I hope that the drastic simplification of the operation of wages councils—previous studies of orders show how complex they have become, especially for smaller employers—will assist in the creation of new jobs.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State accept that, in commending wages council legislation to the House, Winston Churchill made the fundamental point that the good employer is undercut by the bad employer and that the bad employer is undercut by the worst employer? That was why wages councils were needed. What evidence does the right hon. Gentleman have to show that Winston Churchill's recommendations were wrong? Does the Secretary of State want youngsters to be employed only by the worst employers?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman had made more than a superficial study of the position, he would have known that Winston Churchill set up trade boards, which were mostly concerned with health and safety. They are now covered in separate legislation. The trade boards dealt mainly with manufacturing industry, whereas the wages councils cover mainly hotels and catering, the retail trades and part-time workers, including many women. The Government at that time were anxious to prevent sweating, as it is called, which is now covered by separate legislation. It is a different matter.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Minister let us know the total number of young people who will be affected by the measures? Will he also remember that many shop workers, who are still not covered by wages councils, are young? What protection will he give to them? The Minister talked about sweatshops. In Ogmore, 8,000 people are unemployed, 1,000 of whom are youngsters aged under 21. What protection will he give to those who are working in the sweatshops that are mushrooming in my constituency and in Wales generally?

Mr. King: I thought that the hon. Gentleman said that they were unemployed, but I may have missed the point. Obviously, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the figure. We believe that the measures will lead to increased job opportunities for youngsters, but it is impossible to predict how many will be affected.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): In welcoming these partial steps, may I ask my right hon. Friend to remember, when considering each industry, the advantages of abolition, especially for 20-year-olds, who might celebrate their 21st birthdays by getting the sack?

Mr. King: I understand my hon. Friend's point but, considering the earnings in those areas, I hope that that will not be the case. The new measures will help to avoid the obvious anomalies, where employers who wish to employ more young people cannot do so because they are required, for example, to pay a 16-year-old who has never worked 50 per cent. of the full adult rate. That cannot be justified, and we must tackle the problem.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Since the right hon. Gentleman is content to lower standards and wages, especially for the young, does he believe that it is a good idea for other countries to follow our example? Does he not understand why those conventions were signed? Is it not disgraceful that Britain should be at the head of a drive to lower standards?

Mr. King: The right hon. Gentleman has heard all the exchanges on this matter, yet he appears to have paid no attention to the points that have been made. How can it be a positive benefit to any youngster to fix wages, in relation to adult rates, at twice the rate paid in Germany, if the result is that British youngsters are unemployed while German youngsters have jobs?

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he has received many representations from industries involved with wages councils advocating

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their retention, but the removal of the damaging side effects that have built up? Is he aware that the skilful balance of measures that he has announced this afternoon will be widely welcomed by those who are genuinely concerned about job creation and increased training prospects for the young, although it will not be welcomed by those who weep crocodile tears and have no constructive alternatives to suggest?

Mr. Prescott: Twenty pounds a week—that is what it means.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who put the point better than I have succeeded in doing so far. I genuinely believe that we can help young people in this way. There is no merit in artificially preserving rates of pay which ensure that no one obtains employment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that this a matter of great interest to the House, but we have a heavy day ahead of us. I shall allow questions to continue for 10 minutes, and I hope that everyone can be called.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): As a former trade union officer, I know that many people in the catering trade work long hours, and that many youngsters in that trade are mentally and sometimes physically handicapped. They know nothing but hard work, and they are entitled to the protection of the Government. What will the right hon. Gentleman do to ensure that such youngsters are not exploited?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman raises a serious point about handicapped people, which no doubt will arise when we discuss the legislation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Does my right hon. Friend agree that wages councils discriminate against the handicapped, ethnic minorities and young people, and that his proposals will be a fillip for them? Does he agree that the Opposition have shown that they can offer nothing to the young unemployed, and that they are happier to respond to the needs of their bosses in the trade unions than to tackle these fundamental problems?

Mr. King: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), who is an experienced trade union official, will know that there is a real problem here, which we must consider. The operation of wages councils can inhibit the employment of disadvantaged people who, above all, want the respect and responsibility that comes from employment.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): While recognising that the Government's proposals are part of the continuing process designed to strip those who are fortunate enough still to have jobs of basic minimum legal protection, may I invite the Minister to set out his proposals for the next stage in the process? Since he has decided to simplify the method of introducing regulations to abolish wages councils, thereby depriving the House of its normal procedures, and following the quadrupling of the qualifying period for unfair dismissal protection, can he say which councils he intends to abolish? Or will he not tell the House even that?

Mr. King: The hon. and learned Member, with his expert legal knowledge, has raised a number of points which will arise if legislation comes before the House, as I certainly hope it will, and which we shall need to debate. My concern today was to set out the main framework at the earliest opportunity, as I promised the House I would. That I have done. I do not wish to pursue further the line which the hon. and learned Gentleman invites me to travel.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Does my right hon. Friend share my incredulity at the comments made by the Opposition in connection with a number of the councils such as the ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower council, and the need for them? May I draw to his attention the fact that the Dutch Government introduced the young person's level of 23 and that, by considering reform along those lines, we will increase Britain's greatest growth industry, tourism? There will be delight, particularly in tourism circles in Yorkshire, that, as a result of these measures, some 60,000 to 70,000 jobs a year will be created.

Mr. King: I certainly accept what I think is a very important point. If we are considering future sources of employment, the scope for tourism is very significant. I hope that we may soon have something more to say on this.

The age level is obviously a matter of judgment. I took the view, after full consideration, that 21 was the right age. I have no doubt that that matter will be debated fully when we come to consider the legislation.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Given that the Government's case depends on their argument that low wages will produce more jobs for young people, can the Secretary of State explain why the highest levels of unemployment for young people are found in those regions with the lowest wage rates for young people and the lowest levels of unemployment for young people are found in those areas with the highest wage rates for young people?

Mr. King: A number of other factors—not least the concentration of traditional industries and the scale of problems which have affected some of those industries—also dominate those issues.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): My right hon. Friend's announcement today will be widely welcomed, because it will create many new job opportunities for young people. It will give young people the freedom to negotiate their own wages. I wonder why my right hon. Friend is denying this freedom to those who are over 21 and whether, in the light of the White Paper issued yesterday, he will consider excluding from the provisions of the wages councils all those employed by small businesses.

Mr. King: I understand that point. I think that the balance which I have tried to strike is the right one, and I commend it to the House. But I have no doubt that all these issues of detail will be a matter for discussion in the progress of the legislation.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Why do the Secretary of State and his Government seem to regard being young as an illness? Does the Secretary of State understand that he is going to have a very tough time persuading young people that he is doing them a good turn by cutting their pay and reducing their conditions of employment?

Mr. King: I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to defend the system when he knows perfectly well that, by historical accident and sometimes by negotiation, wage rates for a number of young people are fixed at levels which simply are not economic and at which, therefore, there are not jobs. I will recommend as firmly as I can a system that will give encouragement to jobs and will give the best possible opportunities to young people by employers being able to offer them employment. At the start of their working life, when they are not able to make a significant contribution to the firm, employers are willing to give them a chance, provided that the level of pay is one which a company can afford.

Mr. Matthew Parris (Derbyshire, West): How is it possible for the Opposition to argue that abroad low wages create jobs because they give foreign manufacturers the edge over ours, yet those mechanisms do not apply at home?

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): We have low wages.

Mr. King: The truth is that, as the hon. Lady the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) says, we have low wages and low productivity and we then jack up the wages of young people in a quite unreal relationship to the wages of adults. As a result, we tend to have the worst of all worlds. It is to amend that situation that I bring these proposals to the House.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in the the northern region high unemployment and low wages go hand in hand, and that, since 1979, unemployment has doubled in the manufacturing sector, with 250,000 able-bodied men and women on the dole? In addition, 440,000 workers are on less than the decency threshold which was worked out by the Council of Europe. Is he aware that in my constituency there is one street in which 90 per cent. of the people are unemployed? Can he tell the House where in his announcement today there is any message of hope, expectation or a lifting of morale for those people?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman will know that we have taken a number of measures, concerned with improving training opportunities, work programmes for the unemployed and the help which we can give them in a range of different ways. We are determined to take every step which may help to open more employment opportunities. We are starting now to create more jobs, but not fast enough to bite into the levels of unemployment. However, we are on our way, and we will continue to take steps which will genuinely help employment opportunities. I know that the hon. Gentleman comes from a difficult area which has tragic problems, but we will face up to those problems and we will take the steps which we genuinely believe can help.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): May I join those who welcome the policy of reform rather than of abolition? However, are we right to choose some arbitrary age to distinguish between adults, skilled and otherwise? I am concerned about late entrants into an industry. It might be far better for an industry to be able to have a say in defining what is adult—for example, after three or four years of experience in an industry. That may be of greater practical significance than choosing the age of 21 or even 23.

Mr. King: I hear what my hon. Friend says, and I respect his close knowledge of one of the industries concerned in this area. It is, of course, important for the House to keep in mind that what we are talking about here is simply the minimum rate. It is open to industries to make alternative arrangements within that framework. It is the basic flaw in the situation with which we are concerned.

Ms. Clare Short: Is the Minister aware that we on the Labour Benches are nauseated by Tory Members with two or three jobs, earning £25,000 a year plus, talking about cutting the pay of young people who earn £35 a week and adult workers who earn between £63 and £75, many of them working for supplementary benefit rates? The Minister is not entirely honest with the House. His party has for a long time been determined to cut the wages of young workers. The Government therefore introduced a scheme called the young workers scheme, whereby they subsidised employers at the rate of £15 per week to cut young people's wages. The scheme failed completely, and is about to be abolished. A report of the Select Committee on Public Accounts found that 77 per cent. of the subsidised jobs would have existed anyway, and the vast bulk of the other jobs were jobs taken from adults. The Minister knows that cutting youth wages will not create more jobs.

The House should also note that, although the brunt of the attack is on young people, there is also an attack on low-paid adult workers. That means mostly women and black workers. The provisions to pay only for a single hourly rate and one rate of overtime result in no protection for holidays, no protection for piece-rate workers and no minimum rate, so that a worker can be sent home any day of the week if there is not enough work. The attack is upon all the protections of some of the poorest and most vulnerable in society. The Government are inspired by a future in which Britain will compete with some of the cheapest lowest paying sweatshops of the world. The Opposition believe in a high-wage, high-skill, high-investment economy. We reject this statement, on the grounds of social justice and economic efficiency.

Mr. King: The hon. Lady says that she believes in all those things. A better recipe than her approach for destroying more jobs more quickly it is difficult to imagine. How can she make these accusations and allegations when she knows perfectly well that I have already referred to the relationship with Germany? Why is it that in Germany it is not thought unacceptable to have sensible and economic levels for young people? That economy is not seen as a low-wage, low-tech, low-skill economy; it is seen as a sensible way to get young people in with a better chance of training and a better chance of a job. That is what we are embarked upon. The distortions and allegations which she makes have no part in our programme.

Later—

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of the statement made by the Secretary of State for Employment, the Opposition shadow employment spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), raised a point of order with you about the statement being made in the House before being given prominence elsewhere. Is it not extraordinary that, after raising that

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point of order, the hon. Gentleman did not have the courtesy to listen to the remainder of my right hon. Friend's statement?

Mr. Speaker: That is patently not a matter for me.

Civil Servants (Assistance to Members)

4.59 pm

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the course of the debate on the Welsh rate support grant last evening, my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) raised with Mr. Deputy Speaker the fact that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) was seen to be obtaining information from the civil servants box at the back of the Chamber, although that hon. Gentleman is neither a Minister nor a Parliamentary Private Secretary.

At that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker ruled, quite properly, that it was not a matter for his concern because the people in the officials' box were outside the Chamber. We accepted his ruling, although it was clear that an attempt had been made by the hon. Member concerned to seek privileges over other hon. Members. May we have your guidance, Mr. Speaker, as to the propriety of the hon. Gentleman's action?

Mr. Speaker: I am aware of the incident that was raised with Mr. Deputy Speaker last night, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) for giving me notice of his intention to raise it today, because that has enabled me to look into it with great care. Departmental officials are admitted to the box behind the Chair so as to be available to Ministers.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): It was I who raised the point of order last night, when Mr. Deputy Speaker informed me that there had been no infringement of the rules of the House. It was obvious that civil servants in the box were giving documents to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best).

I understand that that hon. Member was informed that this point of order would be raised, and I appreciate that his absence may mean that he is engaged elsewhere. The fact that he has been informed means that my hon. Friends and I are not raising the matter without his knowledge.

When I approached the officials' box—as I told Mr. Deputy Speaker that I would — to ask for some information that I wanted regarding the situation in the Ogmore constituency and in Mid-Glamorgan, I was handed a copy of the supplementary rate support grant report which I already had, and the officials would not furnish me with any other information. They told me that they were available to give information to hon. Members other than Government Back-Benchers. If that information is correct and we can all approach the box for information, I need not have raised the point of order in the way I did last night, and I would not be raising the issue again today. However, I take it that the ruling is that the officials in the box are available only to advise Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: I have nothing to add to what I have said. It is a question for Ministers and not for the Chair.

Social Security

5.3 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher: (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you are no doubt aware, authoritative information has been made public today, based on leaked documents, giving the numbers of gainers and losers under the social security Green Paper and the amounts of their gains and losses, largely losses. It shows that the number of losers is in excess of 8 million, including 600,000 of the poorest on supplementary benefit, and that their total losses are about £1 billion.

Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have repeatedly said that the information is not available now, before the April 1987 uprating. These documents, which have been seen and copied, reveal that Ministers have repeatedly misled the House.

Will you, Mr. Speaker, use your good offices to ensure that a statement is made at the earliest opportunity by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, so that hon. Members in all parts of the House may have an opportunity to question him on essential information the existence of which he cannot deny and which should have been made available at the outset, when he made his original statement on 3 June?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is raising matters which are for Ministers and not for the Chair. It is not for me to call Ministers to make statements. That is a matter for the usual channels.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was not asking you to force Ministers to make statements. He was pointing out that until now the House has been misled by being told by, among others, the Prime Minister that the information was not available. He was——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Nor is that a matter for me. It is for the Government.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister and other Ministers have consistently denied the existence of documents relating to the cost of the social security reviews. Proof has now emerged that such documents exist. Is it not incumbent on the Government to present those documents to the House in the normal way in the form of a statement?

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for them, not for me.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have a requirement in the House that no hon. Member is allowed to accuse another hon. Member of lying, and it is proper that we should have that arrangement. However, it poses problems for hon. Members who wish to comply with that reasonable proposition when there is a clear case, as in this instance, the occupants of the Government Front Bench, including the Prime Minister, have been less than honest with the House of Commons. How are we to pursue these matters when it is clear that we cannot make the accusation, yet the accusation would be absolutely valid?

Mr. Speaker: There are plenty of opportunities at Question Time and at Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Alan Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) has touched on an important point. You say that there are plenty of opportunities when hon. Members can raise issues such as this, Mr. Speaker, but we shall go into recess in a week's time and will not return until the end of October. Apparently the information is available. The Government have refused to present it to the House and have actually denied its existence. May we have an assurance from the Leader of the House that a statement will be made before we rise for the summer recess?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): No assurance can be given, but I suggest that we might look at the matter through the usual channels.

Racial Harassment

5.7 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to create an offence of racial harassment; to place a duty on a landlord to seek eviction of a tenant who is convicted of such offence if it is committed against another tenant of that landlord; to provide for the right of appeal against eviction and against proposals for rehousing; to place a duty on landlords and local authorities to provide information on the rights and duties in relation to racial harassment; to make provision for investigation of complaints and for a code of practice; and to make provision for compensation of victims.

This important legislative step is designed to tackle the problem of racial attacks in and around people's homes. The need for such legislation is highlighted by the tragic deaths in Ilford last Saturday, when Mrs. Shamira Kassam, who was eight months pregnant, and her three small children died in an arson attack on her home. The evidence strongly points to racial motivation. Petrol was poured through the letter box——

Mr. Nell Thorne (Ilford, South) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Cohen: Petrol was poured through the letter box three weeks earlier; there was an attack on the same property three years previously, when it was occupied by a different Asian family; and across the road, done by a Fascist organisation, was obnoxious, racist graffiti. Under my Bill, the police would have been under a statutory duty to investigate the previous arson attacks and the incident of the graffiti as racially motivated crimes.

These horrendous and needless murders, to society's shame, cannot be treated as an isolated incident. There has been a steady increase in the number and intensity of incidents of racial harassment. Sir Kenneth Newman, in his June report about the situation in London, pointed out that the number of reported cases of racist attacks went up by over 18 per cent. in 1984, whereas the crime rate generally went up by 9 per cent. We know, moreover, that many cases are not reported to the police, either for lack of confidence in the police or for fear of reprisals.

Most of the victims are Asian of Afro-Caribbean. The official Home Office report of 1981 found that the incidence of racial victimisation of Asians was 50 times higher than for white people, and for Afro-Caribbeans it was 36 times higher. The Policy Studies Institute's report, "Black and White Britain, 1984", considered that the Home Office may have underestimated the incidence of racial attacks by as much as 10 times.

Police perception of and reaction to these attacks is mixed. There is an inconsistency in their recognition of the racial motivation for such crimes and in the speed and type of their response to them. For example, they often exhibit scepticism and even hostility to the victims. They arrive late at the scene of the crime and end up simply advising victims to pursue private prosecutions.

However, there is a slow realisation of the extent of the problem. Mr. Robert Bunyard, chief constable of Essex, is quoted in *The Times* on 7 June 1985 as saying:

"ethnic minorities live in dread."

The police, media and politicians may have been wrong to dismiss such problems and people's fears as trivial when they are not. Sir Kenneth Newman has formally stated that racial attacks will be one of his prime priority targets for 1985. He has said:

"Reducing the numbers will not be easily achieved, nor will it be won by the efforts of the police alone."

That, by implication, advocates tighter law and the need for clearer duties on the police in these cases. My Bill will provide just that.

However, the Bill also imposes duties upon local authorities, as it is also, in part, a housing Bill. There is a tentative policy to deal with the perpetrators of racial harassment in a few local authorities—Newham and the GLC should be praised—but it is a piecemeal and uncoordinated approach in the absence of effective legislative backing. There is a poor record of co-ordination between local authorities and the police in dealing with cases of racial harassment. That has resulted in a hotchpotch of responses, instead of clear guidelines embodied in statutory responsibilities.

Specifically, my Bill will put on the statute book for the first time the crime of racial harassment — a racially motivated crime by a member of one racial or ethnic group against a member of a different racial or ethnic group. Racial harassment denies one the right to peace and comfort in one's home and reduces the quality of life. It can mean that the person affected fears for his safety.

The Bill includes a schedule that delineates such acts. They include unprovoked assault — including actual bodily harm and grievous bodily harm — damage to property—including breaking windows, doors or fences — the writing of racial slogans or graffiti, arson or attempted arson or damage to a building used by a racial or ethnic group, including places of worship and cemeteries.

The Bill also lays down police procedures for the conduct of investigations, the maintenance of records and the publishing of findings. It lays duties on all landlords and local authorities to inform their tenants and ratepayers of the offence and its consequences. Connivance or neglect by an officer of a body corporate, which can be the police, a local authority or a company landlord, in dealing with a case of racial harassment is also an offence. An injunction can be sought to stop any further acts of harassment occurring, and stiff fines and/or imprisonment are introduced upon conviction.

In severe cases, the Bill provides grounds for the eviction of perpetrators. They include the possibility of a compulsory purchase order being instituted against a convicted racist owner-occupier, subject to the acceptance of the Secretary of State. A convicted racist tenant who is subject to eviction cannot subsequently be rehoused in accommodation of a superior standard.

Consideration of the provisions of the Bill answers the criticisms of those who casually suggest that no new laws are needed. I was disappointed by the response of the Prime Minister yesterday to my question. The right hon. Lady expressed personal sympathy about the Ilford murders, but she was not prepared to make any effort to bring in legislation to combat this increasing form of violence.

Despite the Government's law and order stance, they want to leave the law out of their response to crimes of a specific racial nature. On the other hand, legislation against racial harassment is supported by the Labour party because it protects and defends our democracy. We cannot assume that a peaceful democracy exits in all sections of our community while many ethnic minority citizens live in fear and in a state of siege in their own homes.

We do not want to encourage vigilantes, but neither should we turn a blind eye when there is evidence of individual or organised Fascism perpetrated against ethnic minorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who is shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, has said:

"Victims suffer twice; they are attacked and then have to move home."

My hon. Friend is a sponsor of my Bill, and he has pledged that the next Labour Government will strengthen the law and help the victims of racial harassment. I am proud to have pioneered the way for future legislation against racial harassment.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Dr. John Cunningham, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mrs. Margaret Beckett, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Ernie Roberts, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, and Mr. Greville Janner.

RACIAL HARASSMENT

Mr. Harry Cohen accordingly presented a Bill to create an offence of racial harassment; to place a duty on a landlord to seek eviction of a tenant who is convicted of such offence if it is committed against another tenant of that landlord; to provide for the right of appeal against eviction and against proposals for rehousing; to place a duty on landlords and local authorities to provide information on the rights and duties in relation to racial harassment; to make provision for investigation of complaints and for a code of practice; and to make provision for compensation of victims: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 October and to be printed. [Bill 195.]

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When you asked for the names of those who supported the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and some of his colleagues near him saying that they were opposed to the Bill. Perhaps they may wish to clarify this, so that their view is clearly on record.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not say "No", nor did I hear any of my hon. Friends say "No".

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) did say "No". Not only that, but he was rude and objectionable the whole time that my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was speaking. What is more, he conducts himself permanently as a proper lout.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We have gone far enough on this. I did not hear anyone challenge the declaration that I made on the vote on the Bill.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Crawley says that he did not say "No" when Labour Members clearly heard him do so. Is it not incumbent on the hon. Gentleman to come clean about whether he supports or opposes the Bill to outlaw racial harassment?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are all honourable Members. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) has said that he did not make the remark that was attributed to him, and the House should accept that, in accordance with its usual practice.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Member sitting next to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) for the whole time that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was speaking, I can assure the House that my hon. Friend did not shout "No" and did not dissent in any way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already told the House that I accept the word of the hon. Member for Crawley, and I am sure that the House does.

Orders of the Day

Administration of Justice Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 5

PREPARATION OF PAPERS FOR PROBATE ETC. BY UNQUALIFIED PERSONS

'For section 23 of the Solicitors Act 1974 there shall be substituted—

"(1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3), any unqualified person who, directly or indirectly, draws or prepares any paperson which to found or oppose—

(a) a grant of probate, or

(b) a grant of letters of administration,

shall, unless he proves that the act was not done for or in expectation of any fee, gain or reward, be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding the first level on the standard scale.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a barrister or duly certified notary public.

(3) Subsection (1) also does not apply to any act done by a person at the direction and under the supervision of another person if—

(a) that other person was at the time his employer, a partner of his employer or a fellow employee; and

(b) the act could have been done by that other person for or in expectation of any fee, gain or reward without committing an offence under this section.".'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.18 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 7—*Probate work by qualified persons*—

'(1) Section 23 of the Solicitors Act 1974 (restriction on persons acting in probate matters when not qualified to act as a solicitor) shall be amended as follows.

(2) After subsection (2) there shall be inserted—

"(3) Subsection (1) also does not apply to any act done by a person who holds such qualifications as may be specified by the Lord Chancellor in an order made by statutory instrument under this section;

(4) An order made by statutory instrument under this section may be varied or revoked by a subsequent order and any such instrument shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.".'.

Government amendments Nos. 5, 6 and 27.

The Attorney-General: In Committee an amendment was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to clarify the position of unqualified staff who undertake probate work at the direction and under the supervision of a solicitor. I undertook to table a Government amendment on Report to deal with the matter.

The new clause puts beyond doubt the legality of unqualified staff preparing probate papers in those circumstances. As the concept of supervision is not apt for the taking of instruction, we have decided to abolish the statutory restriction in this respect so as to enable solicitors' employees to continue to take instruction in probate matters without the risk of committing an offence.

We have also taken the opportunity to modernise and improve the existing drafting of section 23 of the Solicitors Act 1974.

The other amendments provide for appropriate transitional arrangements, and consequential amendments to clause 8, which relates to incorporated practices.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

JUDICIAL REVIEW

'If leave for an application to the High Court for judicial review is refused, the court shall state its reasons.'.—*[Sir B. Rhys Williams.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

My right hon. Friends and I have discussed new clause 1, and they know that I am interested in the subject for personal reasons. They also know that a significant body of well-informed people who observe the procedures of our courts believe that a change in the practice of the courts such as I am suggesting is highly desirable and ought immediately to come into effect.

Private citizens have come increasingly to rely on the judicial review procedure to obtain justice. The application goes before a single judge, who assesses the merits of the case and decides whether the applicant is to be entitled to take his or her complaint to the High Court.

Although not universal, I understand that it is normal for the single judge to make a ruling without stating reasons in court or in writing. That is wrong and should be changed immediately. In the event of the applicant being refused leave to take a case further, he and his legal advisers will have to make a difficult decision. For a private citizen, there is possibly the risk of futile but substantial expense if he decides to take his case further. There might be long delays before the outcome of the case is known and, during that time, he might lose chances to choose another solution which is available to him at once, but which might not be available if, in due course, his case comes to court.

If the applicant is advised to take the issue up for judicial review and his case is rejected out of hand by a single judge, that is likely to shake his confidence in his legal advisers. He might wonder whether they have given him bad advice.

A sense of resentment can be aroused if somebody who thinks that he has a fair case which ought to be heard is refused a hearing and no explanation is given. That is a type of resentment which British citizens ought never to feel about the operation of our courts. There ought never to be a suspicion that their case has not been considered adequately or that some factor which they do not understand, and which they could have overcome, has stood in their way when seeking justice. Justice should never be frustrated arbitrarily.

I have not been through all the relevant cases to see how many times the single judge has refused an applicant who has afterwards been able to establish that he has a serious case to be heard, though I am sure that such evidence could be adduced. But my right hon. Friends should be willing to accept my proposed change of procedure irrespective of whether I can support my argument with such evidence.

If the judge is clear about his decision, he can express it without being exposed to a serious extra burden. I am not asking that he should make a substantial written explanation, but he must state his reasons. If the judge is not perfectly clear and does not wish to be embarrassed by having to explain himself, there could be genuine doubt about whether justice has been done. That could not be right.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will assure me that, if he does not like a new clause of one and a half lines appearing in the Administration of Justice Bill, the same effect will be achieved by another and, if he wishes, more appropriate route. I do not know how the Lord Chancellor would influence the practice of the single judge in the High Court, but, if the House is not to divide on the new clause, we are entitled to look to my right hon. and learned Friend to give a specific undertaking that the change required by my new clause will be made by another means.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has raised a serious and important issue. The use of applications for judicial review has greatly increased recently, especially since the changes in the procedure from the old prerogative writs to the use of what we now call the judicial review procedure under order 53 of the Rules of the Supreme Court. Judges at all levels have pushed back the borders of judicial review. They are increasingly prepared to consider cases where Government Departments, local authorities and other bodies exercising quasi-judicial functions have not operated a fair procedure and have not acted properly.

Most applications for judicial review are made by aggrieved private citizens—many of them of limited means—who feel that important principles that affect their interests, and perhaps those of many others, have been attacked by the action of Government Departments or other bodies. I suspect that since applications for judicial review have become fashionable as a means of seeking judicial remedy, there have been many frivolous and unmeritorious applications. For those reasons, among others, the procedures relating to judicial review have been altered and sophisticated to enable applications with merit to be heard rather more quickly than before—there are still considerable and unacceptable delays, however—and applications with no merit to be disposed of rapidly and relatively informally.

Judges have never been afraid, when called upon to do so, to give their reasons, if necessary stating that an application before the court, whatever the jurisdiction under consideration, lacks merit or is even frivolous, vexatious or an abuse of the court's process. A long-standing tradition, inherent in the court through the operation of the common law, is the power to declare openly that a matter before the court falls within the categories of frivolous, vexatious and an abuse of the court's process. There is no question, therefore, of judges being put in an unpalatable position through having to give reasons in the situation postulated by the hon. Member for Kensington.

Most important in this context is the fact that at the moment there is no Bill of Rights to deal with contemporary issues that affect daily life in this country. I believe that there ought to be a Bill of Rights. Unfortunately, neither the Government nor the Labour party has been prepared hitherto to accept the need to go even to the extent of incorporating the European convention on human rights into our domestic law. Consequently, all that many citizens can do, in an effort to enforce what they believe, rightly or wrongly, to be their rights, is to make an application for a judicial review. The jurisdiction of the courts in England and Wales is both lacking and inadequate in that respect.

One small way to ensure that such manifest feelings of injustice as can occur, did not arise would be to ensure that if an application is thrown out by the court, the applicant at least knows why. I hope that the Attorney-General will say that he accepts the principle that in such cases reasons should be given. If he is not prepared to accept that principle, I can assure him that the considerable pressure for fundamental changes to public law will become stronger.

5.30 pm

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) for raising this matter. I have a great deal of sympathy for it. I believe that I can give an assurance both to my hon. Friend and to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). The Government agree that reasons should always be given. If that does not happen in practice, we should be grateful if examples of difficulties could be sent either to the Lord Chancellor or to me. The Lord Chancellor will consult the judiciary and, if necessary, introduce appropriate rule changes under order 53, which has virtually created the new system of judicial review. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery described it as rolling back the frontiers. I prefer to say that it is advancing the frontiers. Whichever word one prefers, order 53 has created considerable changes which can only be in the interests of the general public. Therefore, I welcome them.

The changes are entirely the result of the rules committee changing the rules. They have not been brought about by legislation. Therefore, the changes for which my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery have asked can be made by rules of court. Primary legislation is not the right way to go about it.

Having heard my explanation, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington will withdraw his motion.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Can the Attorney-General say what time scale he has in mind for the consultations and for the introduction of these changes?

The Attorney-General: I should like to be able to answer the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), but this new clause has been examined only recently. I have been one stage removed from it. However, my consultations earlier this afternoon with the Lord Chancellor have allowed me to give this assurance.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I should like to thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General for what he has said. If the House were to divide on this new clause, the feelings of hon. Members would be quite clear. I hope that the rules committee will bear in mind the strength of feeling about this matter. Although this has been only a short debate, it

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

is nevertheless incumbent upon the Lord Chancellor, or the rules committee, to ensure that action is taken quickly and that what is contained in my new clause should be brought into effect by one means or another.

In view of the assurance that I have been given, I shall not seek to divide the House this afternoon. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 2

RESTRICTIONS ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN CONVEYANCING

'No person or body corporate shall engage in the conveyancing of any property if they have a financial interest (other than their fee for conveyancing) in that transaction or any related transaction, including, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the provision of loans for the purchase of that or of any related property or the earnings of fees or commissions from estate agency, mortgage or insurance broking; and any person in breach of the provisions of this Clause shall if he is a licensed conveyancer be guilty of an offence punishable by the Council in accordance with Schedule 4 of this Act and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding the third level on the standard scale or, in the case of a solicitor, shall be regarded as in breach of the rules as to professional conduct under section 31 of the Solicitors Act 1974'. — *[Mr. Butterfill.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I rise this afternoon to provoke, I hope, a discussion on the considerable conflicts of interest that could arise from the conveyancing provisions of the Bill. Many hon. Members who are in the Chamber today were members of the Standing Committee and they will be aware of the reservations that I expressed in Committee. I shall itemise some of the principal areas where I see conflicts arising, in the hope that I shall receive assurances from my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

The Bill proposes to take away the solicitors' monopoly on conveyancing and to permit a new class of licensed conveyancers. Those who are now engaged in all aspects of property transactions and property exchange may seek either to become licensed conveyancers or to employ licensed conveyancers. It is that aspect that gives rise to considerable concern.

It is possible that many estate agents will be sufficiently qualified by the examination that they have taken to apply to be licensed conveyancers. Others may meet those criteria or may employ licensed conveyancers. I perceive great difficulties if estate agents were to be involved in both estate agency and conveyancing. Many property transactions form part of a chain. A long transaction may involve three, four or possibly five properties. An estate agent who is selling a property at the top of the chain for £150,000 and earning a commission of £3,000 or £4,000 might also be selling a property at the bottom of the chain for £30,000 and earning a commission of only £600 or £700.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problem he is discussing has already arisen over the two solicitors' property centres which have now been opened? One solicitor with an interest in the property centre is acting for the vendor, another solicitor with an interest in the property centre is acting for the purchaser, and both have an interest in the house being sold by the property centre. Already we can see the conflict of which we are afraid arising in something which has the support of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell).

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), and I agree entirely with everything that he has said. Later in my speech, I propose to deal in detail with that aspect. An estate agent might have two commissions from property sales in a transaction. He might also be involved in conveyancing one or more of the properties in a chain of transactions. An estate agent who was due to earn many thousands of pounds from a chain of transactions, and who was also acting as a conveyancer, might be faced with a problem of title of one of the properties. There could be an irresistible temptation for him to fail to point out the problem or at least to gloss over it, in the hope that the chain would not collapse and cause him considerable financial loss. That risk should rule out the possibility of estate agents carrying out conveyancing.

If solicitors are involved in conveyancing and the sale of properties, the same conflicts of interest will arise. Solicitors are already involved in the sale of houses and the Master of the Rolls, Sir John Donaldson, says that there is nothing in the solicitors' practice rules to prevent them from carrying out what he calls "property sales work", which, apparently, has always been part of the work of a solicitor.

Sir John uses the phrase "property sales work" to differentiate the work done by solicitors from that done by estate agents. That is a spurious interpretation, and I am sure that all hon. Members agree that if a solicitor advertises that he will sell a house, in addition to doing the conveyancing, he is, by any logical definition, involved in estate agency and, therefore, should be subject to the Estate Agents Act 1979 and any other regulations applying to conveyancing.

It has been claimed that solicitors do not need to be subject to that Act because their practice rules and the Solicitors Act 1974 impose on them obligations which are much greater than those imposed by the Estate Agents Act. However, that is not so. Solicitors are not subject to the mandatory disclosure of interests of relatives, staff and relatives of staff that is imposed on estate agents under section 21 of the Estate Agents Act.

Solicitors are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Director General of Fair Trading, as are estate agents. Solicitors are not subject to the powers of entry and inspection under section 11 of the Estate Agents Act, and they do not have to give details of their remuneration and expenses before a transaction takes place, as is required under section 18 of the Act.

Perhaps most important, although estate agents are required to account to their clients for interest on deposit moneys held for those clients, solicitors are not so required and may keep for themselves any interest earned. That is an important difference.

Whatever comes out of the Bill, solicitors involved in estate agency or "property sales work" should be subject to the same rules as everybody else.

Mortgage and insurance brokers may apply to become licensed conveyancers or may employ licensed conveyancers. They have an acute interest in property transactions.

They arrange mortgages for substantial commissions and life assurance endowment policies for substantial and continuing commissions on annual premiums.

If those brokers are also involved in conveyancing, there will be a grave danger that the large commissions which they earn from their brokering work, which will be much larger than the fees earned from conveyancing, could impose an unacceptable conflict of interest on them. Like estate agents, they could be involved in chains and they could build up a bigger interest in completing the deal than in looking after the interests of their clients.

5.45 pm

Probably the greatest problem is posed by banks and building societies. If in-house conveyancers are permitted to act for both sides, all sorts of conflicts may arise for the banks and building societies. Many borrowers are required to place their building insurance with a company nominated by the bank or building society. Until recently, that insurance had to be placed with the one company nominated by the bank or building society.

When I moved my mortgage from a bank to a building society, I was required to change my insurer, although he was a reputable underwriter at Lloyd's, and I had to accept one of the society's choosing. As a result, my premium almost doubled, and a substantial commission went to the building society.

We have taken action in the House to require banks and building societies to give borrowers a choice of insurance companies. However, only three companies are nominated by banks and building societies, and those are chosen because they give the biggest commissions and not because they give borrowers the best bargain.

If we are to allow banks and building societies to do conveyancing, will an in-house conveyancer be likely to tell a borrower that he could get a better rate of interest or a better deal by going somewhere else? It would be difficult for such a conveyancer to take a noble view that was contrary to his employer's interests.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I declare an interest as an adviser to one of the major clearing banks. It may help my hon. Friend to know that the banks are not interested in going into the conveyancing business. They do not think that it is part of their business and they are not particularly interested.

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful for that assurance, but I strongly suspect that although that may apply to the clearing banks—though I doubt it, because they have gone into estate agency in other areas — I wonder whether it will apply to some of the secondary and tertiary banks and the loan sharks who inhabit this world. I have grave doubts about that.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): My hon. Friend will know that Lloyds bank owns the very large Black Horse estate agency. The bank might not wish to engage in conveyancing direct, but there is no reason why it should not do so through the estate agency.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend has anticipated something that I intended to say later, but I am grateful to him for reinforcing that point.

Many banks earn substantial commissions by requiring borrowers to take out with a company nominated by the bank expensive life assurance to cover loans. The commission earned from that sort of business is very large and is bound to create conflicts.

Even more important is the mortgage deed — the terms of the loan—and how a borrower can be protected from the one-sided approach and lack of independent advice that would arise if the bank or building society were the sole arbiter for both parties. How would an in-house conveyancer advise a borrower if that borrower were made redundant or lost his job in some other way, and could no longer meet the payments? Under what circumstances could a lender evict a borrower, and what would be the rights of the borrower's wife and children regarding their occupation of the property? A court may grant an eviction order, and the bank or building society may be given the power of sale. What then happens if the lender controls an estate agency, such as the Black Horse agency or some of the estate agency chains set up by major building societies? Will the lender be able to sell the house through his in-house estate agency, raise the money, and get yet another commission from the entire transaction? If so, on what terms?

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): That depends on which estate agent conducts the sale. How does having the advice of an independent conveyancer at the start of the procedure safeguard against all those problems arising, such as a person losing his or her job?

Mr. Butterfill: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has missed the point. All those matters are contained in the mortgage deed — the terms of the loan — and are normally negotiated between the borrower and the lender through their solicitors or other advisers. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I have been in professional practice in this field for 25 years, and I have acted in innumerable disputes between lenders and borrowers of the type that I am now describing. I have also been involved in negotiating with all sorts of institutions on the terms of their mortgage deeds. I accept that many people do not take up these points, but they should. Perhaps some of them have not been properly advised in the past. The debate may bring to people's attention the fact that they should be properly advised, and if we do no more than that we shall have achieved something for the public good.

If a borrower finds himself in financial difficulties, will he be permitted to take in lodgers to supplement his income? If he goes abroad, will he be allowed to let his house while he is away? Many mortgage deeds do not allow that, but after negotiations the lender often concedes that under certain circumstances that can be permitted. However, the concession is granted only be negotiation, and if the borrower asks. If one is not independently advised, will one ask? In the event of a dispute between the borrower and lender which may go to court, what provisions will be made for arbitration, and who will bear its cost? All such conditions are set out in the mortgage deed and need to be negotiated between two independent advisers, not imposed by one particular adviser.

Those are only a few of the problems arising with banks and building societies. We may argue that those problems will not arise with our highly respectable building societies, such as the Halifax, the Woolwich, the Abbey National and others, but they will arise with other building societies. There have been considerable problems with the Grays building society, the management of which has not been all that it should be.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Does the hon. Gentleman realise, on the basis of the *Which?* survey and our knowledge of the world, that two thirds of house buyers approach a building society first? The same survey showed that only 11 per cent. sought advice from a solicitor about their mortgage. The hon. Gentleman is telling us that solicitors are qualified to give independent financial advice, which they are not, and that people are receiving that advice now, which they are not.

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning the *Which?* survey, but it was conducted among *Which?* readers, who tend to be better informed and who think that they can decide on these matters for themselves. The problem is that the general public, especially the young and inexperienced house-buyer, cannot so decide, and do not. The hon. Gentleman should study the Marplan survey, which, contrary to the *Which?* survey, showed that second-time buyers, as opposed to first-time buyers, recognise the grave need to have independent advice. That is precisely the point. People with experience of the system realise where they needed to be independently advised. Therefore, Marplan produced the opposite result to *Which?*

Mr. Budgen: I wish to take up the point of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). The fact that only 11 per cent. of people want financial advice and that conflicts of interest may occur in only 1 per cent. of cases, is like saying that only 1 per cent. of those convicted before the courts are wrongly convicted. Are we not trying to deal with a grave injustice which may occur at the margin?

Mr. Butterfill: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the argument of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is bogus? The hon. Gentleman referred to the percentage of people who approach building societies first, but is not the crucial point the fact that they then see a solicitor before they are committed to taking out the loan with the building society?

Mr. Butterfill: I agree with my hon. Friend. Most people, before they think about entering into a transaction, go to a bank or a building society to see whether they can borrow the money. After establishing that and finding the property, they go to their solicitor.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I wish to make the same point. Does my hon. Friend agree that, after going to a bank or a building society people have the benefit of independent advice from a solicitor before signing on the dotted line?

Mr. Butterfill: Again, I agree with my hon. Friend. We may argue that conflicts will not arise with the highly respectable banks which we know and love, such as Barclays, Lloyds and the National Westminster, or even with financiers of undoubted probity, such as Julian Hodge and Bernie Cornfeld. However, we are also dealing with the denizens of the nether regions of the financial market — the loan sharks and tertiary banks, which impose conditions which many hon. Members would not even believe. We are legislating for those areas, in addition to the household names, whose conduct is not entirely beyond reproach.

We are told that the Government will deal with all these problems by regulation; that the regulations, which are to be published, but which, regrettably, we have not yet seen, will overcome all the difficulties which may or could arise. I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for showing me a copy of a letter which the Lord Chancellor sent to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), and one which the Prime Minister sent to the hon. Gentleman, confirming that the Government are resolute in their view that banks and building societies should not be allowed to act for both sides in the same transaction because of the problems that have arisen. I am reassured by my right hon. and learned Friend on that issue at least.

I am less reassured on the prospective regulations, which cannot and will not apply to solicitors who are involved in estate agency. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to reassure me, that he will explain how he proposes to deal with the anomaly that may well arise if solicitors are permitted to continue to practice both conveyancing and estate agency, and that the Government will deal with all the problems that I have described. If they legislate for any extension of a conflict of interest which they may regard as being in the public interest—otherwise, it would be a restriction on trade—I hope that a warning will be issued similar to that which appears on cigarette packets. There should be a Government warning which states, "Entering into this transaction without taking independent advice could seriously damage your financial health".

6 pm

I see no difficulty in providing one-stop shopping, which is so dear to the heart of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby and others. It can be provided by grouping businesses together under one roof. Why not have in one building a solicitor, an estate agent, a mortgage broker and even a building society? Perhaps they could all agree to charge a composite fee which would be lower than the sum of the parts. There could be agreed divisions of the fee of individual responsibility for those with whom they deal. If there is no individual responsibility, there will be temptations and conflicts of the sort that I have described.

For example, if a building society conveyancer, in acting for both sides, were to behave inappropriately or negligently, that would give rise to an action for negligence on the part of his client. If he were an independent solicitor, how could the borrower sue? How could he sue the building society's own solicitor, when that solicitor or conveyancer could say, "I was acting for my principal client, my employer. I have no duty to you."? Where would the remedy be for the borrower in those circumstances?

I hope that the Government will deal with all these matters when they come to address the regulations. I hope also that my right hon. and learned Friend will give an assurance that the regulations, when they are available, will be brought before the House for an affirmative resolution. The House must have the right to scrutinise. The matter cannot be left to the Lord Chancellor's discretion.

If we do not get the protection for which I and many others are looking—we shall not know until we are able to study the regulations—I hope that the professions that are involved in property transactions will take the initiative themselves. I trust that the professions will come forward with a self-denying ordinance whereby they will say to their members — I include the Law Society, the new

Council for Licensed Conveyancers, which we are about to establish, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the National Association of Estate Agents and all the other bodies involved—"None of you should be involved in conveyancing if you have any other fee or commission arising out of the property transaction." Perhaps we can persuade the professions to produce a self-denying ordinance, instead of pursuing their own self-enrichment, and to act in the public interest for the protection of the public.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): The new clause should be opposed and defeated. The presence of a profusion of lawyers in the Chamber makes me certain that we are hearing the last gasp of the old restrictive practices system. The lawyers are making a last-ditch attempt on behalf of their entrenched professions to retain the old system by opposing radical and structural change.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Weetch: No. I shall not give way at this stage.

Mr. Butterfill: I wish to intervene on the very point that the hon. Gentleman is making.

Mr. Weetch: I shall not give way at this stage.

The professions are attempting to oppose changes in conveyancing. They wish to keep conveyancing in the dark ages, where it has been for 150 years, to the disadvantage of the consumer.

When we talk about an issue in the House we are frequently, in reality, talking about something else. In this instance we are not really talking about conflicts of interest or anything similar. It is convenient for lawyers to advance the conflict of interest argument and to avoid other issues. It is a bogus argument and that can be said for much of the other stuff that we hear from the legal profession.

The reality is that we are discussing economic matters. Who is to gain the major slice of the lucrative conveyancing market that arises from a society that is becoming more than ever a property-owning democracy? The Building Societies Association calculates that by the end of the century over 70 per cent. of the population will be owner-occupiers. These people will be more mobile and, therefore, the conveyancing market will be worth thousands of millions of pounds. It is not surprising that the legal profession is defending restrictive practices to the last ditch. It clearly considers it crucial that it should have the largest slice of the action. The argument over the new clause sets the scene.

It is important to bear in mind the main objective of the conveyancing exercise. Our aim is to give the consumer as many options as possible. If someone wishes to buy a house, to buy and sell, to trade up or to buy for the first time, I want him to have the maximum number of options. If a firm of estate agents has an in-house department of licensed conveyancers, I do not see why the consumer should be prevented from using the agency. I should like him to have the option of a licensed conveyancer working for someone else or on his own account. The consumer should have access to a solicitor if that is what he wants. He should have access to the conveyancing department of a major bank if that is his wish. In other words, he should have all the options before him.

The choice should extend beyond outlet to structure. The consumer should have the choice of a small firm, a medium-sized firm with corporate status or a large-scale approach. He should be able to choose between a number of individual specialists working on their own and an in-house conveyancing service. The pattern of consumer demand to emerge will be for the market place to decide. Perhaps the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) will take that comment in the spirit in which it was intended. The structure should emerge according to the shape of supply and demand in the market place. I hope that that point goes home to the right hon. Gentleman.

Although I initially had some reservations about conveyancing with respect to building societies—I have criticised the building societies in the House—I now believe, on balance, that the proposition should be supported. The Bill is a poor attempt to bring about more competition. In principle, it has widened the category of persons who can practise conveyancing but has loaded it down with such a lot of paraphernalia that the widening will not be great. In return, the monopoly has been tightened but extended to the contract for sale — previously untouched by the monopoly under section 22 of the Solicitors Act 1974. In a fundamental sense the "monopoly" is more vicious and tightly functional than it has been for 150 years. If this is an exercise in more competition, it is a straightforward confidence trick. If building societies and banks are allowed to carry out conveyancing which is regulated properly by appropriate codes of practice, the scope of consumer choice will be widened.

The burden of one argument is that there is a great potential for abuse if building societies and banks perform the conveyancing on a property. That possibility exists, but it does not logically follow that abuse is inevitable. It is possible to legislate against abuse. If it is argued that we cannot choose an option because of potential abuse, we shall never move forward. The right action is to take the advantages from a line of options, legislate against the abuses and ensure that they do not occur.

Mr. Butterfill: Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on a recent case involving a Lincolnshire solicitor whose wife runs an estate agency from adjoining premises? The Law Society has ruled that there is no conflict because the two businesses are in no way related.

Mr. Weetch: I shall not comment on that case. An intervention in which an hon. Member puts a case to another hon. Member without giving supporting detail is not even a good beginning for consideration. If the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) will send me all the supporting correspondence, I shall consider the matter. At this stage I cannot give a snap judgment on my feet about what is probably a complicated matter. I think that that is the consensus of the House. If that is the type of legal advice that comes forward in a snap judgment, I hope that it is the advice that would be used when I am being prosecuted and not when I am being defended.

Building societies can offer substantial structural advantages in conveyancing. As large organisations, they can offer certain industrial-type advantages. Make no mistake—conveyancing is organised in the same way as the putting-out system was organised in the 18th century, and it has not altered since. It is still a matter of small workshops, which the managerial and technical revolutions have passed by. Conveyancing has been impeded by the monopoly that has been enshrined in legislation.

[Mr. Weetch]

As large organisations, building societies can offer certain advantages. A large in-house department in, say, the Halifax building society can offer a large throughput of conveyancing transactions which can be backed by substantial financial resources and streamlined procedures. That is a natural extension of the building societies' activities, and they have a critical interest in the title. We are talking about a large throughput of work at low unit cost.

6.15 pm

Mr. Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that, in his Shangri-la of building societies with large conveyancing departments, the scrutiny of a conveyancing transaction for a client living in Llanidloes by the Halifax building society some 200 miles away in Yorkshire would be as good as the scrutiny given by a Llanidloes solicitor who has no interest in the transaction other than the fee that he will obtain for the conveyancing?

Mr. Weetch: It may, or it may not be as good. These days when conveyancing transactions take place the last thing that a solicitor does is look at a property. I would go one stage further and say that I have seen bigger mistakes in my constituency by local solicitors than by solicitors who operate from London. Whether one lives in a particular locality or has a professional business in that locality frequently has nothing to do with it.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): One of my hon. Friend's assumptions concerns falling unit costs. Is it not true that building societies might push up unit costs? They might say, "The loan is here for you if you use our lawyer, although our lawyer happens to be more expensive than one outside the building society."

Mr. Weetch: I was going to bring up that point later in my speech when dealing with the shortcomings that we should guard against in allowing building societies to engage in conveyancing. I believe that the unit costs of the building societies will be lower because they will operate under economies of larger scale. If they do not, as long as the consumer has the option to go elsewhere for his conveyancing, he can decide what to accept and what to avoid. There should be a code of practice in which abuses and potential abuses are outlawed.

The real point is not about conflicts of interest. The Law Society has only relatively recently stipulated that a solicitor cannot act for the buyer and seller at the same time. Until a few years ago it was the usual practice for a solicitor to act for the buyer, the seller and the building society. There are a good many cases in which that still happens. I have a constituency case where the solicitor is acting for the seller, the buyer and the building society. I wrote to the Law Society asking this simple question: is this professionally right? Unfortunately, the answer went to my constituency office in Ipswich. I said to my secretary, "Read the letter for me and simply tell me 'yes' or 'no' whether it is right for a solicitor to act for the buyer and the seller." She said, "The answer appears to be a little evasive." I thought to myself, "I bet it is." This is not the first time I have come across this sort of thing. For all the arguments about conflicts of interest and who should do what in conveyancing, most solicitors do not care if Joe Soap does the conveyancing, provided they collect the profit from him.

We are not talking about ethics; we are talking about economics. Many people believe that large building societies will drive out small firms, that small solicitors' offices will be unable to compete with large building societies with in-house departments. They have genuine fears that some building societies might use conveyancing as a loss leader. Small firms would therefore tend to go out of business.

If we applied that principle elsewhere and prevented large firms emerging we should still be in the world of the small workshop and the small grocery shop. If the conveyancing market demands that large firms emerge, they will emerge. If that is the structure that the consumer and the market place want, that is what will happen. Passing this new clause will not stop it because it will be an organic function.

Over the years, building societies have indulged in a multiplicity of restrictive practices. They have restricted insurance cover opportunity and taken the commission. Until relatively recently, they never allowed the purchaser to have sight of the valuation survey. Building societies have been the centrepiece of the conveyancing monopoly. They have also organised a cartel on interest rates. No one was ever protected from those abuses by solicitors or any of the chartered surveyors because the major professions connived with the building societies in some of those abuses.

Solicitors have always been able to place money in building societies, sometimes with and sometimes without the consent of their clients, in return for mortgage queue jumping, and at times of scarcity of funds, in return for building societies underpinning their monopoly and for favourable conditions for doing the mortgage work. Solicitors have often connived with the building societies in providing life policies which did not suit the consumer.

If the legal profession criticises building societies for collecting commission, it is the pot calling the kettle black, because I know of no group of people which collects commission faster from a variety of directions than do practising solicitors. Much of that argument is therefore bogus.

We are approaching the problem in the wrong way. Building societies can do the job, provided the potential for abuse is eliminated. We should eliminate the abuse by statutory codes of practice, not eliminate the option.

A number of things must be done. The consumer must be given the freedom to go elsewhere. Any practice which involves pressure to take conveyancing services because a loan is being provided should be outlawed. Any contract which loads the conveyancing charge on to the mortgage, at many times the original price, should be forbidden. Loss leading should be outlawed when it is aimed at eliminating competitors.

The Office of Fair Trading supports the idea of building societies doing conveyancing. I am confident that it can protect the consumer in all these matters. With the proper safeguards, the consumer should be given the option of having his conveyancing done by a building society, and I believe that it is not for the House to stop him.

Mr. Alex Carlile: We have heard from the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) a speech of almost religious fervour, in which he indulged in all the cheap rhetoric of lawyer bashing. I confess with some pride to being a lawyer, but I should tell the House, before the hon. Gentleman berates me for my self-interest, that I have

rarely seen a conveyance, apart from those which from time to time I have signed to accommodate myself and my family, I have never passed an examination in conveyancing, or tried to, I have never read a book on conveyancing, and I have little interest in conveyancing as a legal subject.

I fear that one word used repeatedly by the hon. Gentleman has revealed the weakness of his argument—the word "consumer". The hon. Gentleman, and some of those who are of like mind on this issue, seem to envisage a world in which an attractive young couple will be out doing their shopping on a Saturday morning and will suddenly turn to each other and say, "Let's go and buy a house." They pop into the estate agent's and pick out a house. Then, rather as if buying a can of beans, they pop into the building society and everything is arranged for them by the smiling manager, and all goes through smoothly and without a hitch. That is seen as the world of the consumer.

Unfortunately, we do not consume our houses as we consume a can of beans. We must live in our houses. We must live, not just with their attractions, but with their imperfections. The greatest imperfection that there can ever be in a house is a defect in the owner's title. I speak in favour of the new clause because I believe that everything possible must be done to ensure that the householder's title is protected and assured to the greatest possible extent. There is no protection for purchasers of houses comparable to that provided under the Sale of Goods Act 1979. It is not possible for a householder, who has purchased his house in circumstances which go wrong, to go to the local trading standards department and have the building society — if it be a building society — prosecuted for defective conveyancing under the Trade Descriptions Acts.

The purchase of a house is usually the most serious, expensive, enduring and, in some cases, dramatic commitment that many people make, apart perhaps from the commitment to marriage. We should consider house purchase within that context of its importance in people's lives. It is expensive to buy a house, whether one buys it in the ritzy arbours of the south-east or on the pleasant mountains of Wales. A great deal of money must be found by the person who wishes to buy a house. It is a fact—it may be uncomfortable for those who oppose the new clause—that building society A may offer interest rates slightly lower than those offered by building society B, and the interest rates of building society C may be slightly higher than both. It is not simply a matter of a quarter or a half per cent., because it is likely that the person buying the house will be committing himself or herself for about 25 years, and a quarter per cent. means a great deal of money over those 25 years. The commitment may involve not just the mortgage repayments, but the payment of insurance premiums.

6.30 pm

The hon. Member for Ipswich suggested that, in his perfect world of fair and regulated building society conveyancing, there would be some kind of free choice as to which building society one would go to. More important, he said that there would be a free choice, if one went to a building society, of deciding not to use that society for one's conveyancing. He said that one could still go to the solicitor down the road for the conveyancing.

It is a custom of the hon. Member for Ipswich to listen to only one side of the argument on these issues, and he is not listening now. If he can bring himself to have the courtesy to listen, I say to him that we are in a mortgage glut at present, and it may be that people can walk out of a building society saying, "I am going to the solicitor down the road for my conveyancing," but if there were a mortgage famine, as there has often been in the past, is the hon. Gentleman really saying that one could enforce a provision whereby the building society would have to say to the prospective purchaser, "We are awfully sorry to lose your conveyancing, but of course we will give you the mortgage in any event."? One would have no such luck. A building society would not provide the mortgage for people who did not have the society doing the conveyancing.

If the hon. Member for Ipswich honestly thinks that building societies will not use conveyancers to ensure that they get the mortgage business on the terms that they want, it shows that he has not examined the issues properly and does not understand the meaning of the phrase "conflict of interest".

Mr. Favell: Is that not what happens now in many states of the United States of America? If one goes to a loan company and does not use its legal services, one simply does not get the loan. The use of the legal services of the loan company is very expensive, and people in many parts of America are trying to get out of the clutches of a loan company for that reason.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) for drawing attention to the American experience. His point reinforces my argument.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that his fears are reinforced by the behaviour of building societies with regard to insurance for the property?

Mr. Carlile: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman, who has referred to his own experience. I have had similar personal experience on two occasions. On one occasion I had to insist upon using the insurance company in which I had confidence and from which I expected to get satisfaction.

There are, of course, mutual life offices, which do not pay commission to anybody. Many of us have taken out our own insurance policies of all types with those mutual life offices. One can hardly imagine the building societies giving anything but discouragement to purchasers of homes who wish to go to those mutual life offices, which do such a good job—and have for hundreds of years—in the insurance market.

The hon. Member for Ipswich says—and I heard the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) muttering something to the same effect from a sedentary position—that solicitors are qualified to give financial advice. One of the basic qualifications which a solicitor must have is some financial understanding. I would be the first to question whether the present training of solicitors and barristers is either adequate or covers the fields that it should. Nevertheless, solicitors, in order to practise in conveyancing, are trained and must have a basic understanding of the transactions. In addition, they learn a great deal through their experience.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Ipswich will be aware that, under the solicitors accounts rules, a person

[Mr. Carlile]

cannot come straight out of law school and set up in practice as a solicitor. There has first to be supervision by a senior qualified solicitor for a period of years.

Mr. Greg Knight: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that often the solicitor will get the client to question the transaction? The solicitor will say to the client, "Are you sure you want to go ahead with this? Are you sure you want to take out a loan of this size?"

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is correct, and I shall be coming to that point, but before doing so may I postulate a rhetorical question? How often do we hear of building society managers saying, "Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Thank you for your interest, but the house is pre-1919, so you will be better off down the road at another building society which gives greater percentage loans or loans at a lower rate for such properties."? How many times can we expect to hear building society managers saying — *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Great Grimsby wish to intervene?

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I hope the hon. and learned member realises that, in regard to the duties of solicitors, Cordery's book, "The Law relating to Solicitors", specifies:

> "A solicitor is under no duty to advise his client whether a sale is a prudent one or whether an independent valuation is desirable".

In other words, the financial side of the transaction is not the solicitor's responsibility.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman's corduroy is as threadbare as his argument. The fact is that a solicitor who does not give that kind of advice to his client has very little prospect of continuing in practice as a solicitor. If the hon. Gentleman will open his eyes and look at the advice given by solicitors, he will find that day by day they are saying to their clients, "The terms of building society A are better than those of building society B, so although you have been to building society B to make inquiries, I suggest that you take your mortgage from building society A. How many building societies will say to Mr. and Mrs. Jones, coming in off the street, "Our terms are worse than those available down the road."?

I received a letter yesterday from a solicitor in Hull —not a million miles from the seat of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby—making precisely the point that was made in an intervention. That solicitor told me of a specific recent case in which a client of his had come into the office, having made the decision to purchase a particular property, and given him instructions to deal with the conveyance. By the end of the week the client had decided not to buy that property because the solicitor had pointed out to him that, from the resale point of view, it was not in a particularly good area, that he probably could not afford it in any event, and that he would be just as well off in his existing house with an extension, which would cost him far less money, and for which finance by way of mortgage was available. That is the sort of service that is given every day by solicitors, whose only interest in the transaction is the fee that they will have, either for the conveyancing or for the advice they give not to go ahead with the transaction.

We heard from the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) about the need for scrutiny of the mortgage deeds. I will not repeat it; I will simply say how right he was. The House is grateful to him for making that point so forcefully.

I have heard it suggested that the local solicitor would provide no better service than the solicitor in the great in-house office in Halifax. It was suggested by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby from a sedentary position that the country solicitor who does the conveyancing for the client never goes to look at the property. Perhaps I am lucky in the solicitors that I know. My own solicitor has never conveyed a house on my behalf, on the many occasions when we have moved, without walking round every inch of the boundaries of the property. At least the solicitor is there in the area, so the client can ask him to walk round and check the boundaries. In country areas the first thing that any solicitor looks at is the boundaries, either on a plan or by walking round them. If any difficulty arises as a result of the inquiries before contract, will the in-house conveyancer get into his company Rover and drive from Halifax to Llanidloes? If he does, who will pay the 30 or 40p a mile for him to do it? It will be the client. All this brings into question not just the arguments against our conflict of interest point as put forward by the building societies, but the cost-effectiveness argument that we have just heard.

I do not expect certain Labour Members behind me to agree, but the solicitor acting independently is not in anybody's pocket except the pocket of his client. If he renders an unsatisfactory service, his client has a number of forms of redress. He can go to the Law Society, though I would rather see him going to an independent complaints body. That is a matter which we may discuss later. He can also sue his solicitor. During the Committee stage of the Bill the hon. Member for Great Grimsby asked whether it was sensibly possible for a client to sue his solicitor.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: How common is it?

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman has just asked from a sedentary position: how common is it for a solicitor to accept instructions to sue another solicitor? There are hundreds, if not thousands, of cases every year in which solicitors are sued by their clients. I hear laughter on the Opposition Front Bench, but those of us who practise the law have acted on innumerable occasions in actions against solicitors for breach of contract and negligence. I ask the hon. Member for Great Grimsby to produce to the House a catalogue of cases in which the negligent actions of solicitors have not been taken up but should have succeeded. I should be surprised if he is able to do so.

Mr. Butterfill: I should like to reinforce the hon. and learned Gentleman's view on that point. I am a chartered surveyor, and my firm frequently acts for the insurers appointed by the Law Society on actions between solicitors, where one solicitor is suing another. It is a substantial proportion of the work of the firm in which I am a partner. It certainly happens very often.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. If one sues a building society, as many people have had to do, one runs up against all the institutional stonewalling to which one is all too accustomed in litigation. The underwriters who deal with solicitors' negligence claims are frequently under pressure to settle, and they frequently do. Although some solicitors' negligence actions are unfortunately and needlessly

protracted, a great number of the claims are settled. Actions for solicitors' negligence generally avoid the institutional harshness of a suit against a building society.

I turn now to the matter of solicitors'-property centres. I received a letter this morning from a senior and respected solicitor who practices in the Wrexham area. He is personally known to me and I have considerable regard for his ability and his objectivity. The solicitors' property centre in Wrexham has run into professional difficulties. As I mentioned in an intervention, there are instances where one firm which makes money from the centre is acting for the vendor, and another firm which also makes money from the centre is acting for the purchaser. That raises a clear conflict of interest. I am afraid the Law Society has taken a weak line on it and says that it does not know the answer. That does not help my correspondent very much. That conflict of interest ought to be instructive to those who wish to extend conveyancing to the institutions.

6.45 pm

The county of Powys includes, I am delighted to say, the constituency of Brecon and Radnor. I wanted somehow to get that into the debate. In a rural area like Powys, which is but an example, there are many excellent and old-established firms of solicitors. Those firms provide an all-round service. They deal with many problems similar to those with which we deal at our constituency surgeries. They deal with matrimonial matters, crime, probate and conveyancing. Some of the things with which they deal are not within their immediate expertise, but they are able to obtain specialist advice elsewhere. To a great extent, their bread and butter is conveyancing. By and large, they are not expensive conveyancers, because they cannot be. The price of a freehold cottage in Powys may be between £15,000 and £20,000, and one cannot charge a lot of money for the conveyance of a £15,000 cottage. While conveyancing no longer subsidises other work, for litigation is nowadays apparently worth while for solicitors, without the conveyancing the prospects for many of those firms would be poor.

I hope that the hon. Members for Ipswich and for Great Grimsby, whose party last night, in the debates on the rate support grant, was espousing the need for local services, do not wish to nationalise the legal advice service. I hope they share my view that it is desirable for a reasonable standard of legal advice to be available in all areas, including the small market towns of Montgomeryshire. I hope the hon. Gentlemen will accept that there is a risk that firms of solicitors in areas like that will be forced either to amalgamate or to cut the range of services.

There is great competition, even hostile rivalry, between firms in small towns, which makes it as sure as anything that negligence by a firm of solicitors will be rooted out. I hope that the hon. Gentlemen agree that the level of competition and service should be maintained. I hope that they will take it from me that the profession knows best how much it depends upon conveyancing for its bread and butter.

Amalgamations may take place. Many of them would be against the public interest, but there is an even greater danger. It is that these highly respected, independent, and in many cases exceedingly skilful firms of country solicitors, may be forced into takeovers by slick city firms. It would not be in the interests of people in the shire counties and rural areas to have only the limited legal advice services provided by small branch offices of big city firms. Hon. Members who are tempted by institutional conveyancing should bear in mind the legal service needs of the community before they pitch in with the lobby we have heard ventilating its views this afternoon.

Mr. Knight: In view of the propensity of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Austin Mitchell) to keep commenting on the number of lawyers who have taken part in this debate, perhaps I should start by saying I have no interest to declare. Although I am a qualified lawyer, I currently receive no fees or remuneration from that profession. However, I have a deep unease about the prospect of building societies being allowed to carry out domestic conveyancing.

I should draw the attention of the House to two articles that appeared in last Sunday's newspapers. The first article, from the *Sunday Telegraph*, was headed, "Conveyancing—the great debate." It stated something that we all accept and know:

"Building societies argue that they would — if legally permitted to employ their own solicitors — give customers a cheaper, quicker service . . . Some insurance brokers voice the suspicion that building societies are invading their patch a little too greedily and are becoming intensely preoccupied with earning commission on endowment mortgages, house insurance and house contents insurance."

Further down the same page, the paragraph headed, "The Savings Scene", referred to the proposal by the Leicester Building society to merge with the Alliance. It also stated:

"If the proposed merger of the Woolwich and Nationwide Building Societies goes ahead our three biggest societies—the Halifax, Abbey National and Woolwich-Nationwide — will outweigh all the others put together."

There is something sinister about that. The building societies are developing their muscle in the expectation that they will be allowed soon to carry out conveyancing.

The Sunday Times carried an article entitled, "Farewell 1874, roll on 1987: It's all go for new business." The article stated:

"While there is little contention over services such as money transmission and insurance sales . . . certain other proposals raise fundamental questions about conflict of interest and about the building societies' ability to move from doing a simple job, which they are generally considered to do well, to providing some more complex financial services. On the question of ability, the portents from across the Atlantic are not good. A few years ago, the American equivalent of building societies, the savings and loan associations, were given the freedom to broaden their services. In the best-run associations, big staff changes were needed to operate the broader range of services. And at the worst-run there have been multi-million dollar disasters as a result of irresponsible lending and over-ambitious investment. The building societies claim that it will not happen here."

They would, wouldn't they? The House should note that danger.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that another danger is that building societies are not democratically accountable? In theory, their members—the depositors and borrowers—may attend their general meetings, but, in practice, hardly anyone turns up. Therefore, they are self-perpetuating oligarchies, effectively accountable to no one. In contrast, large institutional shareholders of public companies can attend their annual general meetings and influence board policies. No such thing happens with building societies.

Mr. Knight: My hon. Friend makes a valid and telling point, and the House will have noted his comments.

[Mr. Knight]

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) appeared to say that we are right to have fears, but that those fears can be regulated by legislation. He said that those who have spoken against allowing building societies to carry out conveyancing are overstating the case. However, building societies are already regulated, and I do not believe that they serve their customers as best they could. One need only walk down the high street of any town to see the offers that building societies can make, within the scope of the regulations to which they must adhere, to try to attract custom. I have noted a few of the inducements that are currently on offer. One building society offers money boxes to children who open accounts; another offers trips to a zoo; and another suggests an "adopt a duck" account, which allows its new customers to do that, and gives them free admission to a wildfowl trust centre. However, none of those accounts offers high rates of interest. In addition, the children who are induced to open such accounts cannot claim back the tax that they will pay through their savings. Under the present restrictions on building societies, the customer is not getting the best possible service. Therefore, one should be worried about what might happen if banks and building societies are allowed to carry out conveyancing.

No Conservative Member would disagree with increased competition in conveyancing. Indeed, that is what the Bill seeks to do in a modest way. But the House must ensure that it does not allow building societies so much power in the marketplace that anti-competitive practices result. We are on thin ice, and we must tread warily.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is fascinating to see so many professionals gathered here today to defend their vested interests and earnings from the consumer. It was especially interesting to hear the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) appealing for the country solicitor vote in his constituency. I do not know whether he was unveiling Liberal party policy on competition, but, if he was, we welcome it. The real spectacle today has been Labour Members urging competition and Conservative Members, as usual, defending vested interests.

We must be clear about the effect of the new clause. It is designed to stop competition and the development of comprehensive services to the consumer. It does so on behalf of the vested interests—especially solicitors and some other professions — which have been doing too well for too long at the expense of the consumer. That is the essence of the argument.

There have been different approaches to the fear of competition. The Law Society, which failed to retain the conveyancing monopoly, has suddenly decided that it had better start to steal the building societies' clothes. Therefore, it has dressed itself up as the protector of the house buyer and started to attack the building societies as though they are ogres and have not been serving the house buyer for about 100 years by providing mortgages.

The Lord Chancellor, acting here as the political arm of the Law Society—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] In that case, the provisional wing of the Law Society — has produced a mythical conflict of interest which he says is sufficiently important to obviate the principle of more competition. He has not published details of the conflict of interest, or given us any idea about the nature of the replies that he has received to his inquiries. He has not told us the number of cases to which that conflict of interest applies. We have no published evidence to support the Lord Chancellor's assertion that the conflict of interest is so overwhelming as to prevent banks and building societies from carrying out conveyancing.

Mr. Butterfill: I should take up the hon. Gentleman's point about the new clause being a defence of vested interests. Of the hon. Members whose names are attached to the new clause, only two are solicitors. My profession is completely unregulated. Anyone—even the dustman —could set up tomorrow as an estate agent. Indeed, the dustman could set himself up tomorrow as a surveyor, which I would regret. Perhaps the House will discuss that matter later. I cannot understand what vested interest the hon. Gentleman believes I am protecting.

Mr. Mitchell: The effect is to defend the vested interest of solicitors in maintaining an effective conveyancing monopoly. That is how it works out. The way in which the hon. Member of Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) has approached it is to explode the doomsday weapon. His approach drives everything apart. We want services to come together to help the consumer. I want to pose a few questions about how this will work.

7 pm

If a solicitor serves on the building societies panel and does the conveyancing for somebody, he gets a separate fee for acting on that panel. That would be stopped by the new clause. He would not be able to advise the building society on title, so that practice would go. If he has an agency for a building society, that also would be stopped. If solicitors combine, as they do in Scotland and in some parts of this country to run a property centre—it is an increasing practice which I commend and which we should encourage — that, too, would be stopped by the new clause. If a solicitor is taking a commission from a building society in respect of money invested in that building society, that would stop his advising people to take out a mortgage with that building society.

Mr. Butterfill: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman confirms the effect which I envisage. The intention of the clause is to stop people having their snouts in the same trough more than once.

Mr. Mitchell: I agree that there is a noble spirit of self-sacrifice, but I think that the professions which are backing it do not realise exactly what is implied. They back it from a very different motive — to keep their snouts in a particularly rich trough.

Mr. Favell: I am a practising solicitor and an agent of the Halifax Building Society. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Solicitors will suffer from the new clause if it is agreed to, and they should, because I have always believed that a dog cannot have two masters. That is why solicitors do not act for vendor and purchaser. I should like to ask one question of the hon. Gentleman. On this of all days. Would he be happy if Johnson Matthey acted for the customer and for itself in the matter of a loan, because it is a bank?

Mr. Mitchell: I should be happy if the Treasury and the Bank of England acted on Johnson Matthey in a sensible fashion. I shall ignore that question, because it is irrelevant.

There is a spirit of self-sacrifice if a solicitor is rushing forward to give up a privilege in this fashion—it is done to stop the banks and building societies acting in competition.

This forces us back into an old situation, but we are now discussing a new class of house buyer in today's society—people who have not bought houses in the past and who do not have the middle class skills and tradition of contact with a solicitor. The house buyer is forced to build up his own orchestra piece by piece instead of having a comprehensive service—one-stop shopping—whether it is provided by estate agents, banks, building societies or solicitors running property centres. All can compete to provide a comprehensive service. That is what we want for the house buyer, rather than the professional segregation which this measure would enforce.

What should we do about the new clause? My view is that we should leave the Bill as it is. I have therefore tabled no amendments of the kind that we dealt with at such length in Committee to allow banks and building societies to do conveyancing, whether through licensed conveyancers or solicitors. The amendments tabled in Committee were intended to air the principle. The principle is reasonably straightforward and secure. Therefore, it would be better to leave the Bill open rather than include this unnecessary restriction. In essence, we are committed to allowing banks and building societies to do conveyancing.

I and the sponsors of the Bill which I brought in in 1983 have firm promises from the Solicitor-General that the Government are committed to allowing banks and building societies to do conveyancing through employed solicitors. The building societies have firm promises from the Government that they will be able to provide an integrated service to the house buyer, part of which must be conveyancing.

The Chancellor is pirouetting and wriggling, trying to find ways to fulfil the principle without conceding the practice, and he has come up with two proposals. The first is that the building societies should be allowed to do conveyancing for other people's customers. In other words, people will get killed crossing the road from the Bradford to the Halifax. Perhaps we shall have a twinning arrangement or something similarly ludicrous.

Secondly, there is the letter of 8 July from the Lord Chancellor's Department, which states

"that lending institutions might offer the service through subsidiary companies in which they have only a minority shareholding."

It wants to know what conflict of interest is provoked by the size of the minority shareholding. It continues:

"In particular, how small should an institution's holding be before it need no longer constitute a bar to the company undertaking conveyancing for borrowers?"

There are ways to attempt to concede the principle which the Government have promised honourably to fulfil without making it so attractive that the building societies will do what is intended, but in fact they do not fulfil the promise. The promise was that banks and building societies would be allowed to do this for their customers. The alternatives are so silly that they will not work and they will be laughed out of court. Therefore, it is sensible to say what will happen.

The Bill will allow for the possibility of licensed conveyancers being employed by banks and building societies. It is for the council to decide at its own discretion in the interest of the profession. The building society legislation next year will allow building societies to do conveyancing, the details of which will be defined by regulations. The regulations will have to provide what we want — full freedom to do conveyancing, employing their own solicitors or conveyancers, under certain restrictions defined by the regulations. Those restrictions would be to ban loss leading, to require the supervision of the Office of Fair Trading, to ensure that there is no compulsion on the borrower to have the conveyancing done by the same building society, and to ensure that in that small minority of cases in which a conflict of interest arises—and who better than solicitors to recognise a conflict of interest when they see one?—the solicitor representing the building society shall be required to advise the customer to get his own independent advice.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman suggests the supervision of the Office of Fair Trading. How does he suggest that that supervision should be carried out when one is dealing with the local branch of a building society? If he is suggesting that it should be carried out by trading standards officers, does he realise that they already have insufficient money to carry out their statutory duty and that they have no training in this or any similar sphere?

Mr. Mitchell: If that is the extent of the petty debating points which can be raised against the proposal, the case is unanswerable. There will be supervision by the Office of Fair Trading, to which people will be able to make complaints.

Mr. Alex Carlile: How?

Mr. Mitchell: Experience shows that building societies are far more sensitive to their public image, to public pressure and to complaints, and they are far more vulnerable than solicitors. Indeed, solicitors have been able to maintain a monopoly of conveyancing for many years, despite the protests of the public. As soon as the pressure develops that building societies should offer a range of choice and insurance policies, they do so. As a result, we now have three insurance companies recommended by building societies. The details can be worked out later. *[Interruption.]* That is the way in which legislation is normally passed, is it not? We define the principle, and we set out the procedures in regulations.

To conjure up such hypothetical fears is the feeblest of possible defences against the proposal. Let us be clear about what the solicitors are pleading against banks and building societies. The solicitors say, "We have perfect practice. Everything we do is perfect and efficient. We always inspect the property and supervise the conveyancing"—when it is done mainly by secretaries and clerks —"and we always advise the customer." That, in the main, is rubbish. Some solicitors work in that fashion while others do not. Probably most do not.

Against what is proposed, they are conjuring up the spectre of hypothetical fears and extreme cases. For example, in all the cases produced today, even by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, the building society would not have given a mortgage in the first place. After all, it is in the interest of the building society to ensure that it has good title, that the person should be able to repay the mortgage, and that it has a good relationship with its customers. The building society is, therefore, as well qualified to deal with these matters as solicitors.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman accept from me that he is wrong in his assumption that the

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

building society would not give a mortgage in the cases that I cited? In the Hull case, the building society was prepared to give a mortgage, but the solicitor advised the client not to proceed, and eventually the client accepted the solicitor's advice.

Mr. Mitchell: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman accept from me that the experience of the Halifax building society, with all its branches, is that it could find no cases in which solicitors had recommended against the mortgage offered by that society? That adequately covers the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman made about building societies being huge organisations thrusting piles of money at every borrower. That is a myth. Everybody knows how difficult it is to obtain a mortgage and how much scrutiny takes place by building societies into individual cases. As I say, it is in the interest of the society that the borrower is able to carry the mortgage and that the title is good.

Mr. Butterfill: My experience as a practising chartered surveyor is that most building societies—my firm acts for 32 banks and building societies—are interested only in the security of the loan. When banks and building societies lend small sums of money, secured against valuable property, they do not care whether there are serious defects in the property, which may be of great concern to the purchaser, so long as there is enough security in the property to guarantee the loan. Therefore, there is not always identity of interest between the purchaser and the building society.

Mr. Mitchell: Hon. Members are raising extreme cases. In every case that has been brought to my attention there have been strict inquiries. It must be agreed that, as a general proposition, the building society wants good title because it might need to realise the asset. Nor does it want the odium of turning people out of house and home if they cannot pay the premiums.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West posited an extreme and unlikely case, and that is true of all the arguments that have been adduced against this change. The conflict of interest argument is fallacious. People turn, in the first instance, to the building society. They go to a solicitor only after they have been to the building society. The two procedures — the conveyancing and the arranging of the mortgage—proceed concurrently but independently. That is what happens in the real world.

Nor are solicitors qualified to give the independent financial advice that is being raised now as a strong argument.

7.15 pm

Mr. Weetch: I was told recently by the general manager—a highly qualified solicitor—of a major building society, one of the top six, that in 50 per cent. of cases the mortgage deed was prepared wrongly—it is a question only of filling in blanks—and that in many cases the wrong mortgage deed was returned. In other words, if the mortgage was being given by the Halifax, the deed sent back was, say, from the Alliance.

Mr. Mitchell: That corresponds with my experience in doing my own conveyancing in London. At one stage I received a communication from the solicitor representing the other side asking why the house was registered as two separate properties. I discovered that he had sent me details of somebody else's house. That is the efficient care that is taken in these cases. I accept the evidence of the building societies about the inadequacy of work done by the solicitors.

The need for independent advice has been raised as a kind of bogey man to frighten us away from giving conveyancing to banks and building societies. Plainly, solicitors are not qualified to give that independent advice. If they are now putting themselves forward as providing financial advice, I welcome that because it is another area in which they want to compete. Nevertheless, most solicitors do not know the range of mortgages and building societies, and, more important, most solicitors have a vested interest in channelling customers to the building society in which they invest their funds, from which they get commission and with which they have a close working relationship. How can that be described as independent advice?

For the benefit of, among others, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, with his legal expertise, I shall quote a case to show that the legal evidence goes against the idea of the provision of independent financial advice by solicitors. The most important case was in 1962. In Bowdage *v.* Harold Mitchelmore and Company, the plaintiff, a games mistress, wanted to sell a piece of land. I need not go into the details. Mr. Justice Melford Stevenson said that a solicitor who acted for a client in relation to the sale of land could not be said, in the absence of special instructions, to undertake the duty of advising the client whether the transaction was, from the client's point of view, prudent.

In other words, it is not part of a solicitor's duty to give the sort of advice that is now put forward as an argument for stopping solicitors employed by banks and building societies from doing conveyancing. One cannot argue in favour of a practice which does not exist on a legal basis which is fictitious.

Sir Gordon Borrie, the Director General of Fair Trading, himself a barrister, said that if building societies were allowed to develop conveyancing, it would provide for

"'one-stop shopping' for housing . . . and will lead to greater competition with others who provide such services, and this should benefit housebuyers whether they opt for 'one-stop shopping' or not because competition from building societies will keep everyone on their toes."

That is obviously true. The costs of conveyancing have come down by 20 to 30 per cent. We must keep up the pressure to keep those prices coming down. That means extending the competition to banks and building societies and not allowing solicitors to sit back, cosily saying, "There is no greater threat from licensing conveyancers. We can start upping the charges once again and milk the customer."

Sir Gordon Borrie added:

"Contrary to the views of the Law Society, I do not see any inherent or insurmountable conflict of interest if a building society were to provide conveyancing services to a purchaser who is also a borrower from that society. Both have a common interest in ensuring that good title passes from vendor to purchaser. The Law Society has stressed the value to the client of independent advice, for example, as to which building society to go to or as to whether a repayment mortgage or endowment mortgage would suit him best. Those matters seem to me more a 'selling point' for the independent solicitor's services than grounds for disallowing building society employed solicitors from providing basic conveyancing services."

What would be the position if banks and building societies were not allowed to carry out conveyancing,

which would be the effect of the new clause? The proposal at present comes really only from the Lord Chancellor, who is effectively out on a limb on this matter. I receive plaintive letters from him—some of them increasingly abusive, but they are mainly plaintive—telling me that I must realise that he is the embodiment not only of the law, but of the Government.

That cannot be true. If it is, it means that the Government are not fulfilling the honourable promises that were made to me and to the other sponsors of my Bill. If it were true, the Government would not be following their policy on competition and dealing with professional as well as public and financial monopolies. If it were true, the Government would not be following the wishes of the Department of Trade and Industry in this matter. They would be putting themselves in the ludicrous position of bowing to the vested interest of the Law Society—the new Scargill—which brings the Government, or at least the Lord Chancellor, quaking to their knees. The Government are saying to the Law Society, "Yes, you are right, we must betray our policies and act against competition. You, the Law Society, are such a powerful vested interest that we shall give way to you." The Government cannot afford to be involved in such a spectacle.

We are seeing Rumpole's last stand—the last stages of an ongoing, long-running comedy programme—but Rumpole in this instance cannot stop the tide of progress. Of course banks and building societies should be allowed to do conveyancing, and it is an essential part of competition.

There is a rapidly expanding market with new generations of house-buyers. Some 70 per cent. of houses will be privately owned by the end of the century. People will sell and buy houses much more frequently. The turnover is growing all the time. This is a rich market in which there is room for everyone, but there must be competition to stop the vested interest developing. One does not create monopolies by widening competition. We must bring down prices and get people to compete to serve the customer.

We are seeing new methods and competition, prices falling, and new entrants to the market. All that is good for the public and for house buying because it makes house buying wider and more freely available. That is what we want to encourage and that is why the new clause is wrong. Neither the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West nor the Chancellor can stand in the way of this tidal wave of progress, which will engulf them both.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I cannot agree with the analysis by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), because I do not believe that greater competition, which I agree is needed in this sector, is inconsistent with the importance of separating what may be in some cases a conflict of interest. He argued that the only way in which we can achieve greater competition in the legal profession's provision of conveyancing services is to ignore, or break down and throw away, the separation of interests that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) outlined. I apologise for the fact that I was not here when the new clause was moved, and therefore did not hear all of my hon. Friend's speech.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby said that he thought that most Conservative Members had a vested interest in this matter. I have no vested interest in the conveyancing of houses. I am a chartered accountant, and therefore in an allied profession, but I am not involved in any way in the conveyance of property or the lending of money to those who purchase and sell property. Therefore, I do not fall into the category outlined by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

However, I have talked to the solicitors in my constituency. We have half a dozen firms in my provincial town, and I have discussed the Bill with them over the year and a half since the hon. Member for Great Grimsby first advanced his views. I have kept in touch with the local legal profession and sought its views and comments.

The solicitors in my constituency accept the principle of licensed conveyancing, if not with open arms. However, there are problems, on which I have some questions for my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. The problems arise out of one-stop shopping—permitting the bank to provide not only the money and the financial facility to exchange the property, but also a survey and the conveyancing. That concerns solicitors in my constituency and I shall advance some of their worries. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West if I repeat any of the points that he has made, but it is important that they are rehearsed clearly.

The new clause does not prohibit banks from offering conveyancing services to third parties. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby that banks and building societies that have licensed conveyancers on their staff would not be providing conveyancing services to others. It is obvious that they would provide those services to customers. Therefore, some of the economies of scale and of modern technology and greater competition would clearly apply in those cases. The new clause only stops banks from offering conveyancing services to customers with whom they are involved in providing finance.

It is important to emphasise that in my constituency the service of conveyancing is competitive. There is great competition between the firms of lawyers in the principal town. I know that, because I have checked it. I have looked at the way in which conveyancing fees have moved over the past five years and particularly in the past 12 months. There is no question but that that service is provided competitively.

I have another point to raise with my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General. I am concerned that there are certain instances where the independent advice to the potential property owner is important. For example, in the two years in which I have represented my constituency I have come across many instances of the problem of rights of access. This has nothing to do with the value of the property; they are problems that the solicitor would point out to his clients. I wonder whether a licensed conveyancer working for a bank would not be tempted to cut corners by not exaggerating, or even not pointing out in clear language, the potential problems of rights of access.

Another example would be responsibility for upkeep on either a property shared in common or common party walls to property. Again, this does not necessarily affect the value of properties on which the loan transaction is based but it affects the rights of the property owner and his enjoyment of that property. There is also the problem of the rights of foreclosure on the mortgage loan, on which important and independent advice should be offered. A licensed conveyancer might be influenced by his

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

employer, the bank, in not drawing the attention of the customer with great clarity to what some of those rights and commitments are.

Impartial advice is also needed on finance. I have come across several instances in which the solicitor has asked whether his client is aware that alternative finance might be available at a cheaper rate than the rate quoted by the building society or whatever, a rate that appears to be a little on the high side. He might tell the client that it might be beneficial to shop around. Such impartial advice would not be available at a one-stop shop.

These are all examples of issues on which the solicitor or the licensed conveyancer should be providing advice for his clients. If he is employed by a bank with one-stop shopping I wonder whether this advice will be brought out as clearly as it should be. I agree that new clause 2 prevents solicitors from enjoying the benefits of commissions when arranging finance. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West is being consistent — he is saying that banks should not be involved in the conveyance and that the licensed conveyancer for a firm of solicitors should not receive any other financial reward from the transaction.

7.30 pm

What sanctions will be available in regard to a group or bank which does not conform to the high standards adopted by most firms of solicitors? There are sanctions for solicitors and there will be sanctions for licensed conveyancers, but whence will the pressure come to ensure that high standards in banks are preserved?

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby said that some solicitors are inefficient, that some members of the great British public want one-stop shopping and that, because we want greater competition, we should permit banks to convey property through licensed conveyancers. He cares little for the so-called conflict of interest argument. I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman's initiative during the past two years, but he will get competitive pressures in the profession through the introduction of licensed conveyancers offering a conveyancing service to customers with whom they are not involved financially.

Such competitive pressures will arise naturally. The benefits of those pressures are already obvious in my constituency. The customer is getting a good deal. We should consider whether it is wise to throw out, as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has in a cavalier fashion, the benefits that must be worth serious consideration. Insufficient consideration has been given to the importance of independent advice. A solicitor or licensed conveyancer with no financial interest has a responsibility to ensure that the client is properly advised. I look forward to my hon. and learned Friend's comments. I have raised these issues because they have been raised with me.

Mr. Frank Field: I am not a lawyer, so, as I am not accustomed to being paid by the length of time that I am on my feet, I can be mercifully brief.

My hon. Friends have advanced two reasons why we should oppose new clause 2. The first is that we should oppose restrictive practices. I must declare a vested interest as a member of a political party that was brought into existence by the trade union movement and which understands the value of restrictive practices or, as we like to call them when talking about our own territory, checks and balances. Before I am enticed into attacking restrictive practices, I should like to spend a little more time establishing where such an argument might lead me.

The second reason that has been adduced for opposing the new clause is that the market should decide the shape and size of firms servicing customers. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) said that those comments would thrill the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). That might be the case, but they do not thrill me.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I have my name on the new clause anyway.

Mr. Field: That is indeed true. The market might well decide the shape of firms, or so the theory tells us, but the fact remains that we all favour competition if we are doing the competing but we never favour it if it operates against us. One of the natural laws of the market, therefore, is that people try to do deals to limit competition. I therefore do not find the two reasons for opposing the new clause persuasive.

The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) painted a large canvas with a broad brush. Mine will be small. I should like to consider building societies and what I consider to be the growth of the new Leviathan. Building societies have recently taken over some of the functions of banks. People have asked what harm that has done. We are beginning to hear that the building societies believe that they should take over some of the functions of post offices and sub-post offices, such as the payment of pensions. If they get that deal, there will be wholesale closures of post offices, although building societies will not take on the full range of functions offered by post offices.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It is no use conjuring up bogey men. My hon. Friend asked what harm it had done for building societies to go into competition with banks. What harm has it done?

Mr. Field: That development did no harm, but it does not follow logically that, because that did no harm, all following changes will do no harm. My hon. Friend and I will, as always, oppose the closure of sub-post offices if building societies get the job of paying pensions.

We have been asked to whom building societies are responsible. The answer is, very few except those who run them. Building societies already provide loans, are in league with house agents, undertake surveys, arrange insurance deals for property and try to persuade customers to take out indemnity policies for mortgages. The House has a right to draw a line and say that building societies already have enough power and influence without our adding yet another and important twist.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has argued powerfully several times that Labour should use every opportunity to attack the extraordinary fees that some lawyers earn. I am in sympathy with that argument, but my hon. Friend's proposed solution is worse than the evil. If we want to limit the amount of money that lawyers can earn from conveyancing, there is a simple method—lay down a scale of fees for conveyancing. It would be more effective for the House to debate that proposal than to give building societies even more power as an indirect means of limiting the power of lawyers.

The two main arguments against the new clause do not persuade me. We have allowed building societies to

assume an extraordinary range of powers. So far, those powers have usually been exercised with considerable responsibility, but that does not necessarily mean that this will continue, and at this stage we say that building societies are big enough.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I shall also try to be brief, and not just because I, too, am not a lawyer.

New clause 2, which the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and other hon. Members seek to add to the Bill, is designed to deal with conflicts of interest over conveyancing. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West properly identified three separate areas of professional concern where the debate about conflict of interest is important. He made a strong point about solicitors acting as estate agents, particularly when a chain of sales is being handled by one firm. His point about insurance brokers also had merit. I shall deal later with whether or not it can be covered by regulation.

His third category occupied more time in Committee than any other item. New Clause 2 overstates its case in relation to this third category. All hon. Members agree that unfair practices should be prevented. The division between us relates to how it should be prevented and what constitutes a conflict of interest. Hon. Members also agree that we are living through a period of change. For that reason, if for no other, we should approach the problem in a measured way.

The view of the Opposition is that it would be possible, by regulation, for banks and building societies to provide an in-house conveyancing service. We object to new clause 2 because, whether intentionally or not, it completely closes the door to that possibility. The Opposition's view is that the interests of the consumer are best protected by a plurality of provision. We do not want building societies to establish, because of their power to make loans, a monopoly over conveyancing services. One of the tests of the regulations should be the maintenance of a plurality of provision, thus preventing unfair practices by building societies because of their control over the provision of finance.

There is a range of objections to banks and building societies providing an in-house service. The first objection falls into the category of special pleading. The case for rural solicitors was put very persuasively in Committee by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottoway) but his case did not persuade me. It was that the funding of rural solicitors was to be underpinned by those who seek to transfer their houses in rural areas. I am not sure that that is fair. People who live in rural areas should have the choice of a cheaper conveyancing service, if it is available.

Mr. Alex Carlile: What steps would a Labour Government take, bearing in mind what the hon. Gentleman has just said, to ensure that legal services continued to be made available on a broad front in rural areas?

7.45 pm

Mr. Brown: Had the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) diligently attended the Committee proceedings, as did Conservative Members and my colleagues, he would have known that that matter was dealt with during our discussions on legal aid and law centres. But of course he did not diligently attend the Committee proceedings. I do not intend to travel again over that ground, because that is not the issue with which we are dealing.

Mr. Carlile: Answer the question.

Mr. Brown: I shall deal next with my second point, on conflicts of interest. Genuine and perfectly proper objections can be made to building societies providing an in-house conveyancing service, but my view is that those objections can be met. There is no conflict of interest between the organisation providing the finance and the individual who, according to the title deeds, will eventually be the owner of the property. Both the individual and the organisation providing the money have a clear interest in achieving a secure title. However, a conflict of interest arises on financial advice.

It is wrong to expect an in-house conveyancer who is employed by a building society impartially to advise the purchaser of the property. The point was well made in Committee by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that many solicitors do not provide advice on these matters. House purchasers have already secured their mortgages before they ask somebody to handle the conveyancing side of the transaction, so it ought to be possible to make regulations to deal with this point. I understand that the Lord Chancellor does not intend to do this, but on this point the Bill is permissive and it would be possible for a future Government to make regulations to meet it. If the new clause is successful, that will not be possible.

At this stage, therefore, the Bill ought to be permissive so that we can return later to this matter. We should explore further the possibility of making regulations and be able to discuss this matter again. I have no doubt that we shall discuss it again, together with many other points that are contained in the Bill.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I, too, shall be brief — but because I am a lawyer! I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on moving this new clause, thereby giving an opportunity to the House to discuss further the vexed question of how best to protect the public from advice tainted by interest while at the same time protecting the public from unnecessary restraints on competition. Although it has been a longer debate than many hon. Members expected, it has been of a very high quality.

The balance of the argument has been against the proposition of the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) that the concern expressed by Conservative Members about conflict of interest is bogus. Many impressive speeches pointed to the real danger that a conflict of interest can arise.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Mainly by lawyers.

The Solicitor-General: No, that is not right. My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) asked whether or not it was important that there should be independent advice on a number of matters — for example, about alternative means of financing loans and the responsibility for the upkeep of party walls. The question at issue is whether one should legislate to protect the public in all circumstances against such a risk or whether one should legislate on a less extensive scale and

[The Solicitor-General]

rely, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich said, on the ability of the public to choose advice elsewhere. It is far from easy to solve that problem.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General mentioned on Second Reading, the Farrand committee said:

"The risks to the consumer are too great to permit market forces alone to control entrance to. . . the conveyancing market. Our approach in considering the safeguards needed for non-solicitors to undertake conveyancing has thus been to propose certain essential restrictions on competition, although these are intended to go no wider than is necessary to ensure adequate consumer protection."

That approach can be validly applied to the wider subject with which the new clause is concerned.

I wish to make clear the Government's position on conveyancing by employees of building societies and other financial institutions. We are committed to introducing legislation to permit banks and building societies to offer financial services and we are committed to doing so in a way that does not prejudice the consumer through conflicts of interest or anti-competitive practices. Both limbs of that commitment are important and both will be honoured.

The problem is that arrangements for a loan are an integral part of most conveyancing transactions and the lender's employee is inhibited in advising the borrower about the loan, because he owes his primary duty and his livelihood to his employer. That has meant that the difficulties in the way of lending institutions providing conveyancing services have proved more intractable than had been expected.

Since the consultation exercise on which we embarked, we have been examining ways of carrying forward our commitments. We have decided to amend the legislation that prevents all corporate bodies, including building societies, from offering conveyancing services. The Lord Chancellor will be empowered to exempt individual corporate bodies from the restrictions and to impose general conditions on the way in which the services are provided, to ensure that the consumers' interests are not prejudiced. The legislative mechanism will have to be flexible enough to enable new ideas to be implemented quickly and without the need for further primary legislation. We intend to take those powers in the next Session.

The new clause would prohibit any persons or bodies from providing conveyancing services if they also provided a loan, estate agency or brokerage services in the same or a related transaction. I hope that I have demonstrated that we share the anxieties behind the new clause. There would be a clear danger of conflicts of interest if mortgage brokers or insurance brokers formed partnerships or corporate bodies with licensed conveyancers. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West drew attention to the significant sums that can be earned in commission. They are a plain source of temptation to temper the advice that might otherwise be given.

I do not need to take time over matters that have been extensively explored in the debate. However, we believe that the new clause is too sweeping in its exclusions. For example, it would rule out the present practice of the purchaser's solicitor drawing up the mortgage deed on behalf of the building society after the contract has been agreed and he has advised his client. That is a harmless, indeed beneficial, practice.

The Government's aim is to increase competition in conveyancing as much as possible, provided that proper consumer protection is maintained. We welcome measures to reduce the number of agencies that a purchaser has to deal with when moving house, subject to the overriding need adequately to protect the public from conflicts of interest. We see no difficulties arising if lending institutions offer services in transactions where they are not also providing a loan—my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering rightly pointed out that the new clause would not prevent that—but we have not yet found a way in which those institutions could provide a combined package of loans and conveyancing without risking unacceptable conflicts of interest. Lending institutions are commercial organisations and their interest is in the arrangements for the loan, as distinct from ensuring good title, and is not the same as that of the borrower.

Although we have not overcome the problem, we are continuing to work on it and one possibility under examination is that lending institutions might provide the services through subsidiary companies in which they hold only a minority stake. The Lord Chancellor recently met the chairman of the Building Societies Association and made it clear that the Government would welcome a solution that dealt with the problem of conflicts of interest. There is a genuine welcome for all constructive suggestions, but it would be irresponsible for us to pretend that problems do not exist.

We remain committed to increasing competition, we are determined to ensure that the interests of the consumer will be adequately protected when we introduce reforms, and we shall continue to build on the progress already made. Increased competition means that conveyancing services can readily be obtained at prices that are about one third lower than those prevailing a year or two ago, as was confirmed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West.

Licensed conveyancers will inject a further element of competition and such developments are enormously in the interests of all our constituents. Therefore, after what I have said about the Government's approach to this important matter, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West will agree that, on balance, it would be better for him not to press his new clause, but rather to allow the Government to bring forward their proposals in due course.

Mr. Butterfill: Perhaps inadvertently, my hon. and learned Friend did not refer to my reservations about estate agents being involved in conveyancing and solicitors being involved in estate agency work. Will he comment on that matter and on whether it would be possible for the regulations that are to be drafted by the Lord Chancellor to be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure?

The Solicitor-General: I carried my enthusiasm for brevity too far. I shall deal with both those points. I shall report to the Lord Chancellor that my hon. Friend wishes the regulations to be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. My noble Friend will consider that request, but I cannot give my hon. Friend any assurances.

8 pm

We have to face the fact that solicitors at present provide a combined estate agency and conveyancing package. I know that some hon. Members have reservations about that, and we understand the strength of

those reservations. Nevertheless, that is the position. We did not feel that the provision of a combined package of sale and conveyancing to vendors raised such overwhelming difficulties that we needed to urge the Law Society to prohibit it. At present, estate agents cannot provide conveyancing services. Obviously, a solicitor could not provide conveyancing services to a purchaser if that solicitor was acting for the vendor. That is not permitted.

On the face of it, the present position puts estate agents at an unfair competitive disadvantage compared with solicitors, and therefore we are considering whether estate agents should be free to provide similar packages to vendors. Certain requirements would need to be met before those packages could be permitted, if they were to be permitted. We would need to ensure that the conveyancing work was properly supervised by a qualified person. Similar rules governing conflicts of interest would have to apply to estate agents offering conveyancing, as they do to solicitors in private practice. We shall need to consider whether special arrangements should be made to protect against conflicts of interest where an estate agent is selling more than one house in a chain. Comprehensive financial arrangements would have to be made to secure adequate consumer protection.

Subject to those essential requirements, we are considering whether estate agents should be permitted to provide the service so that they can compete on equal terms.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned consumer protection, but he did not mention competence. In the context of estate agents providing conveyancing services at present practised by solicitors, does he agree that competence is extremely important, and that it is difficult to ensure that an estate agent will be competent to provide such legal services?

The Solicitor-General: That is right, but we are talking about employed solicitors or employed licensed conveyancers.

Incidentally, in a debate which has given rise to the figure of Lord Chancellor Rumpole, I agree that competence is of great importance in all these matters.

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his many assurances. I must confess that I am a little disappointed with what he said about estate agents because I had hoped that the Government could find it preferable if neither lawyers nor estate agents were involved in a position where there could be a conflict. Nevertheless, I accept my right hon. and learned Friend's point that I may have gone further than advisable, and under the circumstances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 3

PREVENTION OF ANTI-COMPETITIVE PRACTICES AND MONOPOLY SITUATIONS.

'For the purpose of preventing anti-competitive practices and monopoly situations or their development in the field of conveyancing services and services connected with such services by persons or bodies corporate involved in or directing or controlling such services, whether directly or indirectly, the Director-General of Fair Trading and the Secretary of State shall, from the date of the commencement of any of the provisions of Part II of this Act, keep the provision of those services under constant review in pursuance of their functions respectively under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Competition Act 1980.' —*[Mr. Cash.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Cash: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am deeply worried that we may be moving towards concentrating economic power in the hands of lending institutions. The new clause relates to part II of the Bill, which to a certain extent anticipates the building societies legislation that we expect next year. To prevent anti-competitive practices and monopolies or their development in conveyancing services and services connected with such services by persons who would be involved in directing or controlling those services, the new clause provides that the Director General of Fair Trading and the Secretary of State shall be obliged from the date of the commencement of part II of the Act to keep the provision of those services under constant review in pursuance of their powers and duties under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Competition Act 1980.

I received a letter from my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, in which he states:

"We will have the opportunity to debate the economic power of the lending institutions, and its relevance to the question of whether they should be permitted to offer conveyancing services, when the provision enabling the Lord Chancellor to exempt 'recognised' bodies corporate"——

that is, bodies recognised in clause 31——

"from the restrictions on conveyancing for reward is brought forward next Session. I dare say the matter will also be touched upon on Wednesday."

He continues:

"As I said in Committee, we do not consider that any special provision is needed to protect against anti-competitive practices and monopoly situations in conveyancing when Part II of the Bill comes into force. We believe the existing legislation is sufficient."

I am deeply worried that the provision of conveyancing services under part II of the Bill will be part of a new monopoly by lending institutions regarding land tenure. In future, on an inevitably progressive basis, building societies and banks will provide estate agency, insurance brokerage, jobbing, stockbrokerage and conveyancing services.

There are strong arguments for effective international competition for economic institutions so that they can compete effectively abroad. However, there are significant dangers in the path that we choose to tread, because its consequence is to concentrate a vast amount of economic power in the hands of relatively few lending institutions. As a consequence, we may regret having followed that path, unless—I believe that this is both a classically Liberal and a classically Tory position—we are sure that anti-competitive practices and monopolies will not develop.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that he did not think that it was necessary to have any special provision to deal with the problem because the powers under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Competition Act 1980 are sufficient. My point is that we must deal with the problem of anti-competitive practices and monopolies before, not when, they have accumulated. That is what my new clause provides.

When I looked over my notes on the subject I was particularly interested to see a quotation from the Nationwide building society's general manager on 2 April 1984. He said:

[Mr. Cash]

"Within ten years, the number of building societies in Britain is likely to have shrunk from 200 to no more than 10, and these 10 will be almost indistinguishable from retail banks in the range of services they offer to personal customers."

Only four days ago, on Saturday 13 July, *The Times* announced that the Nationwide and Woolwich building societies were to merge, with £15 billion-worth of assets. Therefore, the trend is already being well established. Mr. Tim Melville-Ross, chief general manager of the Nationwide building society, is quoted in the *The Times* as having said:

"the main reason for the merger was to create a society better able to take advantage of the new powers coming to building societies under legislation to be passed in 1987.

As we move into new areas of business it will be important for societies to have sheer size and financial strength . . . We will look to take advantage of most of the new powers under the coming legislation."

He seems to have made my point quite well. I believe that the trend will be followed by other building societies.

I have argued consistently and vigorously for the position adopted by the Conservative party — it is a conviction which I hold strongly—in favour of fair and free competition. The aggregation and accumulation of power by the lending institutions will seriously divert us from a principle which otherwise I would thoroughly applaud, unless it is monitored carefully from the beginning of the acquisition of the powers.

I support the principle behind the Bill and the extension to licensed conveyancers, provided that they are fully competent to do the sort of work which hitherto has been done exclusively by solicitors. It is impossible to argue that there is no connection between the Bill and the proposed building societies Bill or the provision of conveyancing services by banks. I have already made clear my objection to the provision of these services. That is borne out in principle by the White Paper "Financial Services in the United Kingdom." The provision of conveyancing services under these new arrangements is likely to become yet another of the financial services provided by the lending institutions.

In Committee I quoted a statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Referring to the financial services, he said:

"The Secretary of State will have the power, to be exercised on the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading, to revoke or amend rules which have anti-competitive effects."

The same point is made in chapter 8 of "Financial Service in the United Kingdom," which states:

"(i) to apply a consistent framework of competition law throughout the financial services sector; and

(ii) enable the Secretary of State to require the Boards to amend or withdraw either of their own rules of those of organisations recognised by them if he is persuaded that such rules are detrimental to competition and not justified in the interests of investor protection."

A similar point is made on page 42 of the White Paper, which refers to the desirability of obtaining the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. If what is good enough for the White Paper on financial services is to be applied to competition, the same provisions should be applied to conveyancing services.

Professor Payne of Alabama, a Warner professor of law emeritus, has made his position clear on the experience that the United States has gained from seeing conveyancing services fall into the hands of the lending institutions. I am not advancing an argument to support the solicitors. My concern is to protect the consumer, not solicitors. We must ensure at the same time that we honour our commitment to competition. Professor Payne said:

"In most parts of the United States conveyancing costs are higher than in England. In recent years they have become so outrageous as to incite prolonged hearings in the Congress and an investigation by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. For the high price the buyer pays he receives only a fraction of the services and protection taken as a matter of course on the other side of the Atlantic . . . Every unbiased observer admits that the American system works badly for everyone except the mortgagee. Chronic criticism of the system is voiced but gets nowhere because the lending institutions do not want change."

8.15 pm

Sir Gordon Borrie has suggested that there should be a number of caveats on the provision of conveyancing by the lending institutions. He has said that these will be needed if the public are to benefit and continue to benefit from the new competition. He contends that competition will operate effectively only so long as the customer knows precisely what services are available to him. He believes that where the building societies provide a range of services to a single client, the services should be priced transparently. He considers it essential that there should be a "dose of official weed killer" to ensure proper and full competition in the provision of these services.

The new clause would effectively provide the sort of weed killer which the Director General of Fair Trading is proposing should be applied. It would ensure that we live up to the principles of competition to which we adhere. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be able to give me some specific assurances that we shall not engage in anti-competitive practices and monopolies when part II comes into force.

The Attorney-General: I well understand the anxieties of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), but I must limit my reply to the purpose of this part of the Bill, which deals with licensed conveyancers. Many of my hon. Friend's anxieties will be more appropriately expressed when we come to consider the building societies Bill next year.

I explained in Committee that the provision of conveyancing services is already within the scope of the Competition Act 1980. Investigations through the normal machinery — a reference from the Director General of Fair Trading to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which in turn reports to the Secretary of State — are available. The new clause is really not necessary to enable us to deal with anti-competitive or monopolistic practices when part II comes into force.

It has been suggested that it would be preferable to prevent such practices arising in the first place by requiring the Director General of Fair Trading and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to vet rules drawn up by the bodies connected with conveyancing. Let us consider what is proposed in the Bill. The Lord Chancellor will not approve rules that allow anti-competitive practics to operate. He will, of course, consult the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who will no doubt take advice from the Director General of Fair Trading, before concurring with rules drawn up by the council to ensure that the sort of situation of which my hon. Friend is fearful does not arise. Thereafter, the Director General will keep under review the operation of licensed conveyancers as part of his general statutory duties to ensure that no

undesirable practices subsequently develop. In our view, that is entirely adequate, and there is no need for the special provision which the new clause promotes.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for the clarity of his reply. I am glad to note the assurance that he has given. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 4

SOLICITORS COMPLAINTS BOARD

'1.—(1) There shall be a body to be known as the Solicitors Complaints Board.

(2) It shall be the general duty of the Board to promote high standards of competence and professional conduct among solicitors and to ensure that those standards are sufficient to secure adequate protection for members of the public.

(3) Schedule [*The Solicitors Complaints Board*] to this Act shall have effect with regard to the Board.

2.—(1) The Board may, in pursuance of its general duty referred to in paragraph (2) of subsection 1, make rules, with the concurrence of the Master of the Rolls and after consultation with the Council of the Law Society, for regulating in relation to any matter the professional practice, conduct and discipline of solicitors, including rules for regulating the association of solicitors with other persons in connection with the provision of legal services to members of the public.

(2) If any solicitor fails to comply with rules made under this section any person may make a complaint in respect of that failure to the Board.

3.—(1) There shall be established two committees of the Board to be known as the Investigation Panel and the Adjudication Panel, constituted as provided by the Board by rules under this section and having, as from the appointed day, the functions conferred or imposed on them by or under subsections 4, 5 and 6 of this section.

(2) Rules under paragraph (1) above—

(a) shall secure that a person who sits as a member of the investigation panel in the preliminary proceedings on any case shall not sit as a member of the Adjudication Panel in any subsequent proceedings on that case; and

(b) shall not come into force until approved by order of the Lord Chancellor.

(3) The power to make orders under paragraph (2) above shall be exercisable by Statutory Instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament and includes power to vary of revoke such an order by subsequent order.

4.—(1) The Investigation Panel shall have the functions conferred or imposed on them by this section.

(2) It shall be the duty of the panel to investigate any case in which—

(a) a complaint is made to the Board by or on behalf of a member of the public against a solicitor, in respect of the professional conduct of, or the services provided by that solicitor; or

(b) it is alleged that a solicitor—

(i) has (whether while a solicitor or otherwise) been convicted by any court in the United Kingdom of a criminal offence which renders him unfit to practice as a solicitor; or

(ii) has, while holding a practising certificate in force under the Solicitors Act 1974, failed to comply with any condition to which that practising certificate was subject; or

(iii) has failed to comply with any rules made by the Board under this Act; with a view to presenting the findings of such investigation to a Tribunal of the Adjudicating Panel for determination under subsection 6 of this section.

(3) For the purposes of paragraph 2*(a)* a complaint against a person who, at the time of the matters complained of, was an employee or associate of a solicitor shall be treated as a complaint against that solicitor.

(4) Any reference in paragraphs (2) and (3) to a solicitor includes reference to a person who was a solicitor at the time of the matters in question.

5.—(1) Where the Investigation Panel are satisfied that it is necessary to do so for the purposes of investigating any complaint made to the Board—

(a) alleging professional misconduct by a solicitor; or

(b) relating to the quality of any professional services provided by a solicitor,

the Board may give notice to the solicitor or his firm requiring the production or delivery to any person appointed by the Board, at a time and place to be fixed by the Board, of all documents in the possession of the solicitor or his firm in connection with the matters to which the complaint relates (whether or not they relate also to other matters)

(2) Sub-paragraphs (2) to (12) of paragraph 9 of schedule 1 to the Solicitors Act 1974, together with paragraphs 12 to 16 of that Schedule, shall apply in relation to the powers conferred by paragraph (1) as they apply in relation to the powers conferred by sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 9 of that Schedule and accordingly in those provisions—

(a) any reference to the Society shall be construed as including a reference to the Board; and

(b) any reference to a person appointed, or to a requirement, under sub-paragraph (1) aforesaid shall be construed as including a reference to a person appointed, or to a requirement, under paragraph (1); and

(c) any reference to any such documents as are mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) aforesaid shall be construed as including a reference to any such documents as are mentioned in paragraph (1).

(6)—(1) The Adjudication Panel shall have the functions conferred or imposed on them by this subsection.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Panel to consider the findings of any investigation presented to them by the Investigation Panel with a view to taking one or more of the following courses of action:—

The panel may, in an appropriate case—

(a) dismiss the complaint or allegation; or

(b) administer a reprimand to the solicitor; or

(c) refer the case to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal for hearing and determination; or

(d) refer the case to the Arbitration Service for hearing and determination under subsection 9 of this section;

(e) where the professional services provided by a solicitor in connection with any matter were in any respect not of the quality that could reasonably be expected of him as a solicitor,

(i) determine that the costs to which the solicitor shall be entitled in respect of those services shall be limited to such amount as may be specified in their determination and direct the solicitor to comply, or to secure compliance, with such one or more requirements falling within paragraph (2) as appear to them to be necessary in order to give effect to their determination;

(ii) direct the solicitor to secure the rectification, at the expense of the solicitor or his firm, of any such error, omission or other deficiency arising in connection with the said matter as they may specify;

(iii) direct the solicitor to take, at the expense of the solicitor or his firm, such other action in the interests of the client as they may specify.

(f) The requirements referred to in subsection *(e)*(i) are—

(i) a requirement to refund the whole or part or any amount already paid by or on behalf of the client in respect of the solicitor's cost in respect of the services referred to in that provision;

(ii) a requirement to remit the whole or part of those costs;

(iii) a requirement to waive, whether wholly or to any special extent, the right to recover those costs.

(3) The Panel shall give notice of any action which it takes under paragraph (2), and of the grounds for any such action, to the complainant and to the Law Society.

(4) Where it appears to the Panel—

[Mr. Cash]

(a) that any such allegation or complaint as is mentioned in paragraph 2 of subsection 4 ought to be referred to the Solicitor's Disciplinary tribunal for hearing and determination by that Tribunal; and

(b) that it is necessary for the protection of the public to do so,

the Panel may direct that any practising certificate held by the solicitor in question shall be suspended until the allegation or complaint is determined by the Solicitor's Disciplinary Tribunal or until the expiration of such period as may be prescribed by rule made by the Board, whichever is the earlier.

7.—(1) Subsection (2) of section 46 of the Solicitors Act 1974 (Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal) shall be amended to read as follows—

"(2) The Master of the Rolls shall, after consultation with the Solicitors Complaints Board and with bodies representing the interests of consumers, appoint the members of the Tribunal."

(2) After subsection (2) of section 46 of the Solicitors Act 1974 (Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal) shall be inserted—

"(2A) A person who is a member of the Council of the Law Society shall not be eligible to be a member of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal."

8.—(1) The Board shall establish an Arbitration Service for the determination of cases arising out of a complaint to the Board in which compensation not exceeding £2,000 may be appropriately awarded.

(2) The Arbitration Service shall be constituted as provided by the Board by rules made under this section.

(3) Rules under paragraph (2)—

(a) shall secure that a person who sits as a member of the Investigation Panel in the preliminary proceedings on any case shall not sit as a member of the Arbitration Service in any subsequent proceedings on that case; and

(b) shall not come into force until approved by order of the Lord Chancellor.

(4) The power to make orders under paragraph (3) shall be exercisable by Statutory Instruments subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament and includes a power to vary or revoke such an order by subsequent order.

9.—(1) The Arbitration Service shall have the functions conferred on them by this section.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Service to hear and determine any case referred to them under subsection 6 of this section.

(3) Upon determining any such case as is referred to in paragraph (2) the Arbitration Service may—

(a) award compensation to the complainant not exceeding £2,000; or

(b) dismiss the case.

(4) The Board may, with the approval of the Lord Chancellor, make rules providing for the procedure to be followed by the Arbitration Service when hearing and determining any such case as it mentioned in paragraph (2).

(5) If it appears to the Lord Chancellor that there has been a change in the value of money since the date when this section comes into force, he may by Order made by Statutory Instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament substitute for the sum specified in sections 8(1) and 9(3) such sum as is the then equivalent of £2,000.'.—*[Mr. Nicholas Brown.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 8—*Council for Legal Services*—

'(1) For the purposes of Part I of this Act and the Solicitors' Act 1974 there shall be a body known as the Council for Legal Services.

(2) It shall be the general duty of the Council to ensure that standards of quality of service which can reasonably be expected of solicitors and of professional conduct among solicitors are upheld and enforced and it shall assume all the powers of the Law Society under the Solicitors Act 1974 for that purpose.

(3) Schedule 9 will have effect with respect to the Council.

(4) The Council shall appoint an Ombudsman who shall have responsibility for

(i) the investigation of complaints against solicitors in respect of quality of service and professional conduct

(ii) promoting conciliation in appropriate cases

(iii) unless falling within the jurisdiction of the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal, in resolving complaints and applying the sanctions available to the Council under section of the Solicitors' Act 1974.

(5) The Solicitors Act 1974 shall have effect subject to the amendments specified in Schedule 10.'.

Amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 4, leave out clause 1.

Amendment No. 2, in page 4, line 19, leave out clause 2.

Amendment No. 18—*New Schedule*—

'THE SOLICITORS COMPLAINTS BOARD

Status

1. The Board shall be a body corporate.

Constitution

2.—(1) The Board shall consist of—

(a) no more than 15 solicitors of at least ten years standing; and

(b) no more than 10 lay persons.

(2) Members of the Board who are solicitors shall be elected by a postal ballot of all solicitors holding a practising certificate at the time of the election.

(3) Lay members of the Board shall be appointed by the Master of the Rolls after consultation with—

(a) the Board;

(b) relevant professional bodies; and

(c) organisations representing the interests of consumers.

(4) A member of the Council of the Law Society shall not be eligible to stand for election to the Board.

3.—(1) During the initial period the Board shall consist of a chairman and not more than 15 members (at least 5 of whom shall be lay members) appointed by the Master of the Rolls.

(2) In this paragraph the "initial period" means the period beginning with the establishment of the Board and ending immediately before the date fixed by the first scheme under subparagraph (3) for the coming into office of the first persons elected or nominated as members of the Board in accordance with the scheme.

(3) The Board shall prepare a scheme making provision as to—

(a) the election or nomination of persons for the purposes of sub-paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* of paragraph 2(1).

(b) the tenure and vacation of office of persons elected or nominated as aforesaid, and the eligibility of persons for election or nomination.

(4) A scheme under sub-paragraph (3) shall not come into force until it has been approved by the Lord Chancellor and the first scheme shall be submitted to the Lord Chancellor for approval before the end of the period of one year beginning with the establishment of the Board.

(5) The Master of the Rolls shall after consultation with the members of the Board appoint a Chairman of the Board to hold office for the period of one year.

4.—(1) The Board shall have power to raise a levy on practising solicitors, which levy shall be charged on the issue or renewal of a practising certificate.

(2) The levy referred to in sub-paragraph (1) shall be sufficient to meet the expenses of the Board incurred in the performance of their functions under this Act.

Remuneration of members

5. The Board shall have power to pay to the members of the Board or any of its committees such fees for attendance and such travelling, subsistence or other allowances as the Board may determine.

Incidental powers

6. The Board shall have power to do anything which in its opinion is calculated to facilitate the proper discharge of its functions, including the borrowing of money.

Officers and staff

7.—(1) The Board shall have power to appoint such officers and servants as it may determine.

(2) The Board shall pay to its officers and servants such remuneration as it may determine.

(3) The Board shall, as regards any officers or servants in whose case it may determine to do so, pay to or in respect of them such pensions, allowances or gratuities, or provide and maintain for them such schemes (whether contributory or not) for the payment to or in respect of them of such pensions, allowances or gratuities, as it may determine.

Committees of the Board

8.—(1) The Board may establish a committee for any purpose (other than a purpose for which it is required to establish a committee by virtue of any provision of this Part) and may delegate to any committee established under this paragraph, with or without restrictions or conditions, as it thinks fit, the exercise of any function exercisable by the Board under this Part, not being—

(a) a power to make rules, schemes or standing orders under this Part;

(b) a function expressly conferred by this Part on any committee required to be established as aforesaid; or

(c) subject to any express provision for delegation in the rules, a function expressly conferred on the Board by any rules under this Part.

(2) The number of members of a committee established under this paragraph, and the terms on which they are to hold and vacate office, shall be fixed by the Board.

(3) A committee established under this paragraph may include persons who are not members of the Board (whether licensed conveyancers or not), but a majority of the members of any such committee (including the Chairman) shall be members of the Board.

Proceedings

9.—(1) The powers of the Board and of any of its committees may be exercised notwithstanding any vacancy, and no proceedings of the Board or of any of its committee shall be invalidated by any defect in the election or nomination of a member.

(2) The Board may make standing orders for regulating the proceedings (including quorum) of the Board and of any of its committees.

Accounts

10.—(1) The Board shall keep proper accounts of all sums received or paid by it and proper records to those accounts.

(2) The Board shall appoint auditors to the Board, each of whom shall be a member of one or more relevant bodies of accountants.

(3) The Board shall cause their accounts to be audited annually by the auditors to the Board; and, as soon as is practicable after the accounts for any period have been audited, the Board shall cause them to be published and shall send a copy of them to the Lord Chancellor together with a copy of any report of the auditors thereon.".

Mr. Brown: On Second Reading and in Committee the Opposition made clear their view that part I was inadequate for its purpose. We are conscious of the improvements that the Government have made and we have taken care to draft the new clause so that we can retain the benefits of part I as it stands. The problem is that all the major anomalies which were pointed out on Second Reading remain. Part I will not deal with the widespread public dissatisfaction with the present system. The largest single grievance is that the legal profession controls the mechanism for dealing with complainis against it. The National Consumer Council's MORI poll revealed that only 3 per cent. of those polled thought that this was satisfactory. No matter what hon. Members feel about the accuracy of opinion polls, one would have to allow for a wide margin of error to interpret 3 per cent. in favour as a vote of confidence in the status quo.

The new clause meets the point by setting up an independent body to deal with complaints. It will be professionally serviced by its own staff. The legal profession will have an important voice in its functioning. We are not anti the profession, but the solicitors will not control this body. Thus, the public's objections will be met and the profession's reputation will be enhanced, because the public will have confidence in the complaints system.

The public's second major grievance against the present mechanism is over the confusing variety of avenues of complaint. The intractable nature of the complaints procedure and the tremendous obstacles faced in securing any financial remedy for a grievance will combine to make the ordinary complainant feel that the legal profession is ganging up against him. The new clause provides a focus for complaints and the possibility of redress.

It is difficult for a citizen to obtain advice and help when trying to come to grips with the negligence of his solicitor, and we provide for that. It is useless to point to the existence of the voluntary negligence panels. The Law Society has not bothered to monitor their performance, so we do not know how effective they have been. I have the experience of my constituents, whom I have tried to help, to guide me. My attitude is shaped by my practical experiences of the profession in Newcastle upon Tyne. I have no doubt that complainants are given the run around when they try to complain about solicitors. Whether that is the intention, or whether the present system makes it almost inevitable, I am not able to say. This injustice must be stopped, and our amendment does that.

If the abuse is not remedied now, public pressure, and perhaps a change of Government—or at least a change of Lord Chancellor—will make the pressure for reform later almost inevitable. The new clause is based on the Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure) Bill which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). I pay tribute to his pioneering work, which is very much appreciated not just by those who have the interests of the consumer at heart but by those who have the long-term interests of the profession at heart.

The amendments have been altered from their original wording to take account of the Coopers and Lybrand findings and recommendations and to make them compatible with the Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure) Bill. The Opposition have been working from the draft Coopers and Lybrand report, which someone was good enough to send me in advance of publication, and perhaps in advance of potential dilution. I like to think that it was sent to me by the Lord Chancellor, but the Attorney-General tells me that that is unlikely, to put it at its nicest.

The report tells the Law Society what the Opposition, the Legal Action Group and the National Consumer Council could have told it more cheaply. In short, the report says that the game is up. It urges an independent complaints procedure, a focus for complaints, a separation of the Law Society's trade union functions from its disciplinary ones, and arbitration. I was pleased that the report referred to the solicitors' trade union role in the same affectionate way as I referred to it in Committee.

The report says some unkind things about the speed and responsiveness of the Law Society's complaints procedure. It found that there was "a substantial backlog" and that

"the Professional Purposes Department was under-resourced and inadequately staffed."

The report then criticised the department for its "extreme caution". Yet this is the institution in which, under part I of the Bill, the Government invite the general public to have continued confidence. The public will not have that confidence in it. They will rightly continue to feel cheated.

[Mr. Brown]

Perhaps the most worrying aspect is the Government's failure to develop a policy in advance of events. The pace of legislation has been dictated, not by the Government, but by the Law Society. The Government do not form a view until the Law Society has formed a view, which the Government then uncritically endorse. This is utterly craven. This wrong approach to reform has got the Government into the present mess. They are legislating in part I for the La[illegible]ociety's last known view. However, the Law Society has just received a report from Coopers and Lybrand, which it commissioned, which says that the present view is wholly inadequate and untenable. On past form, when the Law Society changes its mind, the Government follow. It is therefore likely that we shall go over all this ground again and that the time of the House will have been wasted on part I.

There is a way out for the Government. To provide this way out we, as a responsible, helpful and constructive Opposition, have tabled the new clause. It could be that there are those with professional interests who hope that part I, as it stands, will appease the complaints. There may be those who hope to lose the contents of our amendments and the Coopers and Lybrand recommendations by delay and obstruction—in short, by adopting the same tactics which those who complain about solicitors say are used against them.

These proposals are our response to the present position. If that situation is allowed to deteriorate, due to neglect or deliberate obstruction, public pressure for a more thorough review of the Law Society's privileged position will become irresistible. I commend the new clause to the House and to the profession — in that order, not in the Government's order.

Mr. Alf Dubs (Battersea): Earlier this year, I introduced under the ten-minute Bill procedure the Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure) Bill. Leave to introduce the Bill was given by the House without any opposition. Although it provoked an enormous postbag of mail from all over the country, I have not had a single letter or representation other than in support of the Bill's aims. I mention that legislation because these amendments are directly based on it.

I am grateful especially to the Legal Action Group but also to the National Consumer Council for their help in preparing the Bill and publicising it. There has been enormous support for that legislation. I have been astonished at the number of people who spoke to me, in the House and outside, and at the number of letters that I received not only from the very rich, who have complained bitterly about their solicitors, but from the very poor, whose lives have been seriously disrupted and damaged by disputes in which they believed that justice had not been done, although they complained about the solicitors who acted for them.

Of course, complaints against solicitors come from a minority of people. The bulk of our constituents are satisfied with the service that they get from solicitors. I am not seeking in any way to denigrate the whole profession. Nevertheless, an important minority feel seriously aggrieved because of their dealings with the legal profession. They feel that they have not received justice and believe that the method by which they can complain against solicitors is inadequate. They want changes.

I appreciate that the Attorney-General is embarrassed about this part of the Bill, because the Coopers and Lybrand report has appeared at the wrong time for him. I do not want to tread too much on his toes and dwell on his embarrassment, but it is obvious that he must be embarrassed. In a sense, I am sorry that circumstances have conspired to make that so.

The mystery surrounding the Coopers and Lybrand report puzzles me a little. I understand that it has been made available officially by the Law Society. I went into the House of Commons Library earlier today and asked whether it had a copy of the report. It assured me that it had not been able to obtain one from the Law Society. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has one, and I have three copies. They all arrived by mysterious means in brown envelopes from sources about which I am not clear. If the Attorney-General is short of a copy or two, I have three. I do not need them all. I am genuinely puzzled about why the Law Society, knowing that the Bill was going through the House, and knowing that the part of the Bill dealing with complaints against solicitors was coming before the House, did not move a little faster. I have reason to believe that the report has officially been out for about a week. Despite that, it has not reached the House of Commons Library. The Law Society is adding to the Attorney-General's embarrassment. If he is cross about that, I can only say that I agree with him.

8.30 pm

The Coopers and Lybrand report seems to be a sensible document. It makes its main criticisms of the present arrangements concisely. I should like to quote from paragraph 20 *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* because that summarises the fault of the present system which is not put right by part I but which would be put right if the amendments were to be accepted. The first point is:

"A conflict of role arises if one body, in this case The Law Society, is responsible both for handling complaints against solicitors and for carrying out the full range of activities of a professional representative association".

There is a contrast in the views of Ministers. They feel that there would be an unacceptable conflict of interest in regard to conveyancing if the same solicitor were to work for a bank or building society, yet they do not—unless I am going to be surprised later—share the view that there is an intolerable conflict of interest if the Law Society acts as a professional body on behalf of solicitors and investigates complaints against solicitors by members of the public.

The second point made by the Coopers and Lybrand report is:

"the distinctions made between the different types of complaints are confused and extremely difficult for the public to understand".

The third point is:

"the complaints handling process is slow, cumbersome, inefficient and unresponsive to change."

The case for the amendments is contained within those three criticisms. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East said, the amendments are based upon the Bill that I introduced, but have been adjusted to give more direct effect to the Coopers and Lybrand report.

It is essential to have an independent system for investigating complaints against solicitors. As has been made clear in the report, that would give a number of distinct benefits. First, if the suggested scheme were

adopted, there would be one focus for complaints. In other words, a member of the public who feels a sense of grievance would have only one place to go and could be satisfied that the complaint would be taken on from there. At the moment, the Law Society all too often says that it does not handle a complaint and it may suggest a different remedy to the complainant. The solicitor might be required to do the work again or to refund the money.

Some of those benefits exist in the scheme provided in the Bill. The solicitor might be reprimanded. The complaint might be referred directly from the new complaints body to the solicitors disciplinary tribunal or there might be an arbitration scheme that would make recourse to the courts in negligence cases involving up to £2,000 unnecessary. The last point would be especially beneficial because a complainant who feels aggrieved by his previous experience of the legal profession and perhaps the courts will not be happy if he is told that he has a remedy and can go to the courts. Of course, there is the money involved. Legal aid might help. However, it will not appeal to the average person who feels a sense of grievance to suggest that he or she should go through the whole cumbersome procedure again and possibly incur the expenditure of significant sums of money. That is why I am keen on the arbitration scheme which is suggested in the amendment.

There is another point of some importance which relates to a proposal contained in the Bill and which I think is unsatisfactory. I understand that, under the present scheme, the Law Society has a wide discretion to refuse to deal with a complaint. That is wrong. It is arbitrary and it may leave the complainant confused. Such a let-out would not be available to the new body dealing with complaints. It would be obliged to deal with all complaints. That proposal would be of immense benefit not just to the average member of the community who feels a sense of grievance but to the legal profession. I cannot think of a more invidious position for the legal profession to find itself in than the one in which it is now. There have been some notorious instances in which the complaints system, as handled by the Law Society, has completely broken down. I shall not take up the time of the House by repeating examples which have been mentioned previously.

If the Law Society wishes to sustain the present position or if it believes that the small improvements contained in the Bill are adequate, it is in difficulties. I contend that the Bill is inadequate.

If we pass the Bill and merely say, "Oh, well, we may get round to thinking about this again," we shall be storing up trouble for ourselves. Even at this late hour in the Bill's life, the Attorney-General can say that he accepts the amendments. He has an alternative, which I put to him as a second best. The least that he can do is give a commitment that he will consider sympathetically the conclusions contained in the Coopers and Lybrand report with a view to early legislation. If the Attorney-General cannot do that, he is merely storing up difficulties for himself.

An enormous body of opinion in this country feels that we need the changes. They are of interest to many people. Until such changes are brought about, and until we have an independent system of investigating complaints against solicitors, many of us and many other people will not be satisfied. If we leave the matter tonight without a commitment for the future, it will not be long before we shall have to legislate again. It would be a pity to say that we will do nothing now, put off the day and have to do something in a few years' time. That is not good enough. We owe more to the people who would like to see changes.

I hope that we can have some positive guidance from the Attorney-General. I hope that he will accept the amendments but, if not, I hope that he will give a clear commitment as to the action that he will take in the near future.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I welcome new clause 4, which has a good deal of merit. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will carefully consider some of the suggestions that he has heard from the Opposition because, although the Law Society supports the improvement contained in the Bill, some of us believe that the present arrangements, even with the improved machinery included in the Bill, will not be adequate.

I support the right of anyone to go to the complaints board. The complaints will then be referred to the investigating panel and to the adjudicating panel. That seems simple and straightforward.

I am grateful to the Law Society for writing to me only last month to explain the safeguards that exist in the Bill and the improvement that the Bill would make to the existing system. Even with that strengthened system, I believe that in practice there will be manifest failings. I say that because in the Bill, and in the letter from the Law Society dated 5 June, there is not one word about delay. I have serious misgivings about the way in which the Law Society conducts its affairs, because of the almost endless delay and prevarication that an ordinary Member of Parliament experiences in trying to obtain some form of justice for his constituents.

In the past 10 years, two of my constituents met with severe accidents involving head injury. In each case I had to approach the Law Society in trying to secure better compensation for them. I shall refer to my constituents as Mr. A and Mr. B.

Mr. A, who was involved in a serious car accident, was awarded about £27,000 for his injuries. It was a handsome and fair award, but the solicitor who acted for Mr. A presented a bill for about £23,000. Luckily, that was spotted and the solicitor eventually sent my constituent a cheque for the overcharge of £23,000 in his bill because of "a clerical error", as he put it. That was a disgraceful case of deliberate overcharging of a man who was not mentally able to cope with his affairs for himself. That solicitor should have been prosecuted for criminal negligence. That is the course that the Law Society said that it was considering four or five years ago. Although Mr. A has received back the £23,000 overcharge, there is no sign of a prosecution taking place.

Mr. B, who was also involved in a serious motor car accident, was awarded substantial damages of about £22,000. Again, that was a perfectly fair award. As with Mr. A, the machinery of the law proceeded in an adequate and normal way. But Mr. B's solicitors fell foul of the law by paying Mr. B directly £22,000 when he was manifestly mentally inadequate. In his mentally disabled state, Mr. B squandered the money and is now penniless. The solicitors handling Mr. B's case were in contravention of the law for, if a client is mentally incapacitated, they have a duty not to give him the money directly, as he is not able to be responsible for his actions. I sent particulars of that case to the Law Society between five and 10 years ago.

[Sir John Farr]

The last letter I had from the society was this week. I was reminded that the long recess was due and that the society hoped in due course to let me have counsel's opinion on whether the firm in question should be prosecuted.

In dealing with those two cases I met with extreme lack of interest, prevarication and blocking on the part of the Law Society. As far as I can see, it will be another 10 years or so before the obvious action will be taken. For that reason, if I have the chance to do so, I shall support the new clause.

8.45 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: The Glanville Davies case was an ill wind but it did a good deal of good. It swept like a hurricane through the Law Society in Chancery lane, and I believe that one of the most interesting results of that case is that it has actually changed attitudes among solicitors.

In paragraph 41 of the Coopers and Lybrand report, in which I think the authors are referring particularly to their contacts among solicitors, they say:

"We have found widespread agreement with our broad conclusion that complaints handling should be transferred from The Society to a new and regulatory body separate from and independent of The Law Society".

They go on to say:

"We have much less agreement about the nature and functions of the new body—not least because many had thought up to, but not beyond, the need for complaints handling to be independent of The Society."

However, it is not beyond the wit of man and not even beyond the wit of Government — even of this Government—that some means might be devised, and devised very quickly, to provide the independent procedure needed for dealing with complaints against solicitors.

It is notable that other professions and other bodies have already devised independent disciplinary procedures. The accountancy profession, which had to deal with the difficulty of being a profession split into different parts, has recently established a joint disciplinary scheme which applies to all members of four professional associations participating in the scheme. The scheme provides procedures for investigating the professional and business conduct of accountants of the four different types. The procedure enables their efficiency and their competence to be investigated in questions which give rise to public concern.

It is fundamentally offensive that the Law Society should carry out the two functions of representing solicitors and regulating solicitors. It is not necessary to expand the arguments beyond those broad but important professions of principle—a principle which, I believe, is widely held on both sides of the House. We would hope to hear tonight from the Attorney-General that the Government have not only taken note of the Coopers and Lybrand report—as, of course, they have—but have decided that in the next Session of Parliament, within the next few months, there will be legislation giving expression to that widespread agreement to which I referred in quoting from paragraph 41 of the report.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The great majority of the solicitors—the collective noun is a "charge" of solicitors —who were present on the Government Benches during the debate on conveyancing, when the Government's mind was still open and the solicitors were wanting to close it in a direction favourable to their interests, have now disappeared. I take it that that means that on this matter the Government have made up their mind and will not accept our new clauses. Nevertheless, it is still important to argue the case for the amendment, in the best interests of the legal profession itself.

My concern is for a profession which serves the public in all its problems, defends all its rights, and even puts the public interest and serving the public above its vested interest as a cosy profession. It is because of that emphasis that the Government should act in the profession's own best interest and accept the new clauses.

There is a sad contrast between the Government's behaviour on this matter and on conveyancing, and it is important to draw attention to that. When it comes to banks and building societies doing conveyancing, conflict of interest becomes paramount—so important that it can obviate the principle in the eyes of some. The Lord Chancellor can selfishly argue that one has to defend the income of solicitors because one does not want to pay more fees in legal aid to them. Conflict of interest there is all-important. But when we come to complaints against solicitors, where there is a real conflict of interest, it is ignored by the Government. That conflict is real and palpable and is felt by the public.

The Law Society cannot act as a trade union defending the vested interests of its members and as custodian of the public interest serving and dealing with complaints by the public. It cannot be judge, jury and accused in its own case. There is a real conflict of interest. If the Government regard conflict of interest as so important, why do they not do something about it and accept our new clauses, which get round the problem? The Coopers and Lybrand report makes clear in paragraph 23 what a conflict of interest is. It says:

"some consider that The Society's complaints handling and representational roles are inherently in conflict, whatever arrangements are devised to minimise the conflict in individual cases; they are concerned that, despite rigorous efforts to eliminate conflict in those cases, there will still be cases in which it will occur. From our programme of interviews and consultations, we are impressed by the widespread perception of, and concern over, this basic conflict, both among members of the profession and among outsiders."

The question of conflict of interest is obsessive. Why will the Government not do anything about it? Our new clauses get round the problem. All Members who speak on legal issues are deluged with complaints about solicitors. One can understand some of the complaints, because people who lose do not like losing. But many of the complaints are about shoddy workmanship, inattention and inefficiency. They are justified complaints from which there is no redress. The Bill, as it stands, does not provide adequate redress. The Government will be serving the public well if they accept the new clauses.

Part I of the Bill is not satisfactory. There is no mention of a concrete code of written professional standards. The boundary between negligence and inadequate professional work is not defined. The Law Society is given wide discretion to deal with complaints, or to refuse to deal with complaints, and the shoddy work jurisdiction is almost entirely in the hands of the society. All that is wrong.

More important, events have overtaken the Bill and we are legislating nonsense. The report from Coopers and Lybrand manifestly says that the Bill is inadequate and that there has to be independent machinery. That is what we are proposing in the new clauses. Yet the Government are

determined to press on in the face of their own inadequacies. They are closing the case for legislation for at least two or three years, and giving us a stopgap measure which has been rejected by the society's own advisers.

I am aware that part I comes directly from the Law Society. Speaking as the political arm of the Law Society, the Lord Chancellor says that part I was requested by the society, and he is inclined to listen only to the society in this kind of case. That is an interesting comment on the source of the legislation. The Law Society's own management consultants, Coopers and Lybrand, say the proposals are inadequate and therefore the Government have a responsibility to think again. They should not push this House into nonsensical legislation which has been bypassed by events.

The Government will doubtless say that they want time to consult, but there was no consultation over part I before it was put into the Bill. In any case, consultation could take years, bearing in mind the way the profession functions. Coopers and Lybrand referred to an unacceptable gap of 11 years in the preparation by the society of a new guide to professional conduct. If that is the speed of consultation, it would be far better to do what we are proposing, which is to lay down the basic guidelines by way of the new clauses and to allow consultation to take place on how the basic guidelines are to be operated and filled in.

Parliament has a clear mandate from the public to act by ensuring that the new legislation is not nonsense. That is what it will be if we pass it unchanged. It should be not a stopgap, but legislation which will fulfil a public need. There is strong public feeling. All the opinion polls and our own correspondence show that. We need an independent review procedure for complaints. If the Bill is passed unamended, people will feel that Parliament is once again ignoring the public interest and getting into cahoots with a privileged profession in order to protect that profession from the standards of impartiality and independent review which are maintained in every aspect of life and in all other professions.

The Attorney-General: The canard was repeated by the hon. Member for Newcastle on Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I assure him that there is no mole in ermine in this building, and that includes the Lord Chancellor. I suspect I know who it was.

We had a valuable contribution from the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), and all of us respect his work on this subject. I have expressed my admiration for him before, and I repeat it tonight. I should tell the hon. Gentleman that if the Library does not have the Coopers and Lybrand report it must be because it does not take the *Law Society's Gazette*, because it was published as a supplement to the *Gazette* on 10 July and was therefore available to anybody who needed it.

I wish that I could give to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) the undertaking that within a few months we will introduce legislation. I cannot do that, for reasons which I shall explain in a little detail.

My old friend the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) invented yet another phrase — a charge of solicitors — which tempts me to think that he is the grouser of Great Grimsby. I hope that he will not sue me for that.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I take a little time, because this is an important subject and deserves to be dealt with in proper detail. It has been helpful to have this opportunity so early after the publication of the report to debate the proposals for an independent solicitors complaints board, as reflected in the new clauses and in another way in the Coopers and Lybrand report, or what it calls the exposure draft of its report.

Before Opposition Members get too carried away with enthusiasm for immediate change, I must inject a note of caution. The first warning must be that whatever legislative changes might be needed to give effect to such proposals, they cannot be included in this Bill. It is far too late, even if there were settled policy, to formulate the additional clauses which would be needed to make the changes suggested in the Opposition new clauses or by Coopers and Lybrand. Not only would there need to be several new provisions to set up a solicitors complaints board, to describe its functions in detail and to prescribe its constitution, but there would have to be a line-by-line examination of the 80 or so sections of the Solicitors Act 1974 to see what should be removed, what retained and what amended. Therefore, the new clauses are defective, although I do not complain about that. I admire the huge amount of work that must have gone into them, and I congratulate hon. Members on what they did.

9 pm

This debate will be helpful in assisting the Law Society in its deliberations on the report — we have already heard conflicting views, as one would expect, from the council of the Law Society—and the House will agree, on reflection, that rushed and ill-thought-out legislation is something that we would live to regret.

We are considering an exposure draft—a first report — as only one element in the first phase of the fundamental review of the society's functions and organisation now in hand. We must await the further reports from the management consultants on the other matters within their terms of reference. We must consider structure, staffing and systems, which have been expressly reserved by Coopers and Lybrand for later phases of the review, as is consideration of the society's representational functions and its role in legal aid administration. All those matters deserve careful consideration, and even if the society can form rapid decisions following the end of the consultation period in October — which I suspect is unlikely — if would be foolish then to press for early legislation and, therefore, miss the opportunity to take account of later proposals, which, in a sense, is the reverse of the accusations made against us in carrying on with part I.

The Coopers and Lybrand report proposes that a solicitors complaints board independent of the Law Society be created with the duty of investigating all complaints against solicitors. A central theme is that the new board would provide a one-door entry point for all complaints against solicitors, having power to impose sanctions in respect of less serious cases, but being able to pass on the more serious cases of misconduct and negligence to the solicitors disciplinary tribunal and the courts. That approach is only one option for change. The society, being rightly anxious to encourage as wide-ranging a debate as possible, has identified some alternative options. It might, for example, be possible to satisfy public concern through the creation of separate committees within the Law Society with responsibility for the investigation of, and the adjudication on, complaints against solicitors. It seems right that such alternative

[The Attorney-General]

approaches be considered. Whether we can accept them is another matter. The society has also identified some potential difficulties outlined in the Coopers and Lybrand report.

Those considering the report will no doubt wish to make an especially close analysis of the wide variety of factors which it brings together. The consultants — naturally enough, perhaps, having regard to the nature of their exercise — have tended to concentrate on the society's functions when considering possible improvements in the system for handling complaints. But this ignores the fact that the society is only one of three bodies with major functions in this area, and—hitherto, at least — has been exercising very much a subordinate jurisdiction when compared with the courts and the solicitors disciplinary tribunal.

We shall always have problems between any new body and the negligence jurisdiction of the courts, bearing in mind the real and immediate danger of prejudice to clients' interests. We must think carefully about the extent to which a single point of entry can work in this area. Further thought may need to be given to the relationships with the quality control aspects of taxation and remuneration certificate procedure. We may need additional consideration of the role of a lay observer, given the presence of lay representatives on the proposed new body. We must also consider accountability: to whom should that new body be accountable?

Those are some of the clearly difficult issues that must be resolved before the Government can invite the House to consider legislation for changes. The report acknowledges that there are no absolute answers here and that these are matters for judgment. It acknowledges that much existing criticism may relate to appearance as much as to reality. It refers to

"a wider issue of public confidence, by no means confined to the Law Society, in the accountability of professional associations and the means of disciplining their members."

The criticisms that have been made of the lack of independent elements within the existing system disregard the part at present played by the solicitors disciplinary tribunal as a statutory body, independent of the Law Society, and the lay observer as an independent check on the society's handling of complaints against solicitors. Thus, even on the fundamental principle of an independent body, there is clearly more than one view. In his recently published report, the lay observer—and I shall not quote it all—made it quite clear that he took a contrary view, so the opinion, although it may so appear from the debate today, does not in fact lie all in the same direction. After the recent events in Wales, I think that we are now a little more suspicious of MORI polls than we were before. Therefore, the MORI polls which were quoted previously must be considered with a little suspicion.

The response to the consultation exercise which has now been embarked upon will assist the society in reaching informed decisions on all the matters raised in the Coopers and Lybrand report. It is right that the Government should wait until such time as this process is complete before forming a view of their own, but I assure the House that the Government have a completely open mind about whether a complaints system independent of the Law Society best suits the public interest.

I come to the points that were made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. This is really an approach from a different angle, based on the report of the National Consumer Council. It is getting to very much the same end by rather different means. The points that I have made, as I am sure the hon. and learned Gentleman will appreciate, as a lawyer, about the Coopers and Lybrand report apply equally to him. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not go into great detail, because in a sense I would merely be repeating what I have said before. Whichever suggestion one takes—the Coopers and Lybrand report, which is merely the first stage of a much more detailed analysis, or the National Consumer Council report — these are matters which obviously need a great deal more consultation, and I am sure that, on reflection, the House would be the first to agree that hastily rushed through legislation does great harm in the end.

Part I contains a number of real benefits for the client. I would hate in any way to delay those, because, if we cannot have all that we want today, for the reasons that I have given, part I provides more safeguards for the public, which the House will generally welcome.

Mr. Dubs: The Attorney-General has been a little enigmatic. He says that the Government are completely open-minded about the possibility of an independent system for investigating such complaints. Can he give the House some idea of the possible time scale, on the assumption that this open-mindedness on the Government's part comes to an end and the Coopers and Lybrand report proves to be persuasive?

The Attorney-General: I think that I made it clear. We obviously must have the complete series of reports from Coopers and Lybrand. On the existing report, there is a consultation period ending in October. We shall want to see what the Law Society and others concerned say. It may well be that the bulk of opinion will be on the lines of Coopers and Lybrand. I want to have the other reports, because Coopers and Lybrand has reserved certain matters, to which I referred, for later reports. We do not want to have two bites at the cherry. Indeed, we have already been accused of having two bites.

We shall have to consider carefully the existing law about solicitors contained in the Solicitors Act 1974. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be no deliberate holding back by the Government. We shall move as fast as we can, but he will appreciate, as will all hon. Members, the difficulty in getting such matters into the programme of a coming Session. There is always great competition to include Bills. I give him the undertaking that there will be no feet dragging of any kind.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Attorney-General's reply was disappointing, though not unexpectedly so. We appreciate the Government's difficulties, even embarrassment, in this area. However, we feel it important to show the Law Society that Opposition Members mean business and we shall, therefore, press the matter to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided. Ayes 145, Noes 233.

Division No. 281] **[9.9 pm**

AYES

Ashton, Joe	Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Beggs, Roy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Beith, A. J.
Barnett, Guy	Benn, Tony

Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Aye:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher

Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 10

AMENDMENT OF ARBITRATION ACT 1950

'In paragraph *(b)* of section 7 of the Arbitration Act 1950 (party fails to appoint an arbitrator), the words after "appoint an arbitrator" to the end of the paragraph shall be replaced by the words "or does not do so within the time specified in the agreement or, if no time is specified, within a reasonable time, the other party to the agreement, having appointed his arbitrator, may serve the party in default with a written notice to appoint an arbitrator and, if the appointment is not made within seven clear days after the service of the notice, the High Court or a judge thereof may, on the application of the party who gave the notice, appoint an arbitrator on behalf of the party in default who shall have the like power to act in the reference and make an award as if had been appointed in accordance with the terms of the agreement.".'.—*[Mr. Ottaway.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Clause 57 blocks a loophole in the law of arbitration but creates an inconsistency. The clause is welcome in that it stops people being able to avoid appointing an arbitrator and therefore to avoid having a properly constituted arbitration panel but, as those who follow the debate on clause 57 in Committee will be aware, I was anxious that its approach was wrong in that it provided for a court appointment of a replacement arbitrator. I thought that a somewhat surprising decision in view of the weight of opinion of people in the arbitration profession who went to the Department of Trade and Industry to make their case. It is regrettable that their views did not prevail.

As a result of clause 57, section 10 of the Arbitration Act 1950 is inconsistent with section 7 of that Act. Section 7 provides that, when parties have agreed to refer a dispute to two arbitrators as umpire, in the event of default in the appointment of one of the arbitrators, a properly constituted panel becomes a sole arbitrator. Clause 57 provides that when there is a default in the appointment of an arbitrator, there are three arbitrators, and the second is appointed by the court. That is bad law and, inconsistent and should be remedied.

In Committee, I tried to provide consistency with section 7 of the 1950 Act but my proposal was rejected on three grounds. I should like to consider the arguments that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General used to reject my proposal. First, he said that a fundamental requirement was that the clause should provide that a dispute should be settled by a three-man arbitration tribunal. I have managed to comply with that requirement by providing in the new clause for a three-man arbitration tribunal. Secondly, he said that it was important for such a clause to have the blessing of the United Nations Committee on International Trade Law and that clause 53 should be in line with the model clause on arbitration. Again, I have got over that hurdle by providing in the new clause for a three-man arbitration panel, which is consistent with the UNCITRAL model code.

The most important point, however, is that the Government took the advice of Mr. Justice Mustill. To quote again my right hon. and learned Friend, he said:

> "Mr. Justice Mustill is probably the greatest expert on the law of arbitration . . . Mr. Justice Mustill is probably the leading expert of all time in this respect."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 4 July 1985, c. 196.]

I am happy to accept my right hon. and learned Friend's view of Mr. Justice Mustill. It is unfortunate that in Committee we did not have before us a letter dated 26 February 1985 from Mr. Justice Mustill to Lord Hacking. Referring to sections 7 and 10 of the Arbitration Act 1950, he said:

> "We accept that section 7 provides a precedent for party-appointment. There is, however, much to be said for the view that it is an anomaly, which should not be perpetuated. The Advisory Committee will have to look at sections 7, 10 and 25 together, since they do not really add up."

The unfortunate point about clause 57 is that it does not take Mr. Justice Mustill's advice but looks in isolation at section 10. All I am seeking to do in the new clause is to follow Mr. Justice Mustill's advice by taking sections 7 and 10 together. I have adopted in my new clause the Government's wording of clause 57. Having deployed my right hon. and learned Friend's arguments in Committee and having adopted the Government's wording in the new clause, I hope that he will be able to accept it.

The Attorney-General: I admire my hon. Friend's great ingenuity, but I am afraid that I still have to disappoint him. I appreciate that his approach is consistent and unobjectionable but the problem is that it goes beyond the intention of clause 57, which was designed to fill a specific gap in the Arbitration Act that had been identified by the Mustill committee on a temporary basis — I emphasise "on a temporary basis"—prior to consideration by the departmental advisory committee on arbitration for the reform of arbitration law in the light of the UNCITRAL model. The solution chosen in clause 57 was recommended by the sub-committee and it was adopted in the UNCITRAL model law. As yet there is no evidence that section 7 is creating difficulties for arbitrators but the ingenuity shown by my hon. Friend will be drawn to the attention of the sub-committee.

Mr. Ottaway: Although I am somewhat disappointed, I am reassured by the assurance of my right hon. and learned Friend that the matter will be looked at. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 6

PREPARATION OF CONVEYANCING DOCUMENTS BY UNQUALIFIED PERSONS

The Attorney-General: I beg to move, in page 10, line 9, at end insert—

'(5) After that subsection there shall be inserted—

"(4) A local weights and measures authority may institute proceedings for an offence under this section.".'.

In Committee I undertook to introduce an amendment to empower trading standards departments, which formerly were known, probably inappropriately, as weights and measures authorities, to undertake prosecutions for breaches of section 22 of the Solicitors Act 1974. This amendment gives effect to that undertaking. For some time, the arrangements for prosecuting illegal conveyancers have been regarded as unsatisfactory. The Royal Commission on legal services recommended that the Law Society should cease to undertake such prosecutions. No statutory requirement is imposed on the Law Society to do that, and it has assumed responsibility rather by default. That has given rise to presentational difficulties, because it has not been sufficiently recognised that when the Law Society initiates such prosecutions, it is not being selfish and acting in its own interests, but is acting to protect the public.

We have been exploring alternatives and it has been agreed that local trading standards departments should take responsibility in this area. That seems to be a sensible move.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8

INCORPORATED PRACTICES

Amendments made: No. 5 in page 11, line 17, leave out 'of that Act shall also'

and insert

', or (as the case may be) section 23(1), of that Act shall'.

No. 6, in page 11, line 24, at end insert

'or (as the case may be) under the said section 23.'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 14

ISSUE OF LICENCES BY COUNCIL

9.30 pm

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 15, line 38, at end insert——

'(4A) Where—

(a) an application for a licence is made in accordance with section 13 by a person who, at the date of the application, already holds a licence under this Part; and

(b) no new licence is issued to him in pursuance of the application before the time when his existing licence would, apart from this subsection, expire in accordance with subsection (4),

his existing licence shall not expire at that time but shall continue in force until a new licence is issued to him in pursuance of the application or, if the application is refused by the Council—

(i) until the end of the period within which an appeal may be brought against the refusal under section 28(1)*(a)*; or

(ii) if such an appeal is brought, until the appeal is determined or abandoned.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this, we may take Government amendments Nos. 10, 13, 19 and 21 to 24.

The Attorney-General: In Committee, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) moved an amendment to clause 11 designed to ensure that licensed conveyancers should not be prevented from practising when their application to renew an existing licence was not dealt with in time by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers. I undertook to bring forward an amendment to cover the point.

As so often happens, while we were considering the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman, other issues arose which are covered by the amendments grouped with No. 9. Two remove from the council the power to revoke recognition of a body corporate on the grounds of fraud or error and enable the discipline and appeals committee, which is a much better body, to exercise that power. That fits in with the respective roles of the council and the committee under part II.

Two other amendments introduce a right of appeal against refusals to grant recognition to bodies corporate, whether of licensed conveyancers or of solicitors. An amendment to schedule 3 ensures that the council's rule-making powers regarding proceedings before the discipline and appeals committee is sufficiently flexible.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 16, line 1, leave out 'of expiry of his previous licence'

and insert

'when his previous licence expired in accordance with subsection (4) (or would have so expired but for subsection (4A))'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 31

PROVISION OF CONVEYANCING SERVICES BY RECOGNISED BODIES

Amendment made: No. 13, in page 29, leave out lines 26 to 28.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Clause 68

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT, TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 56, line 28, leave out 'and 55 to 64' and insert ', 55 to 61 and 63 and 64'.

This is a technical amendment to the commencement provisions, correcting the reference to the sections that will come into force two months after Royal Assent.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 2

INCORPORATED PRACTICES: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 60, line 26, at end insert—

Appeal against refusal of Council to grant recognition

[The Attorney-General]

1A.—(1) Where the Council refuse an application by any body corporate for recognition under section 8 of this Act, that body may appeal to the Master of the Rolls against that refusal within one month of being notified of it.

(2) On an appeal under this paragraph the Master of the Rolls may—

(a) direct the Council to grant recognition of the body in question under section 8 of this Act; or

(b) affirm the refusal of the Council;

and he may make such order as to the payment of costs by the Council or by that body as he thinks fit.

(3) Rules made by the Council with the concurrence of the Master of the Rolls may make provision, as respects any application for recognition that is neither granted nor refused by the Council within such period as may be specified in the rules, for enabling an appeal to be brought under this paragraph in relation to the application as if it had been refused by the Council.

(4) The Master of the Rolls may make regulations about the procedure for appeals to him under this paragraph.'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 4

The Discipline and Appeals Committee: Supplementary Provisions

Amendment made: No. 21, in page 75, line 41, leave out from 'relation' to end of line 8 on page 76 and insert

'to proceedings before the Discipline and Appeals Committee under this Part.

(2) As respects proceedings before the Committee under section 25,'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Schedule 6

Bodies recognised under s.31: Supplementary provisions

Amendments made: No. 22, in page 85, line 26, at end insert—

'Revocation of recognition on grounds of fraud or error

6A.—(1) Where the Discipline and Appeals Committee are satisfied that the recognition of a body corporate under section 31 was granted as a result of any error, or as a result of fraud on the part of that body, the Committee may, if they think fit, by order revoke that body's recognition.

(2) A body corporate may be granted recognition under that section notwithstanding that any recognition previously granted to it has been evoked under this paragraph; but if any such recognition was so revoked on the ground of fraud that body shall not be granted recognition under that section except on an application made in that behalf to the Committee.

Appeal against decision of Council in relation to grant of recognition

6B.—(1) Where, in the case of any body corporate, the Council—

(a) refuses an application by that body for recognition under section 31; or

(b) decides to grant recognition of that body under that section subject to any restrictions,

that body may appeal to the Discipline and Appeals Committee against that refusal or decision within one month of being notified of it.

(2) On an appeal under this paragraph the Discipline and Appeals Committee may—

(a) by order direct the Council to grant recognition of the body in question under section 31, either without restrictions or subject to such restrictions falling within subsection (3)*(d)* of that section as may be specified by the Committee in the direction; or

(b) affirm the refusal or decision of the Council;

and the Committee may make such order as to the payment of costs by the Council or by that body as they think fit.

(3) Rules made by the Council may make provision, as respects any application for recognition that is neither granted nor refused by the Council within such period as may be specified in the rules, for enabling an appeal to be brought under this paragraph in relation to the application as if it had been refused by the Council.'.

No. 23, in page 85, line 28, leave out sub-paragraph (1).

No. 24, in page 85, line 33, after 'Paragraphs', insert '1(2),'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

The Attorney-General: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 86, line 10, leave out

'that Part of that Schedule'

and insert

'Part II of Schedule 5'.

This is a minor drafting amendment which corrects an insufficiently clear reference in schedule 6.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 9

Transitional provisions and savings

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 91, line 25, at end insert—

'Restriction on preparation of papers for probate etc.

5A. Where a person has committed an offence under section 23 of the Solicitors Act 1974 before the commencement of section [*Preparation of papers for probate etc. by unqualified persons*] of this Act, he shall not be liable after that commencement to be proceeded against in respect of that offence unless the act constituting that offence would have constituted an offence under section 23, as substituted by section [*Preparation of papers for probate etc. by unqualified persons*] of this Act, if it had been in force at the time when the act was done.'.—*[The Attorney-General.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's and Prince of Wales's Consent signified.]

9.33 pm

The Attorney-General: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am grateful for the high quality of our debates tonight, and, in particular, in Committee. As so often happens, the criticisms made of the Bill relate generally not to what is in the Bill, but to what people think should have been it it.

As is so often the case when the Government introduce change, far from satisfying the reforming element in us, it serves only to increase the appetite for more. We have been asked to move immediately towards the establishment of an independent body to deal with complaints against solicitors, and we have spent a good deal of time discussing whether banks and building societies should be permitted to offer services. The House will have the opportunity to return to both those issues in due course. The Coopers and Lybrand review of the Law Society is still in its early stages. We await with interest the developments in that area as the exercise progresses. Legislation to enable the Lord Chancellor to exempt bodies corporate from the restrictions on conveyancing will be introduced next Session. I am sure that many hon. Members present tonight will reappear then to air their views on how those powers should be exercised.

The provisions of the Bill are familiar to hon. Members. The speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House have been largely constructive and helpful, and the Bill has undoubtedly been greatly improved by all

our efforts. My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and I are grateful to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), and to all those who have played a part in tonight's debate for their assistance, and for the good will which has coloured our proceedings. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.35 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: In concluding my speech on Second Reading, I said that the Bill was more to be commended for effort than for achievement. The Bill is an under-achiever, and many hon. Members may eventually feel that it was not worth the effort. I have no doubt that part I will not stand the test of time. Part II timidly and cautiously introduces the new profession of the licensed conveyancer. We wish the new profession well, and believe that it will benefit the consumer. However, the question of in-house work by building societies remains unresolved.

I noticed, as did many hon. Members, that the long title of the Bill is drawn wide. At one stage I considered introducing an amendment to set a statutory retiring age for Lord Chancellors. However, I must not refer to what is not in the Bill, which is frustrating, as most matters which should be in the Bill are not.

Despite the issues that divide us, and the occasional charges of vested interest and counter-charges of ignorance, the Report stage, like the Committee stage, was reasonably good natured. In that spirit I shall draw my remarks to a close by putting in a kind word for the Attorney-General. He has had his problems in recent legal affairs debates, and the Opposition have always sought to help him constructively. Recently he had to respond to the loss of the disreputable original clause 22 from the Prosecution of Offences Bill and the equally disreputable original clause 43 from this Bill when both clauses were defeated in the other place. He had to explain why the Government retreated from their original promise to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on banks and building societies, and he had to defend part I of the Bill, which has been superseded by events. In Committee, he could advance only the worst of arguments to defend the present state of our defamation laws—that he could not afford to change them because of the cost. He was clearly embarrassed by the lack of coherence in the present state of law centres.

I shall now come to the good word. To all those points the Attorney-General's ultimate response was, as it had to be, "I am only the agent of the Lord Chancellor." To be fair to the Attorney-General, that is the only respectable excuse available to him.

9.38 pm

Mr. Cash: I am glad to have taken part in the proceedings, and I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General for the courtesy that he has shown throughout. I wish the Bill well.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

Rates (Edinburgh)

9.39 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move,

That the Rate Reduction (City of Edinburgh District) 1985-86 Report, which was laid before this House on 3rd July, be approved.

I should like to start by setting the action that we have taken against Edinburgh in the context of our policies on local authority expenditure as a whole and then set out the reasons why we have taken action against Edinburgh this year.

On any measure, local authority expenditure is a significant feature of the economy. What Scottish local authorities spend accounts for half the programme of public expenditure in Scotland for which I am responsible. In the United Kingdom as a whole, local authority expenditure accounts for a quarter of public expenditure. Given the range of services provided by local authorities, this is not surprising, but it does emphasise the fact that no Government can leave local authority expenditure out of their economic calculations. I do not think that Labour Members would disagree with that. Certainly their policies when last in office confirm that they agree with us that local authority expenditure cannot be ignored and has to be controlled in the pursuit of national economic aims.

Local authority expenditure in total is still too high. It is still above the level it was when we came to office, although I am glad that increasing numbers of authorities are now reducing their expenditure and budgeting to spend within guidelines. In 1984-85, 15 authorities budgeted to spend within guidelines. This year, the number is 30, and I hope to see continued improvements.

The problem of local authority expenditure is increasingly becoming a problem of a small group of authorities. If we look at this year's overspenders, of which there were 35, 12 were within 3 per cent. of guideline and 16 were within 6 per cent. Of the remaining seven all except one were within 8·1 per cent. of guideline. All these 34 authorities have of course suffered grant penalties but, under the new improved arrangements that we have introduced, if they bring their spending down to guideline at outturn, they will have their penalty returned. There is no reason why this money should be lost to ratepayers if authorities take action now and reduce their expenditure.

The exception to this pattern of overspending is Edinburgh district council with its massive overspend against guideline of 48 per cent. On any test this planned expenditure is excessive and unreasonable and action simply has to be taken in the interests of the city's ratepayers. However, before I turn to the details of the case against Edinburgh, I should like to trace briefly the history of the term "excessive and unreasonable" as applied to local authority expenditure and linked to the power to take selective action.

Although the origins of the power are in the local government legislation of 1929, the power to take action against an individual local authority on the grounds of excessive and unreasonable expenditure, and on which, in amended form, we are taking action against Edinburgh, is set out in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966. It is therefore a measure put on the statute book by Labour Members when they were in power. We have, of course,

[Mr. George Younger]

amended and improved it so that we can operate on planned expenditure and return the savings to the ratepayers. However, the basic concept of selective action is contained within legislation for which the Labour party was responsible and for which the ratepayers are, I am sure, grateful.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Is the right hon. Gentleman really telling the House that the guidelines had statutory backing in 1966?

Mr. Younger: No, I did not refer to guidelines. I merely pointed out that the ability to take selective action for excessive and unreasonable expenditure was proudly introduced by a Labour Government. It may be significant that the Minister who introduced that measure has since joined the Social Democratic party. I leave it to the Opposition to judge whether that has any significance.

We have initiated selective action on 14 occasions. The total of savings achieved over the years is over £80 million and there have been significant benefits to ratepayers. For instance, the rate of Lothian regional council went down by 25 per cent. over two years. It is, of course, a power to be used only when an authority is clearly planning excessive and unreasonable expenditure. Last year, no authority fell into that category. This year, one authority has stood out and I should now like to turn in detail to the reasons why I initiated action against Edinburgh and why, having considered the representations it made in response to my action, I have decided to lay this report before the House.

It is necessary only to set out the basic statistics for Edinburgh's expenditure plans for 1985-86 to make an overwhelming case for selective action. The figures speak for themselves and I shall remind the House of them. Edinburgh is planning to exceed its guideline by no less than 48 per cent. This is a massive excess and it is six times greater than the next highest excess. If all authorities had overspent by 48 per cent. local authority expenditure in Scotland would have been no less than £1,289 million higher than it is.

If I heard the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) correctly when he was speaking on the radio this morning, he made it clear that he would have nothing to do with supporting any defiance of court rulings or any contempt of court by a local authority. I hope that he will confirm that sensible and statesmanlike statement when he speaks this evening. However, he must go rather further if he is to satisfy the House of his and his party's bona fides in this matter. We require a clear statement from the hon. Gentleman whether he fully supports all the actions of the Labour administration of Edinburgh district council, including its rating plans, expenditure plans and the increase in rates which these plans involve. He owes it to the House to make it clear whether these plans have his full support in every detail.

Edinburgh's excess expenditure of 48 per cent. represents £17·2 million in cash, which is almost 20 per cent. of the total overspend of all Scottish local authorities, although at guideline level Edinburgh's expenditure accounts for only 1·2 per cent. of guideline provision. Without Edinburgh's contribution, the spending performance of Scottish local authorities would look much better.

The level of spending against guideline is not the only test, and on every other way of considering the figures Edinburgh stands out from all other authorities. Its planned level of spending per head is, at £114, the highest of any district council, and almost double the district average of £62. It is well above the average of comparator authorities and above each comparator individually.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there are other ways of judging an overspend of £17·2 million? That sum is a quarter of that which was ladled out to Johnson Matthey Bankers and the cost of five days on the Falklands.

Mr. Younger: Yes. It is probably a much smaller sum and a much smaller percentage if it is compared with all that we spend on the Health Service or the education service in Scotland. It can be compared with anything one chooses. Surely it is fair to compare Edinburgh with its nearest comparator authorities and other local authorities generally. I have no doubt that it is difficult to run a local authority but it is the easiest matter in the world to run one if no attention is paid to the amount of money required to do it. The skill is in matching resources to requirements and it is that which we are criticising this evening.

The level of growth planned at a time when we are asking authorities to reduce their spending is staggering. Edinburgh is planning to spend in real terms—that is, making full allowance for inflation—33 per cent. more than it spent last year. The comparable figure for districts as a whole is 1·8 per cent. Compared with what the council was spending in 1978-79, it is now planning to spend 68 per cent. more in real terms after fully allowing for inflation. The comparable figure for districts as a whole is 8·3 per cent.

Thus, on any test, Edinburgh is planning expenditure which is excessive and unreasonable. The cost of that to the ratepayes is heavy, and it is their interests which selective action is designed to protect. When I initiated selective action, I therefore proposed a reduction in the rate of 5·2p to reduce Edinburgh's excessive expenditure and return the savings to the ratepayers in the form of reduced rates. A 5·2p rate reduction, if translated into expenditure savings, would reduce Edinburgh's expenditure by £16·145 million. That would still leave it £1 million above its guideline. That is a 3 per cent. excess compared with the average for all other districts of 2·7 per cent. Thus, in my proposals I am not even expecting Edinburgh to come down to its guideline or even the average excess over that guideline of other authorities. After making such a reduction, its expenditure per head would, at £79, still be above the district average of £62 and the average for its comparators. It would still be above all the comparators individually except one, and above all the cities except Glasgow, which has special expenditure needs. The level of spending after selective action would still be 16 per cent. in real terms above what the council was spending in 1978-79, and that is double the district average. Thus, I do not believe that, in proposing a rate reduction of 5·2p, I am asking Edinburgh to do the impossible when one sees what authorities as a whole, and comparable authorities, are doing.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Secretary of State accept that, while what he says is true in respect of a complete financial year, by imposing this cut halfway

through the financial year he is requiring a cut of about 50 per cent.? That will have a chaotic effect on the city's administration.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is correct. I shall be covering that point in a few moments. I hope that I am not to take it from his intervention that he supports what Edinburgh is doing. I should have expected him and his party to support this measure.

Mr. Bruce *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Younger: I hope that we shall be told whether the Liberal and the Social Democratic parties support Edinburgh. We are entitled to know.

I invited Edinburgh to submit representations on my proposal and I have studied the full comments which it sent me. I, together with my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for home affairs and the environment, met representatives of the council when they expanded on those representations. The council's representations and a note of our meeting are included in the report which I have laid before the House. However, I am bound to say that nothing said in the representations or at our meeting leads me to change my view that the council is planning excessive and unreasonable expenditure, or that it is unreasonable for it to be asked to cut its expenditure by the equivalent of a 5·2p rate.

The representations of the district council contain a vast amount of detail about services. The implication seems to be that any reduction in the level of services that it has in mind is unacceptable. For the reasons I have given, however, I believe that the expenditure consequences of what Edinburgh proposes are quite unreasonable, and must be reduced. I note that Edinburgh is not arguing that any lesser reduction in its plans would be preferable.

I shall comment on some of the general points which Edinburgh makes. First, it is much concerned that the overall effect of the two statutory steps that I have taken against it—the order which is before us today and my order requiring a reduction in its rate fund contribution to the housing revenue account—is to point to a level of expenditure implied in the budget proposed by the local Conservative group. It suggests that my proposals therefore flout the views of the local electorate. But I stress to the House that that line of thought is not relevant to the order before us, which, as I shall explain, is very generous to Edinburgh. The coincidence, to which the district council's line of criticism relates, does not occur unless one also takes into account my housing order. The reasonableness of that order by itself has, of course, been upheld in the courts.

The whole argument about the coincidence is in fact wrong-headed. My decision to look for a reduction of 5·2p was based on the considerations I have mentioned, including consideration of the average excess over guideline of all districts, a figure which would not be known to the Edinburgh Conservative group. Of course, my action on the rate fund contribution, including the precise amount in rate poundage terms of the reduction I required, was initiated before the local Conservative group was even involved in budget-setting at all.

Secondly, the council is critical of the guidelines against which its expenditure has been judged. Those guidelines are based on client group assessments built up service by service on the basis of discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The assessments are, of course, not perfect and are being refined in consultation with the convention. However, Edinburgh is not being expected to budget at its client group assessment. Many hon. Members might wish that their local authorities were similarly treated. Its guideline is fixed at 7·7 per cent. above it in recognition of its 1984-85 expenditure level and to give it a realistic target. Its 1985-86 guideline was described recently by an independent academic commentator as "generous", and is 11 per cent. more in cash than last year—an increase well above the rate of inflation, which again many other authorities in Scotland would be glad to have.

Thirdly, Edinburgh complained of the other authorities with which it had been compared. Those were chosen on the same basic method as we used to choose comparators in 1982-83 and 1983-84 as authorities whose expenditure need was most like that of Edinburgh, taking account of factors that have been found to affect expenditure. In its representations, Edinburgh compares itself with the other three cities. However, even on that basis, Edinburgh is still well out of line. It is planning to spend £114 per head. That is 34 per cent. more than the average of the three cities, which is £85 per head. It is also planning to spend more than each of the other cities individually.

We are now asking Edinburgh to bring its spending down not to guideline but to about 3 per cent. above it. In terms of last year's budget, that is about 3·5 per cent. less in real terms than the planned level of spending for 1984-85. Thus, it cannot be said that we are proposing huge reductions in basic services. If such massive reductions happen, it will be because of the course followed by the council of ignoring all the signs and pressing on with spending plans well above that level until it has no choice but to look for major economies in existing services.

However, behind all those figures are the ratepayers. Edinburgh's rate for 1985-86 is 22·7p. If it had budgeted to spend at guideline and in line with its rate fund contribution limit, that figure would have been cut by a third. That is a measure of the cost of Edinburgh's plans to its own ratepayers. What is more serious, perhaps, is the effect that Edinburgh council's activities have on the businesses is the city and those considering expanding or coming into the city to create jobs. Rates push up business costs and force businesses to look at ways of cutting down on staff. High rates discourage firms considering setting up in Edinburgh when they know that one of their main costs is in the hands of an unpredictable high-spending council.

At present, on the information available to us, Edinburgh is spending regardless of the action which has been taken against it and building up its expenditure to ever higher levels. I should like to take this opportunity to give Edinburgh a serious warning about the dangers of the course it is following. The longer Edinburgh takes to recognise the consequences of the action being taken against it and start reducing its expenditure, the harder it will be for that city.

Every month's delay, indeed every week's delay, means progressively sharper cuts when cuts eventually are made, as they will have to be. The longer the decision to cut is put off and the longer the build-up of unnecessary expenditure, the smaller will be the number of months available over which the required savings will have to be made. It is clear that, even if Edinburgh takes action at the

[Mr. Younger]

end of July, it will still have to spend at a level of 4 per cent. below its guideline for the remainder of the year if it is to keep within the expenditure level implied by the rate reduction I propose.

If Edinburgh delays that decision for another month until the end of August, it will have to spend 10 per cent. below guideline for the rest of the year. Another month's delay would make the situation even worse, as it spends inthe first half of the year the money that is meant to last the whole year. That raises the prospect of Edinburgh being unable to provide proper services and inflicting damage on the city and on its own employees. Defiance and delay will only damage the citizens of Edinburgh and the employees of the council in a way which could do lasting harm to Scotland's capital city.

The figures I have quoted make it abundantly clear that Edinburgh is planning excessive and unreasonable expenditure. The consequences of that for ratepayers are serious, and what I propose in this report by way of a rate reduction of 5·2 p will provide welcome relief to them. I am not asking the council to make unreasonable reductions, only to come down to a reasonable and still above-average level of spending.

This debate is not about a complaint by me or my hon. Friends that Edinburgh is spending more than last year or that it is spending more than we think it ought to. Edinburgh is entitled to do that if it wishes to do so. The debate is about a level of spending which is so extreme, unreasonable and excessive that by any level of calculation something must be done about it. I hope we shall get a clear statement from the hon. Member for Garscadden not only that he deplores any attempt to defy the law, but that he does not support this extreme level of overspending. I hope that we shall have a clear statement from the Liberal party and, if possible from the Social Democratic party about their position; and whether or not they support the interests of the ratepayers of Edinburgh. If ever an argument was put before the House for excessive and unreasonable expenditure requiring action to be taken, it is before us this evening, and I ask the House to support the order.

10.4 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I regret that we are having this debate at a rather late hour, crushed into a slot at the fag end of the day. However, it has its consolations. I particularly welcome the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), who has made an unexpected appearance in Scottish affairs. I suspect that he is practising. We shall watch developments with interest. We are facing a confusing situation, and that applies in particular to Edinburgh district council. This order is the result of a quite extraordinary exercise in misplaced ingenuity. It is part of what may be described as an obsessive campaign. Sometimes one tends to forget that because of the milk and water and rather limp style of the Secretary of State and the matter of fact way in which he performs at the Dispatch Box. But there is a ferocity of purpose, and we have seen what can fairly be described as a vendetta not just against Edinburgh but against local government in Scotland.

A battery of assault weapons has been deployed. They came creaking forward and were laboriously manoeuvred into position over a number of parliamentary Sessions. Now they are in place and the Government intend to use them to try to bombard and destroy the budget of Edinburgh district council.

First, the rate fund contribution limitation order asks that £5·8 million be taken out of the rate fund contribution. It sounds a formidable excess, but, of course, it is an excess over a limit which was chosen arbitrarily by the Secretary of State. It is simply an effort to ensure that, in a city where rents are already considerably above the Scottish average, they are forced even higher. It is extraordinary brass neck for the Secretary of State to say, "It is all right, because the courts have said that my order is reasonable." What the courts said was that Parliament for good or ill has pronounced and they could do nothing about it. His statement that that is an argument in favour of what he is doing shows the complete poverty of his case. It is monstrous that, as a friendly interim gesture, the Secretary of State has clawed that £5·8 million out of the capital fund for housing. I hope that that will be repaid if and when the rate fund contribution target is met.

Secondly, the general abatement represents a penalty of £9,455,000, which neatly excises Edinburgh's entire rate support grant for 1985-86. One problem is that about £2 million has already been paid. During Scottish Question Time recently, the Secretary of State said that he is pondering how to get the money back. I do not know whether he has reached a conclusion, but I hope that he has more constructive and important matters about which to worry than that.

If the Government force through this order tonight, the £16·3 million that will be clawed back will, in any event, largely eliminate the general abatement. It will be reduced from £9·5 million to about £1 million.

That underlines the fact that this is a nasty and remarkable case of overkill, because, in addition to the two matters to which I referred, we have the section 5 clawback, which is embodied in this order, of £16·3 million or the equivalent of 5·2p on the rates. The position is remarkably confusing, and it has not been helped by the Secretary of State's speech. He seems to work on the assumption that, since he is right and everyone else is wrong, he need not produce an argument or an intelligent case in support of the order.

The product of the Government's proposal is clear. If we combine the rate fund contribution order and the order that we are discussing tonight, Edinburgh is being asked to make cuts of about £23 million well into the financial year. Whatever else we may disagree about, it is clear that that will be a painful and damaging process. I hope that Ministers recognise that.

The Secretary of State tried to justify his position with a flurry of figures. He paraded his disapproval in his usual prim fashion, as though he was discussing some unacceptable conduct with a member of his family. But the position is much more serious than that, and the case that he has made, even on his figures, is nothing like as conclusive as he wishes us to believe. The tragedy is that, in the eyes of the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram)—and his colleagues, we have almost reached the point at which every job that is created in local government is a sin, every facility that is opened is an offence and every additional collection or service is an indiscretion. That is not a sensible conclusion.

The comparisons that have been used in Edinburgh's case are bizarre. Kyle and Carrick and Edinburgh have something in common — they are in Scotland — but beyond that it is difficult to understand why they have been linked. Many of the figures quoted by the Secretary of State sound massive in percentage terms, but we should remember that Edinburgh started from the low base inherited from the previous authority. If we consider the figures for 1983-84 for expenditure per head and employees per 1,000 of the population, we see that Edinburgh started from a low base compared with other Scottish cities.

Of course, Edinburgh has set out to try to improve services. It had a mandate to do so. There was no dishonesty or deceit. In the election campaign, the Conservative group consistently campaigned on what it described as the irresponsibility of the Labour programme, but the people of Edinburgh voted for it. There is no doubt that the district council has a mandate to which it is entitled.

Mr. Younger: Can the hon. Gentleman refer to any pre-election programme put out by the Labour party which said that rates would be going up by 79 per cent.?

Mr. Dewar: The Labour group fought an honest campaign in which it stated its plans for services. Indeed, if the right hon. Gentleman is saying to me that people in Edinburgh were not aware of the consequences of voting Labour, then he is passing an enourmous vote of no confidence in the political efforts of his own party.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to do what the leader of his party is not prepared to do—support the gross overspending of Edinburgh district council? Will he stop equivocating and give the House a straight answer yes or no?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait until I have completed my speech. If I may say so, every month he sounds increasingly more pompous. He will have to watch that.

This should be taken as a serious debate. One matter that Conservative Members should consider is the criteria that ought to apply. We are certainly not being invited to set ourselves up as a surrogate district council. We should not be asked to vote on the basis of whether we would have introduced such a budget. That is not the test that should be applied on this occasion.

If we consider the figures per head for cleansing services, environmental health, leisure and recreation or libraries and museums—we can give the figures if hon. Members want them—and compare them with those of other cities, in some areas Edinburgh is spending more and in others less, but ultimately it is not a gap which any reasonable man, in my view, would say justifies the extraordinary action that we are being invited to take in terms of the excessive and unreasonable expenditure contained in the order.

I do not believe there is anything inherently wicked in decent, humane services. It may be that the electorate of Edinburgh would want to vote to cut services and to have lower rates. On this occasion, the electorate voted to increase services. I do not believe that it is the job of Parliament to prevent the Edinburgh district council from carrying out that mandate and answering ultimately for what it does at the ballot box. That is the nature of local government. Except in the most extraordinary circumstances, we should not interfere. I do not believe that we have reached that point.

The recreation budget, for example, is £21·2 million. If the Secretary of State has his way, that will be cut to £13·2 million. It is not just a matter of forgoing over £3 million of growth—perhaps the Tories would say that there should be no growth in difficult times — it is finding where to make cuts of over £3 million, which will hurt. I do not believe that it is the business of the House to interfere in that way.

We could have endless arguments about the figures, but this goes beyond one budget. I believe that the machinery being used is fundamentally wrong. We are discussing a matter of principle. As we have said, the essence of local democracy is that directly elected councillors exercise their judgment, try to meet the needs of their areas and make a count at the end of the day. We are being invited to contemplate a system whereby periodically the Secretary of State imposes a form of direct rule because he disapproves of the policy of the council. I believe that there is sometimes merit in a pluralist society in having centres of power which compete. I do not believe in this kind of bully boy tactic and riding roughshod over local democracy in Scotland.

This is not a necessary exercise. It is said that it must be done to control public expenditure. In a strange way, Edinburgh has been rejected by the public purse. It has been hived off. In 1980, Edinburgh had a housng support grant of £12 million. It is now nothing, and this year there will be no rate support grant. It will be a city supported by rents, rates and charges. It will be a vision — the ultimate privatisation, in a sense, for the Adam Smith Society—if the Government have their way.

It is a crazy form of economics to say to the city of Edinburgh, "Forgo £23 million of services to get £9 million of rate support grant." That is a thieves' bargain. It is a land of make believe into which the Secretary of State has stumbled.

As I have said before — I repeat it so that the Secretary of State may understand it—my hon. Friends and I did not seek this confrontation. It has been a potential confrontation; but it is now an immediate crisis. It is a travesty for the Secretary of State to give the impression that the district council has been inflexible, unreasonable and absolutist.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): *rose——*

Mr. Dewar: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, if he wishes to challenge me, when I have developed the point.

Even those who disagree with Edinburgh district council have been aware from the beginning, and have said repeatedly in public statements, that the council's budget is not sacrosanct and that they are prepared to discuss the matter and to negotiate. The last-ditcher, the person who has not been prepared to give an inch and who has seen settlement in terms of capitulation, has been the Secretary of State, and he knows it. He has been saying, in effect, that the only basis on which to achieve a settlement is to ask this directly elected council to accept the budget of the discredited and defeated Tory group. That is inflexibility taken to the point of obstinacy in a way that we should not tolerate.

Mr. Bruce: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the members of the Labour administration in Edinburgh have not proceeded with their budget, knowing that the amount was likely to be cut and that they would suffer penalties? In those circumstances, can he justify why yesterday they voted to add another £400,000 to the budget, knowing that this measure would be presented today?

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that during the debate the hon. Gentleman will perform the splits in the way that he usually does on issues such as this. The district council said that it would compromise and go to the negotiating table. The Secretary of State said that the only form of settlement was unconditional surrender. None of us can accept that.

For the Secretary of State to say that he is doing it in the names of the ratepayers, when the principal cause of discontent on the part of ratepayers has been the persistent cuts in rate support grant by the right hon. Gentleman, represents confounded brassneck on his part. He is doing it not for the ratepayers but for the Treasury. He knows that, and so does everybody else.

In the polls the right hon. Gentleman has the support of 15 per cent. of the people of Scotland. In May 1984 he led his party to unprecedented defeat in the district council elections and lost control of Edinburgh. He now purports to act as though that defeat never took place. The local authorities in Scotland have every right to fight by every legitimate means available to them. They have the backing of public opinion and it is clear what would happen if there were by-elections in Edinburgh—*[Interruption.]* Would the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South welcome a by-election in his constituency? He would get the result that his record deserves—summary execution—and the same would apply to the rest of the Tories.

There is a total lack of credibility about the Government's position, and they know it. I imagine that most Conservative Back Benchers — this is the achievement of the Secretary of State from the point of view of his party—have ringed April 1988 as the date that they want for the next general election, on the principle that they should put off the evil day for as long as possible.

The real problem is how to find a solution to the difficulty, and we should at least turn our minds to that. I regret that this matter has ended up in the courts. There is now an order for specific performance from the Court of Session. I understand the temptation to defy that, but it is a temptation that should be resisted. The court order should be observed. I have no doubt about that, speaking for myself. We are the parliamentary Labour party, and we believe in the democratic process. We have a right to argue and to continue to argue, but the order is there and it would not be sensible to make the central issue—apart from the point of principle—the authority of the courts. The central issue, which the Secretary of State should not escape, is what he has been doing to the services and to the local democratic processes in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: It may have been a slip of the tongue, but when the hon. Gentleman said that he was repudiating what had been done, he said that he was speaking for himself. Will he make it clear that he is speaking for his colleagues in deploring what has happened?

Mr. Dewar: I am speaking from the Dispatch Box. I make it clear that while I regret that the Secretary of State has forced us into this position, the court order should be observed. There is no dubiety about that. That is no victory for the right hon. Gentleman. There is no credit to a bully for his actions.

It is not for me to try to save the Secretary of State from his prejudices and folly. I hope that he remembers what happened in 1980-81, when Lothian was in hot water with the Scottish Office. A similar order was introduced under section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 to drop £47 million from Lothian region. It was bulldozed through the House, as this one will be. However, having worked out his aggression and gone through his ritual war dance, the Secretary of State then had to face his responsibilities. He realised that he could not expect Lothian region to make such big cuts, so he settled for £30 million. He forwent £17 million of that penalty.

In the cold light of day, when he comes to look at what he is doing and the realities of the situation, the Secretary of State will realise that he has set an unreasonable target and he will have to forgo some of the penalty that he is trying to exact. He should forgo all of it. That is why we shall vote againt the measure. It is wrong in principle.

Even allowing for the fact that the Secretary of State takes a different view, he will have to go back to the negotiating table and make the concessions that, if he had made them several months ago, would have prevented this crisis. That is a fair summary of the position. The right hon. Gentleman should think long and hard, because he is doing a great deal of damage to the structure of government. His course of action is counterproductive and he should desist from it.

Behind the Secretary of State there is a great deal of private dismay and in the country there is a good deal of public dissension among Tory local government representatives. That is reflected in the polls and in recent local government by-election results in Scotland. I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman will win the vote tonight. I am a realist about that. However, it will be a pyrrhic victory, and the real victims will be not only many of his hon. Friends when they have to face the electorate but, more seriously, local government in Scotland and its services, which are as important in Edinburgh as in every other part of Scotland.

I know that the Secretary of State will not retreat now. However, he is committed to a harsh vendetta of which he will repent, unless he is prepared to rethink his position and take account of the realities of Edinburgh district council's position and the interests of public opinion in Edinburgh and throughout Scotland.

Rates (Edinburgh)

10.24 pm

Lord James Douglas Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): As always, I listened with the greatest interest to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), but his support for the Labour group on Edinburgh district council was the most lukewarm that I have ever heard from a shadow Secretary of State for Scotland.

On 22 May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State initiated action and asked Edinburgh district council to reduce its rate. He was absolutely justified to take that action to protect ratepayers. The council was given three weeks in which to comment and, as it has failed voluntarily to reduce its rate, it has become necessary to lay this report.

I remind the hon. Member for Garscadden that the precedents were laid down by Labour Governments. Section 5(*b*) of Labour's Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 provides that, if the Secretary of State is satisfied that

"the expenditure of any local authority or joint board has been excessive and unreasonable, regard being had to the financial and other relevent circumstances of the area or areas concerned . . . the Secretary of State may reduce the element of the grant accordingly."

The principle of the Government having predominance in local authority matters was accepted by Lord Ross of Marnock, as he now is, when he was Labour Secretary of State of Scotland. On 15 December 1975 he said:

"restraint on spending by local authorities in the years ahead has to be of a stringency hitherto unheard of, certainly in recent times. That is necessary in the interests both of Government and of ratepayers. We have to try to keep down the level of expenditure and the level of the rates."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1975; Vol. 902, c. 1100.]

Besides, local authorities owe their existence to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. In the last resort, Parliament, acting in the interests of the nation, is entitled to take the grievances of ratepayers into account.

Edinburgh's budget is 48·3 per cent. in excess of my right hon. Friend's guidelines and well above the district average of 2·7 per cent. At £114·40 per head, planned expenditure is well above the average of £62·71 for all district councils. The report will reduce the average domestic rate of £494·84 by about £39.

There is evidence of substantial overspending by Edinburgh district council. It has established a women's committee at a cost of £150,000, in the interests of the promotion of women. I suggest that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done far more, by becoming the first woman Prime Minister, to advance and promote the interests of women than has that committee.

There have been leaflets, posters, car stickers and window bills at a cost of more than £42,000, which I consider to be Labour party propaganda and unnecessary. They have been paid for, not out of Labour party funds, but by Edinburgh district council. Moreover, three advertisements by Edinburgh district council in the local *Evening News* cost no less than £10,000. If Edinburgh district council is so confident about its policy of improving services why does it have to spend countless sums of money propagandising the electorate and advertising all over the city?

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The hon. Gentleman is talking about propagandising and advertising. Would he care to reveal how many millions, if not hundreds of millions, were spent on advertising and propagandising the privatisation of British Telecom by the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supports?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should like to check, but I think the hon. Gentleman will find that the funds were provided by British Telecom. The hon. Gentleman will also find that the programme has been enormously successful in giving a great many working men a stake in the industry in which they work.

Recent accounts provided by the finance department show that Edinburgh district council intends to spend £52,000 on policy promotion.

I should like to give another example. Banners are flying outside the city chambers, the Usher hall, the Assembly rooms, the Meadowbank stadium and elsewhere which cost more than £6,000. The flaunting of the red flag over the city chambers was unimportant in itself, but it was symbolic of something much deeper.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that many of the actions of the Edinburgh district council were taken in the face of advice by the chief executive, and that Edinburgh district council had no interest in setting a reasonable budget but was determined to have a head-on confrontation with the Government?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The officials of the Edinburgh district council are very worried that their salaries may not be paid. If this kind of activity continues indefinitely. It was noticeable that the hon. Member for Garscadden did not support to the hilt the Labour party on Edinburgh district council, because he knows that it is grossly overspending.

I shall give another example of unwise spending namely, that of £10,000 having been spent on T-shirts. Most of my constituents who buy T-shirts do not think automatically of Edinburgh district council as the best source for their production. Furthermore, the 5,000 T-shirts which have been produced were to be sold for £2 each, but rumour has it hat they are not sufficiently popular and that some will have to be sold for £1·50.

Another example is the expenditure of £35,000 during the miners' strike, including £2,000 for a city arts centre exhibition. This sum had, I understand, been set aside for the families of miners. Whether or not it should have been spent for this purpose has been the subject of substantial political debate. I want to raise only one point, which was mentioned in *The Scotsman* on 19 November 1984 in an article on Bilston Glen:

"many men make accusations about money and food parcels reaching only pickets, not the majority of strikers."

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We cannot have two hon. Members on their feet at the same time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The allegation which I have quoted comes from *The Scotsman* in an article about Bilston Glen. I want to make absolutely clear what its source is, and I repeat the allegations made in the article: "many men make accusations about money and food parcels reaching only pickets, not the majority of strikers." If the £35,000 did not reach the miners' families, but went only to pickets, there would be grounds for very

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

substantial complaint by the ratepayers. If money was voted for the families of miners and then was given merely to pickets, it would be entirely unjustified.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall give one reason before I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

> "Picketing . . . became a means of coercion, a substitute, an alternative for winning minds. The moral ascendency, by which I mean that overwhelming sense of decency and fair play, which should characterise all struggles of the workers, was abandoned right from the start."

Those are not my words, but those of a distinguished socialist, Mr. Jimmy Reid.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the hon Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) met the district council at Strathkelvin and sympathised with it, because, he said, the districts were dealt with more harshly than the regions?

Did the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) meet Edinburgh district council to hear its views on these matters? Is he willing to emulate his hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Beardsden and promise to fight for Edinburgh district council and against deprivation in Edinburgh?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have met members of the Edinburgh district council and have corresponded with them. The circumstances of Strathkelvin and Edinburgh district councils are entirely different. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) that there is a case for fundamental reform of the rating system.

Questions have been raised by my constituents about whether the £35,000 reached those for whom it was intended. I am entitled to ask what accounts were kept, which families received money and what receipts there were. Those facts have never been put before the electorate of Edinburgh. It is in the public interest that the electors should know.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend accept that the corruption by the district council in this matter goes further? It was not even representing the interests of its own electors. The vast majority of miners in the council's areas were working during the strike. The council was supporting a minority of the miners in its area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It would be useful to have full information about exactly where those funds went. The electorate likes to know that funds go to those for whom they are intended.

It is in character that the Labour group on Edinburgh district council should be financially supporting "the Chilean Democratico." The sum involved is £2,855, including a grant of £1,000 for a Chilean group and a charge of £300 for a public meeting. I suggest that Chilean politicking is not in the interests of my constituents.

Mr. Dewar: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that he is doing his case no good? Those of us on both sides of the argument who are interested in the serious constitutional innovation which the use of the order represents will be saddened by the trivia with which the hon. Gentleman insists on defacing the debate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman failed to tell us whether he supports the budget of the Labour group on Edinburgh district council, I discount his intervention.

The council's accounts include £4,500 which, it is believed, went to an organisation called LOSS. The electors may take the view that it is a case of one dead loss supporting another.

There is a more fundamental reason for supporting the report than all those that I have given. When Lothian region put up rates substantially some years ago, a forest of "For sale" signs went up in shops in Princes street and George street. It is essential for Edinburgh's retail trade —the small shopkeepers and business men—to have reasonable rates. It is vital for Edinburgh's capacity to attract business.

I am particularly anxious about the financial sector—banking, accounting and insurance. Edinburgh is about to promote itself in the European Community and in the United States. The financial sector in Scotland employs about 100,000 people and is a growth sector. I believe that it will provide more jobs. That can be arranged only by a helpful attitude from both central and local government, and heavy rates show an unhelpful attitude towards business.

Similarly, tourism is a major employer. Edinburgh needs new facilities from the private sector, including a conference centre, another big hotel and a major leisure centre. That will require private investment, and the Secretary of State's actions are necessary to prevent investors from being irrevocably frightened away. The visual signs of alarm are now in abeyance because investors believe that the Secretary of State will go through with the report tonight with the necessary support.

Mr. Hirst *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Perhaps my hon. Friend will have a chance to speak later. I should make progress and give other hon. Members a chance to speak.

It is also necessary to build on the expertise in technology within the universities. We need more high technology companies in Edinburgh, which will have to work closely with the universities. Developments along those lines will lead to more employment in service industries. Incomers are frightened away by both high rates and a negative attitude to business. The chamber of commerce believes that Edinburgh should have better services, and the way to achieve that is to expand the economic base of the Edinburgh community so that its income is higher and the city can afford better services. The way to do that is to create more jobs in the private sector. Business men in the private sector require confidence, which is partly determined by the attitudes of local government, and greatly by those of central Government.

Finally, if the Edinburgh district council Labour group chooses to defy Parliament's decision, it will become increasingly hard within a limited period to effect the necessary economies. The Labour group must understand that it can no more overturn the democratic decisions of this House than a community council can overturn those of the Edinburgh district council. Many have sought to defy Parliament in the past, but Parliament has always won in the end.

10.41 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): On 14 May 1984 a report in the *Edinburgh Evening News* was headlined "Squalid Horror". A family had taken Edinburgh district council to court because of its living conditions, and it won its case. The sheriff said:

"I can say at once, that the evidence which I heard satisfied me beyond all doubt that the conditions in which they had latterly had to live were utterly appalling . . . It is difficult to find words to describe the squalid horror which was to be seen when the court had a view of this house."

The debate tonight is about that squalor. The cut in the general services order will make it much more difficult to meet housing needs, as the Under-Secretary of State knows full well.

The Secretary of State made great play of what he called excessive and unreasonable expenditure. He based his judgment almost entirely on the guidelines. What about the guidelines? They were changed. The idea was that the client group approach was more objective and independent, but it is not. In the letter sent to Edinburgh district council on 22 May, appendix A states:

"Up until 1981-82, guidelines were largely based on historical patterns of expenditure but since 1982-83 they have been based on the client group assessments of the relative expenditure needs of local authorities . . . Adjustments have been made to the client group assessments to arrive at guidelines for each year. While the adjustments have varied from year to year the aim throughout has been to provide attainable targets for authorities having regard to previous levels of expenditure."

That is the reality. If the Tory Government's 1983-84 Budget had been within the guidelines—it was not—this year's guideline for Edinburgh would have been £2 million less. When we discuss guidelines, we talk about the disastrous neglect of housing and services in Edinburgh, which has been the consequence of years of inadequate expenditure.

I am aware that others wish to contribute to the debate, so I shall eschew quoting some of the figures which I had intended to draw to the attention of the House. It is ridiculous for the Secretary of State to talk about Falkirk, Kirkcaldy, Aberdeen, Kyle and Carrick and Renfrew as comparable authorities. It is nonsense to refer to guidelines and objectivity when talking about a previous year's expenditure. It is grotesque to pay civil servants to produce such nonsense when the authorities have been specially selected to make out the Secretary of State's case.

If we are to make comparisons with other authorities, let us compare the four cities. I have with me the expenditure on general recreation for the four cities from 1976-77 to 1983-84. There are 32 figures, as there are four cities and eight years. Edinburgh was the lowest spender each year on general recreation. I remind the House that Edinburgh has to put on the Commonwealth games and that it has the Meadowbank Stadium and Commonwealth swimming pool. These major sporting facilities are for Scotland and not just Edinburgh but we are expected to spend less each year on recreation, and sometimes much less, than the other cities per head of population.

The same is true of libraries and museums. Again I have 32 figures in front of me for the years of Tory administrations. What has the abysmal expenditure in Edinburgh meant? Instead of opening new facilities—for example, providing new bowling greens and tennis courts — the old facilities have been shut. Bowling greens are very important to my constituents fifteen tennis courts have been closed in the past 10 years and four have been privatised. Fourteen bowling greens have been closed during the 10 years of Tory control.

Edinburgh has some of the worst housing conditions in Scotland. They are disgraceful. Our services have been run down. The response of people of Edinburgh was to elect a Labour council. Labour has been the largest party in Edinburgh before, but this is the first time that the city hs had a majority Labour council.

Contrary to the Secretary of State's impression—I can remember this vividly listening to the Leader of the Labour group on local radio—the Labour party spelled out that the election of a Labour council would mean rates increases. It was made clear that extra money could be found only by forcing up the rates. Rating was an issue during the election campaign and the issue was put to the people fairly and squarely. What has been the response?

Mr. Hirst *rose*——

Mr. Strang: I shall not give way, as I am aware that others want to participate in the debate. The Labour party was elected in Edinburgh on the clear mandate of reversing the appalling neglect and misery that was the legacy of Conservative administrations. The people wanted the council to start re-opening bowling greens and tennis courts instead of closing them, and to raise standards in the area.

The Government's response was to impose on the elected council of Edinburgh a budget which was defeated by the council on 5 March. The minority Tory budget was defeated by 40 votes to 22. As the Secretary of State knows, the proposed cut is identical to 0·1 of a penny. The cuts in the housing revenue budget and the associated rate cut and the cut in the general service rate would have reduced the rate from 22·7p to 15·7p which was the precise figure submitted by the Tories.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Which parties voted to defeat that district council budget?

Mr. Strang: A Scottish Nationalist party representative and an alliance representative certainly voted in that way. It is a constitutional outrage to impose that defeated Tory budget on the Edinburgh people. These cuts are massive. This measure is much more drastic than that faced by Lothian. It is true that Lothian regional council said that it would have to make massive lay-offs, and that it managed to avoid doing that. If the Government do not realise that this measure is much more severe than that, they should talk to Edinburgh district council officials. I hope that the Government will recognise the enormity of what they are trying to impose on the Edinburgh people.

The Secretary of State said, in a curious remark, that Edinburgh district council had not suggested in its submissions that a lower level of expenditure would be acceptable. The right hon. Gentleman implied that the council was not prepared to settle on a figure between the minimal Tory figure and the figure outlined in the budget. Every hon. Member knows that that is not true. The leadership of the council asked the Secretary of State for a meeting, and got it. The Government's position was in black and white—an order was laid in the House—and it was clear that they were not prepared to discuss the position with Edinburgh district council in a reasonable way. The Government were satisfied that they would force the minority Tory party's budget on the Edinburgh people.

[Mr. Strang]

This report is about democracy and a constitutional outrage, but it is also about the quality of life. I have had the privilege to represent an Edinburgh constituency for more than 15 years. some of the poorest parts of the city lie within my constituency, and Ministers know that. During the past five years I have seen the decline in housing and the people who once had a chance of getting a house, but now have no chance. I have seen the squalor of parts of the city. The majority of young people leave school with no prospect of getting a job. Facilities have been closed and football pitches and bowling greens have been shut. The Labour council wants people to be able to get work. It wants to give them hope and and to start to reverse the decline in housing decline.

We want to improve the houses, to open the bowling greens and to improve facilities. The Government want to force up charges, we want to let the people use the facilities. The Tories forced up prices at the Jack Kene centre in Craigmillar so high that the people could not afford to use the centre. We cut the charges, and the people are starting to use it. This is what the debate is about—an Edinburgh Labour council trying to help the people confronted by the new hard Right, the authoritarian Right-wing Tory Government. That is why, at the end of the day, the Government will lose, no matter how the House votes tonight.

10.53 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I am pleased to follow two Edinburgh Members — my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) — and to give a slightly less introverted view of the position in Edinburgh.

Mr. Nellist: They would never call the hon. and learned Gentleman "introverted" in those trousers.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not know whether the hard Left understand what tartan is all about. I doubt that it does. If those hon. Members understood the kinship and civility that it represents, they would not sit there as a sort of shadow of eagles above the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland who did not dare state his true opinion and clung to the Dispatch Box as his only friend.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East started with a piece of sentimentality about a story in the Edinburgh *Evening News*. I notice that Opposition Members believe the reports in the *Evening News*, but they mocked the reports that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West quoted from *The Scotsman*. They believe what they want to believe.

Similar absurd sentimentality was directed towards me when I stood for Edinburgh, Central. False stories of squalor were spread. If the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East wants to see squalor and humility, he should come to the country. He will see the services provided for those who live in the country, but they do not complain because they are not manipulated by politicians.

I have great respect for the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. Tonight he was not the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland; he was the shadow of the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. Only a lawyer could have given a so pellucidly false defence of a rotten case in which he clearly did not believe. If it had not been for the fact that the clients were behind him warning him that he had better pretend that he was in favour of the Edinburgh mafia, he would not have done so.

I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman what doctrine of law or morals of politics it is when he says, "Speaking for myself." I am surprised that he did not get off the Front Bench and go behind himself to speak for himself, then in front of himself and say to himself, "Me and the Dispatch Box, believing in one another, have a private opinion which we believe is acceptable to us and our conscience but which we must not share with the shadow Cabinet or the rest of the party behind me." I have never heard of a doctrine by which he can say that he believes in law and order and say, "Speaking from the Dispatch Box, and the Box and I, both being made of wood, understand one another." The leader of the Edinburgh council is also called Wood. "We are in league. We understand one another, and I shall not extend my responsibilities to my colleagues because I know that they would not share them." I regard that as disgraceful. I am amazed that it came from the hon. Member for Garscadden.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I use the word "learned" only as a courtesy of the House. May I make it clear to him and to any other hon. Gentleman who wishes to listen, and I hope to put it beyond misrepresentation, that we believe that the court order must be observed.

Mr. Fairbairn: Who is "we"?

Mr. Dewar: The Labour party believes that the court order must be observed. It should not be ignored. I want to make that clear. That is part of the demomcratic process in which we all operate. A court order exists and that is something that we and everyone must take into account. That statement is unambiguous and made without any caveat. In two or three years we shall have a different Government and different laws, but I am sure that he would want to obey court orders, as we obey them at the moment.

Mr. Fairbairn: If, as is unlikely, in two or three years it were to be a Government of the hon. Gentleman's persuasion, we should not seek to say that we obey the law only so far as it suits us, and call only for the Dispatch Box as our ally. If the hon. Member for Garscadden is not willing to allow me the courtesy of the title to which I am entitled, and does so only out of courtesy, that demonstrates the pellucid fallacy of his arguments and judgment.

The rating and voting system which Opposition Members care to call democracy have always been of great benefit to Socialists. It has always amazed me that the English gentlemen here tonight have never seen the advantage that can so easily be taken of the system.

Of the electorate who provide local funds, the industrial third has no vote and the commercial third has no vote. Of the domestic sector which has a vote, more than 50 per cent. benefit from increased expenditure without having to contribute to it. It is an absolute mug's paradise. If I had been a Socialist, I would have taken advantage of it long ago. I would have been spending through the roof, because votes can be bought. One can have any number of bowling greens and one can besmirch a city with notices saying,

"We are providing services with jobs." *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members would listen rather than shout, they might learn something.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East raised a very important point. Edinburgh is about to have to service the Commonwealth games. I am informed, from the most impartial sources of all persuasions, that those who would have been contributing to the Edinburgh Commonwealth games are ceasing to do so because of the policies of Edinburgh district council. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] People can be given free bowling greens in Craigmillar; but what is provided in an equivalent part of Edinburgh, in Pilton? That is real prosperity. Instead of being run by a local authority as a housing encampment, the houses in Pilton have been privatised and sold off, and jobs and services are coming from those sales.

Not only on the present inequalities of the voting system does extravagance pay. If I had been a good Socialist I would have noticed that extravagance has paid hand over fist. The Secretary of State has announced tonight that he will not even ask Edinburgh district council to come down to its guideline. He will not even ask it to come within £1 million of its guideline. As a result of its extravagance last year, the guideline of Edinburgh district council is infinitely higher that it was. The Secretary of State rightly said that it would be impossible to make the council come reasonably within its guideline, so he will meet the council half way. But the guideline of responsible authorities, such as Perth and Kinross district council, is kept miles below where it should be. So Edinburgh district council, in this great battle, will discover, as the Secretary of State has just announced, that it will be allowed to spend miles above its guideline and to benefit from it for the second year running.

I understand that Labour Members know how to work the system. If I were with Mr. Wood and his little clique of Marxists, I would do the same.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): What about the legal aid system?

Mr. Fairbairn: If the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) wishes to question legal aid, he can do so; but let him remember that legal aid in Scotland did not start for criminal matters until I had been at the Bar for five years and I had defended without fee 17 people who were in line for the death penalty. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to say that people at the Bar are on the gravy train, let him say it to the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Garscadden, who is a solicitor. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not raise that matter again.

Edinburgh's income comes from its commerce and from a few of its citizens, and that commerce and those citizens are being driven out. Edinburgh is destroying the goose that lays the golden eggs. It may have a few more bowling green attendants and people who paint banners and hang them up, and, when they are torn down, hang them up again; it may have people who work in the legal department in order to get round the fact that they do not have planning permission to besmirch the city; but it is defying by extravagance, because the people who are doing it believe it to be to their electoral advantage. They are spending other people's money to promote their hideous doctrine. The Labour Government introduced the system, but, as the Secretary of State said tonight, one cannot feed from the ratepayers.

11.6 pm

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Being a member of the Leith Labour party and not the Edinburgh Labour party, I may be allowed to say that this is a timely debate and sums up many things happening in this country. Democratic, basic rights are under attack: that is what this debate is all about. The Secretary of State is, in effect, a governor-general. He is imposing the diktat of Whitehall, the diktat of a discredited regime, and whatever he says will not wash in Scotland, not even in the Tory press. That is an indication of what the electorate in Scotland thinks of the Conservative party.

Despite all the comments in the past about the Tories being concerned to see less interference in local affairs, less government, more freedom, we see now that the mask has dropped. Not only has this Government double standards, they are two-faced, because in reality they represent a police state. One has only to look at the catalogue of laws they have brought in since they came to office in 1979. It is sheer hypocrisy for Conservative Members to talk about cutting public expenditure. During the Government's term of office, they have cut over £1 billion from the rate support grant in Scotland. That is not money saved, because it has been transferred elsewhere. It has been invested, so called, in Trident and in a new breed of nuclear weapons. That is hypocrisy, and I use that term advisedly.

The Government have priorities, but they are not interested in the people of England or Scotland or wherever. One recalls the old reactionary slogan of guns before butter, but today the slogan is missiles before life, before health. *[Interruption.]* We hear a lot of criticism in this debate of Labour councils, but we know from looking at the record, that those councils do not throw money around: they do not have it to throw around. Given a chance, they invest in their communities, they invest in people, because they are the greatest asset and resource we have. Some of my colleagues are in Edinburgh, and they are defending jobs, services, and living standards. Some Conservative Members seem to think that that is a crime nowadays.

All local authorities have mandates, which they must follow. To do otherwise would mean that they were doing the Tory party's dirty work, and our colleagues in Edinburgh certainly do not intend to do that. In some newspapers, including *The Sun*, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, my colleagues in Edinburgh are called doctrinaire extremists. If that is the case, let us have more of it. I prefer to call it sticking to principles, which is important in politics nowadays.

In case Conservative Members have forgotten it, the Labour party won last year's local elections with a record swing—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for interrupting the thread of the hon. Gentleman's argument, but is it in order for him to use the Chamber of the House of Commons as a flyposting board to display his propaganda? Should he not be asked to remove that banner?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As a mere Englishman, I have not seen or heard anything that is out of order.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I was so rudely interrupted, I was saying that the Labour

[Mr. Brown]

party won last year's election with a record swing in support. Why did that happen? Was it simply a fluke that Labour took control of Edinburgh? Of course, we know the reason. Edinburgh, like Britain, is in a mess because of the Tory administration. The so-called Athens of the north had become the slum of the north, and the Labour party had to move in and deal with the problems.

To follow what my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) said, may I remind the House that the Labour administration in Edinburgh inherited a housing waiting list of 13,000 families, and a backlog of sub-standard local authority housing? About 6,000 houses were without baths. I am sure that some Conservatives Members have several baths in their houses. Thanks to Tory maladministration, Edinburgh had litter-strewn streets, and libraries without books — not even the *Dandy* or the *Beano*. Recreation facilities were closed.

All that happened in a city which talks about a festival——

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brown: —for the middle classes and the rich. It talks about hosting the Commonwealth games. It talks about many things—*[Interruption.]*

Mrs. McCurley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order to decorate the Opposition Benches with — *[Interruption.]* I see that the banner has just come down, so I withdraw my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I dealt with that point of order earlier. May I remind the House that this is a short debate, and that the Minister hopes to reply at 11.20 pm.

Mr. Brown: Much more could be said about the Tory record in Edinburgh. Indeed, much more should be said about it. We had criminals operating in Edinburgh for a long time, not doing the jobs that they were elected to do, but working contrary to the interests of Edinburgh's citizens. We hear about the two nations of the Conservative party. In Edinburgh, we have two cities. Visitors to Edinburgh notice better than anyone that, in the new town, there are fine new buildings. They see Bute house, where the Secretary of State resides in all his finery and with his 10 baths. If one goes there, one is very impressed, that is, until one goes to the new houses.

To give the Secretary of State his due, he does occasionally come out of his fantastic mansion. He came out of his tied cottage, for example, a year or so ago when he went to West Pilton to visit some friends who had acquired, thanks to the Tory council, a number of houses which had been modernised. Of course, the houses were bought at a knock-down price. The houses were being sold off to the private sector for a record profit. The right hon. Gentleman quite naturally goes to see his friends, the building fraternity. After all, they are very good at financing the Tory party. They are very generous at putting money into the coffers. One company alone in Edinburgh, Smart the builders, in one year gave £30,000 to the Tory party, so quite naturally the Tories look after their friends.

Talking about kick-backs, we can observe this on the Government Benches, because the Secretary of State and the Tory party know all about kick-backs.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does my hon. Friend recall that when the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs visited Edinburgh, we were discussing the serious problem of dampness? Does he recall the appalling conditions that we found? Does he recall that the then Conservative convenor of housing, Councillor Drummond-Young, appealed for more capital to be invested in Edinburgh? Is not one of the most appalling features of the order the fact that that capital is going to be reduced?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. The former councillor to whom he refers, Councillor Drummond-Young, was obviously very concerned about the situation. He was an extreme Right-winger. I do not know whether he is still around these days. He lost his seat, quite naturally, in the last local elections.

I think that that sums up the role of the Tory party. Even within that Tory group, there was concern about the indifference of its own Government. Undoubtedly, Councillor Drummond-Young made that point to the Select Committee. I am sure that this could be repeated throughout the country. No doubt we would hear the same in Liverpool.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): In the last session of Parliament, I represented Liverpool, Scotland. I fully support the fight which my hon. Friend is making on behalf of the people of Edinburgh. I can assure him, on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) of the support of the Liverpool people. I note that the Secretary of State is shaking his hands, but he is the monkey grinder for Mrs. Thatcher, like the Secretary of State for the Environment — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Parry: It appears that in the battle in Edinburgh in Scotland and in Liverpool in England, the cold hand of the Prime Minister is behind the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Brown: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. What he says can be summed up in this way. What the Tories are saying is, take it or leave it. That is the message being given from the Dispatch Box by the Secretary of State, who knows full well that his political role is to support big business. It is to redistribute wealth from the working class to the bosses. That is his job. He does it in a certain way, and he tries a little flannel, but he does not con many people. He may suggest that in better times it is possible to be more generous, and it is true that in good times in the past a few crumbs were given to the working class. Now they are being taken back.

Why is this action being taken against Edinburgh? Is it because the Secretary of State is vicious and vindictive? *[Interruption.]* The real reason is that there is an almighty crisis in the economy and the Tories want to take back all the gains that the working class has won since the war. They want to reduce real wages, attack the welfare state and reduce the social wage. That is why they are having a go at Edinburgh, which is sticking its neck out and is in the front line. The Government feel that they must challenge that position.

Some say that what is happening is the result of monetarism. Let us be clear that that is not a new word. Monetarism was tried years ago, especially in the 1920s,

when, like today, the working class was told that the nation had to save money, and there were calls for a return to the gold standard. That resulted in attacks on jobs and living standards, and the working class suffered.

Despite the setback of 1926, when the working class was let down badly because of weak-kneed individuals —the TUC of that period—in the local authorities there were individuals such as George Lansbury in Poplar who led the way forward. I say in all modesty — *[Interruption.]*—that Edinburgh typifies the Poplar spirit, the spirit of Lansbury. If we are to learn from history, we must look back to what was achieved by the individuals of the time, because the same can be achieved now.

Conservative Members may smile at what I am saying, but in Edinburgh the members of the Labour group are still concerned with fighting injustice, although the Secretary of State is bound to disagree with anything that we say on behalf of the working class. He and his hon. Friends will continue to jump up and down and assert, "We represent parliamentary democracy," and pontificate on what that means. When Conservative Members speak about democracy, they do so as a front for the capitalist system, a system that is unfair, inefficient, corrupt and dangerous.

It is unfair because wealth is concentrated into fewer hands; it is inefficient because it creates massive unemployment and results in foodstuffs, like industries, being destroyed; it is corrupt because it fosters the black economy and harbours, for example, the Vestey family; and that it is dangerous was demonstrated by the conflict in the south Atlantic.

For all those reasons, the capitalist system is condemned. My advice to my colleagues in the Public Gallery—*[Interruption.]*—is that they should stick to their guns. It is not simply a question—*[Interruption.]* —of breaking the law. Laws can be made and they can be unmade. Laws made by the Conservatives are not designed to improve society but to destroy the decent things in life. If Tory Members speak to working class people they will have that explained, though I am beginning to wonder whether they would even want to speak to Conservative Members.

Why not bend the knee, and let things develop? Why not concede certain things? That would not be just a gesture, of the sort that many in this place are used to. It would mean that services and jobs would be decimated. One could not consider what would happen as a result. If we described what would happen, we would be describing a real horror story. Somebody could make a video of it, and sell it off to ITV.

We must emphasise that the order does not cover housing, although it has been mentioned, because housing policy has been decided in the other place.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Edinburgh Leith (Mr. Brown) giving way?

Mr. Brown: Yes, I am.

Mr. Flannery: Does my hon. Friend agree that the struggles against the Tory party by Labour Members, cities such as Sheffield, Edinburgh and Liverpool and boroughs such as Lambeth, have resulted, whether the Tories like it or not, in the latest Gallup poll? It shows that the Tories are third at 28 per cent., with the alliance taking 32 per cent. of the poll, and the Labour party 38 per cent. The Tories will read this in the *Daily Telegraph* tomorrow, and realise where their policies are taking them.

Mr. Brown: I thank my hon. Friend for his important point.

It was interesting that earlier on, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) attacked the Labour group for flying the red flag. I assume that he would prefer the stars and stripes, or a white flag, but for us, the red flag is a nice colour and quite appropriate. He thinks that the members of the Labour group in Edinburgh are extremists, but far from it. Even the figures produced by the Government show that Edinburgh is spending £9·1 per head of population, compared with the Scottish average of £11·04.

If the rate support grant of 1974 were paid today, Edinburgh would be £2 million better off, but because of the repeated cuts, Edinburgh has suffered.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appeal to you to have regard to the provisions of standing order No. 3(1)*(b)*, bearing in mind that the confrontation that is going on is likely to have the effect of excluding my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) from expressing the views of 25 per cent. of the people of Scotland, who have as much claim as anybody else to take advantage of the debate. Therefore, I ask you to rule that, because of the importance of the subject matter, the time for debate has not been adequate, and under the provisions of the standing order, you will allow the business to stand over until the next day's sitting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House will not have the opportunity to speak in the debate, but I am not prepared to exercise my discretion in that regard, and I intend to put the question at 11.30.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) to take precedence over those of us who represent some of the district under discussion?

Mr. Brown: It has been suggested that Edinburgh councillors want confrontation. It is the Government who want confrontation. They are on a loser if they think that electors do not back the councillors. If the Secretary of State knows anything about Edinburgh — when he occasionally goes there he no doubt reads the Edinburgh *Evening News*—he knows that the *Evening News* is not a revolutionary newspaper and that it carried a poll——

It being half past Eleven o'clock MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 137.

Division No. 282] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Amess, David	Bellingham, Henry
Ancram, Michael	Bevan, David Gilroy
Arnold, Tom	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Ashby, David	Blackburn, John
Aspinwall, Jack	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Bottomley, Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Baldry, Tony	Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Batiste, Spencer	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*

Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rost, Peter
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James A.
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.

O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Wareing, Robert
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Reduction (City of Edinburgh District) 1985-86 Report, which was laid before this House on 3rd July, be approved.

Rate Rebates (Scotland)

11.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) Order 1985, dated 9 July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10 July, be approved.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the debate that has just ended, the arguments that could be advanced by the parties representing 25 per cent. of the electorate in Scotland were not heard. The mess that Edinburgh faces is the direct result of the confrontation between the Conservative and Labour parties. We have been denied the right to contribute to this debate. In those circumstances, although we oppose the actions of the Government, it was impossible for us to vote when we had no opportunity to explain our views. Is this a democractic Chamber, or is it not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. Equally, I understand that a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House, including one Minister, were disappointed in the last debate. The Chair always does its best in the limited time available.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Of course I will take the right hon. Gentleman's point of order, but I hope that he realises that time taken up by points of order now is taking valuable time out of this debate, which can last only for an hour and a half.

Mr. Steel: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that this will be helpful to the Chair — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to hear this point of order.

Mr. Steel: Under Standing Order No. 3(1)*(b)*, where the occupant of the Chair is of the opinion that

"because of the importance of the subject matter of the motion, the time for debate has not been adequate, he shall, instead of putting the question as aforesaid, interrupt the business, and the debate shall stand adjourned till the next sitting (other than a Friday)."

May I suggest that when the Front Benches have taken so much time, when an hon. and learned Member from well outside Edinburgh has taken so much time and when one Edinburgh Member has spoken for 25 minutes, the only discipline available to the occupant of the Chair is the use of that Standing Order to make it clear that hon. Members who try to occupy the time of the House in that way will not get away with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have dealt with the issue raised in that point of order; I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber at the time. I exercised my discretion. That is the duty of the Chair on such occasions.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In your response to my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), you referred to the disappointment of a number of

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

hon. Members in all parts of the House, but I hope that you were not suggesting that the disappointment felt by Back-Bench Labour or Conservative Members could be compared with the frustration of two political parties that represent a quarter of the electorate—a disappointment which is compounded by the fact that in his opening speech the Secretary of State specifically invited contributions from my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon and from myself.

The Government side took 52 minutes of the debate, the Labour party took 58 minutes and they excluded third party opinion. The procedures of the House were grossly abused and it was noted that there were no suggestions from the Chair about the desirability of short speeches. In the latter part of the debate, remarks strayed very far from order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. I hope that we can now get on.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If those roles are to be invoked, do not matters of geography become relevant? Why does an hon. Member from 300 miles to the north think that he can take precedence over some of us who represent the area concerned? I make no complaint about not being called, but let it be recorded that if there is to be precedence, hon. Members who represent the area should take precedence over those from a long way away.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the House now realises very well that the Chair is sometimes in the middle of the crossfire.

Mr. Ancram: The order is the last link in the statutory chain needed to bring into effect the relief for ratepayers which my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 14 May. The powers enabling the order to be made are prescribed in the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985 which was given a Second Reading on 3 June. After a speedy passage—I am glad to record our thanks for the co-operation given by the Opposition—the Act received Royal Assent on 26 June. It comes into force on 26 August, which is also the date of coming into operation of this order.

The order is also the latest measure by the Government to mitigate the most severe effects of the 1985 revaluation. As the House knows, we increased the domestic element of rate support grant, first, on the basis of early estimates of the new values, when it became apparent that the domestic sector as a whole would have to bear a substantially greater share of the rate burden and, secondly, to the unprecedented level of £102 million after local authorities had determined their rates and it became clear that an intolerable burden on the domestic sector was being imposed by the effects of revaluation, together with high spending plans. I am bound to say there have been some irresponsibly high spending plans, in one case so wildly irresponsible that my right hon. Friend has been obliged to take the selective action approved by the House tonight.

Relief for the domestic sector and adjustment of the effects of revaluation through reduction of industrial derating from 50 to 40 per cent. were possible by using powers already available to us. When later information became available for individual ratepayers of the combined effects of revaluation and high rates, it became clear that something more needed to be done, in particular for commercial ratepayers for whom our earlier average figures had indicated that the effect of revaluation was broadly neutral. Once the rolls were published, we learnt that there were many individual cases of horrifying rate increases. They seriously jeopardised the ability of many commercial ratepayers to continue in business. The powers that the Government already had did not enable us to meet the circumstances, hence the need to seek the powers which are now enacted in the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985.

The House may find it helpful if I briefly remind it of those powers. The Act enables my right hon. Friend to provide by order for rating authorities to grant rebate of rates on property where the 1985-86 rateable value is more than three times the 1984-85 rateable value. Property valued by formula or by order, property occupied by the Crown or local authorities, and industrial and freight transport subjects benefiting from industrial derating are all excluded. An order may be made for the current financial year or any year thereafter. The order before the House exercises those powers for 1985-86.

Articles 1 and 2 are the normal provisions dealing with citation and commencement, and with interpretation.

Article 3 simply provides for rating authorities to grant rebates to lands and heritages which qualify under the Act.

Article 4 provides for the amount of rebate to be calculated by comparing old and new values for the same property. Rates payable after rebate will be as if the new rateable value were no more than three times the old value.

There is also provision that, in calculating rebate, no account should be taken of any reduction in the amount of rates payable when any valuation appeal is pending. Until an appeal is settled, a ratepayer is required to pay only 90 per cent. of his rates, or such lesser amount as the rating authority may agree. The effect of the provision in article 4(2) is that the 90 per cent. rule is not taken into account when determining a rebate. It might be thought that it is unnecessary to give a ratepayer the benefit of both a rebate and the 90 per cent. concession on the amount payable while a valuation appeal is pending. But it is important that the new rebate scheme does not encourage ratepayers from appealing if they think that the valuations are wrong.

My right hon. Friend and I have made it clear that the rebate scheme should not be regarded in any way as a substitute for going ahead in the normal way with an appeal where the ratepayer disagrees with the assessor's valuation. We therefore think it important to retain intact and separate the "upfront" incentive of 10 per cent. off the amount payable, without having it confused by being subsumed in the revaluation rebate at this stage. Obviously, once the appeal is determined one way or the other, the result will be the basis of the final entitlement to revaluation rebate, if any. Thus, someone who is in due course successful in his appeal, to the extent that his revised valuation would not have entitled him to as much revaluation rebate, will have his account adjusted, in accordance with article 6.

Article 4(3) is a provision restricting the rebate for any one property to £10,000. The intention is to focus relief on the small ratepayer and especially smaller businesses. We recognise that there is some rough justice in this provision. There is an obvious disadvantage for the large one-shop business as against the large business which

operates many small shops. But resolving anomalies of that kind would seriously complicate the scheme and there is no guarantee that any solution would not itself produce further anomalies. A restriction of £10,000 for each rebate is considered the simplest method of targeting relief on small businesses.

Article 5 first places a duty on rating authorities to ascertain those lands and heritages which qualify for rebate and to grant the appropriate rebate by 16 September 1985. This provision is based on the advice we received from officials of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and of rating authorities and assessors whom we consulted about the practical application of the scheme. Briefly, they advised that the scheme would operate more smoothly if rating authorities determined from their records who was entitled to rebates and calculated and awarded the appropriate amount. Modern systems make this much easier than obliging ratepayers who think they may be entitled to rebate to lodge a claim. We are grateful for that advice, which we were glad to accept, and for much other sound advice which those bodies gave which has been taken into account in the order. The deadline of 16 September should allow any ratepayer to make payments by instalments of rebated rates within the prescribed arrangements.

Rebates may be granted either by a payment to the ratepayer or by reducing rates payable. Given the numbers involved it is not improbable that, because, for example, records are not completely up to date, some ratepayers may not be granted a rebate by the due date. Provision is therefore made for claims by ratepayers who have not been granted a rebate.

Rating authorities are required by 23 September 1985 to advertise in the press informing ratepayers that they may claim rebates within 28 days of publication of the advertisement. A form of claim is contained in the schedule to the order. Rebates must be granted as soon as an application is accepted. If it is refused, the applicant has to be informed immediately in writing. If the rating authority fails to determine an application within 28 days of it being submitted, it shall be deemed to have refused the application. The ratepayer then has 28 days from a determination or deemed refusal in which to appeal against these to the sheriff. The procedure for such appeals, which was a matter of some debate when the Bill was before the House, is set out in article 7. There is also provision in article 6—which I have already mentioned—for rebate to be reassessed where values or rates are altered.

According to the latest return which COSLA has obtained from all Scottish rating authorities, some 133,000 domestic and 62,000 non-domestic, including commercial, ratepayers will qualify for rebate and the total cost of the scheme is estimated at about £30 million, which is a considerable and unprecedented figure. But the scheme is demand-led and the final cost will only be known once all rebates are settled.

As I pointed out in my opening remarks, the order applies to the current year only. Further rebate orders may be made for subsequent years. We have thought it right to go no further for the present than provision for 1985-86.

Mr. Dalyell: Has any rough estimate been made of the cost? It cannot be cheap.

Mr. Ancram: Various estimates have been made. It is thought that the cost will be under £1 million. I made it clear when the primary legislation was passing through the House that the expenditure would be disregarded for penalty purposes in future years.

Decisions on local authority expenditure and grant are normally made in the autumn of the year preceding the financial year to which they will apply. Any extension of this rebate scheme beyond 1985-86 falls to be considered along with the other relevant matters for that year in question and most appropriately provided for at that time.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House—if not this evening, at the earliest possible opportunity—whether the provisions will continue next year? What arrangements are being made to reimburse local authorities for administering the scheme? I expected that important aspect to be covered in the hon. Gentleman's description of the order.

Mr. Ancram: I thought that I had made it clear that the cost of administering the scheme would be disregarded. That would be local authority expenditure which the local authorities would bear themselves. It would be disregarded for the purposes of guidelines. I appreciate that it is in the interests of ratepayers and others to know the intentions for the following years as soon as possible. Those decisions, and decisions on the domestic element of rate support grant, are announced and taken in the House. We hope to make those announcements in November or December this year.

The order will bring much needed relief to those ratepayers in Scotland who face greatest hardship from increases in values and in rate bills in the current year. It is a practical expression of the Government's concern. Although there will still be people who face massive rate increases, we will have met the worst of the burdens that have been created by some elements of the revaluation. That is what we undertook to do when we were passing the legislation. The process has been completed by the order, and I commend it to the House.

12.12 am

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Under-Secretary of State has acknowledged the assistance rendered by the Opposition during the passage of the enabling legislation. There was a problem in the commercial sector, especially for many small businesses.

The generosity of the £50 million in new money has been shown to be more apparent than real. The Under-Secretary of State referred to the order as the "last link," but there seem to be a few lost chords. A shortfall of £20 million is a considerable underestimate of the cost. By refusing to lower the threshold below the three times factor, the Government have effectively denied many ratepayers the assistance that they might have thought would be available, given the Younger declaration at Perth on 9 May. So many figures have been cited for the number of commercial and domestic ratepayers who will benefit under the order that they would have been wiser to rely on COSLA's figures, on which the Government now rest their case.

I am encouraged to look at the order by the reply that the Under-Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in a letter on 15 July 1985, in which he said:

"Now that the rebate scheme's main features have been enacted I think it would be best if we were to get on with putting it into practice."

[Mr. Jim Craigen]

Given the embarrassment that the order has caused, I concur with the Under-Secretary of State.

There were two significant developments in the enabling legislation — the duty imposed on a rating authority to give the rebate and the payment by the Secretary of State to the rating authority for its payments, but not the costs that it incurred in making them.

Does the Minister expect most rating authorities to make a payment or merely to deduct the amount of rebate that might be due? I ask that question because he is giving local authorities that discretion.

Will the Minister say something about some of the problems that may arise following successful appeals where the ratepayer has to pay back a rebate that he or she has been given?

Will the Minister also tell us how the order is to be uniformly advertised? He will be aware that the Scottish information office was busy at the time of revaluation trying to soothe ratepayers' anxieties about the effects of rising assessments. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden has elicited the fact that about £3 million of the £30 million will go to the owners of poster sites. I wonder whether Saatchi and Saatchi will be involved in the promotional aspects. Rating authorities will be advertising in the press, but ratepayers will have more general anxieties about the order.

In Tayside, for example, 7,900 lock-up garages figure among the 12,700 subjects that will benefit from the order.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Craigen: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. He and I spent many hours together on the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984. I pay full tribute to the part that he played in achieving the derating of commercial reed beds. I described it as the "Bill Walker benefit Bill." I wonder whether we are now seeing the lock-ups of Tayside coming into the same category.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that in Tayside, especially in Angus, the revaluation has hit badly commercial premises. A substantial number of those premises will benefit from this measure. I acknowledge that lock-up garages are included. The fact that the majority of the shops, especially in Forfar, will benefit is welcome. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the answer to the problem is to get rid of this iniquitous rating system?

Mr. Craigen: I find the hon. Gentleman's comment about Forfar interesting, because I was reading in a newspaper only the other day about the devastating effect that the problems have caused in Forfar.

I understand that one of the aspects of the rebate scheme that might disappoint many people is that domestic ratepayers may receive only a small rebate. In West Lothian 50 per cent. may receive £10 or less, and for one in three of the beneficiaries who receive more than £1 it will be in respect of lock-up garages. The Government could have assisted by lowering the threshold from the three times factor.

The Government have a duty to reimburse the payments that arise from the order, but the rating authorities are anxious about the effect that the order will have on their cash flow, especially in respect of interest charges that may be incurred. I wonder whether, in the 50 per cent., 45 per cent., 5 per cent. arrangement that the Minister is proposing, he is giving adequate recompense to the local authorities. They will have to fork out the £1 million cost of operating the order, and also the interest charges involved.

The point made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is of importance, because there is a value for money aspect. On the basis of that £1 million and the £30 million that the order will cost, we are talking about 3 per cent. for administrative and interest charges, the rating system itself collecting about £1,700 million. The Minister gave me a figure of £16 million, approximately the equivalent of 1 per cent., for the entire cost.

Will the Minister say something about the appeals procedure? There is concern among the assessors that the detailed advice that the Scottish Office finance division put out should answer many of their queries. I know, for example, that the Fife regional assessor is a little perturbed about the terms "lands" and "heritages". I believe that there have been discussions between the Scottish Office and COSLA about the matter, but the regional assessor in Fife is concerned that there are possibilities for litigation in a change of description, from, say, "store" to "warehouse". He feels that many points of litigation could arise unless the Scottish Office spells out in considerable detail some of the anxieties that can arise from the order.

The regulations are, of course, brought to us in the form that we take them or leave them, because we cannot amend them. The Government have been singularly at fault in the way that they have calculated the costs. They have been mean-minded in not agreeing to recompense the local authorities for the costs that they will incur. I hope that tonight, and in the ensuing Scottish Office circular, the Minister will clarify various points and prevent more people from feeling that they have been rather hard done by because of the way in which the order will operate.

12.13 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the fact that I have caught your eye rather early in the debate. It is interesting to note the rather changed structure of the participants. The great bosom pals of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who were backing him to the hilt in the last debate — the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery)—seem to have decided that this debate has not the same interest as the previous one. In the circumstances, perhaps one can understand their choice of priorities and the issues on which they choose to intervene.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: Not for the present.

The order is one which the Minister, a few months ago, might have led us to believe was the salvation of the ratepayers to Scotland, and the salvation—more to the point—of the seats of his hon. Friends. The order as it appears tonight is a long way short of that. The money that will come back to the ratepayers of Scotland now looks like being a little over half of what was originally promised.

The Government have refused to contribute to the cost of the administration of the scheme by the local

authorities, and the Minister has already told my hon. Friend that he is unable to give any kind of indication whether anything will be carried forward into next year, leaving many businesses in particular, as well as domestic ratepayers, in a position of considerable uncertainty as to whether they have real relief or just a stay of execution. The running sore of rates in Scotland is causing deep and considerable embarrassment to the Conservative and Labour parties.

In spite of its willingness to attack the Government, the Labour party is not willing to declare exactly where it stands in relation to the budget in Edinburgh, nor, indeed, where it stands on the future of the rating system. That is not surprising, because if the hon. Members for Coventry, South-East or for Liverpool, Broadgreen were here, they might say they were in favour of rates, because they recognise that the majority of Labour voters do not pay the same level of rates as the majority of voters for other parties. It is therefore a good way of buying votes on the cheap, and the Labour party has not yet come clean about where and how it will reform the voting system.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Member has talked about coming clean. Has he made up his mind about how he would have voted if he had not had a fit of pique before the last Division?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I have been listening very carefully to the debate. It is a short debate, and I remind the House that remarks should be addressed to the adequacy or otherwise of the amounts of rebates and their calculation. Hon. Members should not stray into the debate that ended an hour ago.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am addressing my remarks to the inadequacy of the order.

The Government have come forward with a botched-up, temporary expedient, which has been announced in a flush of glory. When it is closely analysed, it does not live up to the spectacular announcement made in front of the television cameras at the Conservative party conference. When we get down to the nitty-gritty, we find a squalid and cheap situation, in which the Government are not prepared to give the ratepayers of Scotland the funding which they said they would give back. Nor will they give a firm commitment that such rebates will continue in the future, and that is the only solution which can help to alleviate the problems of Scotland's ratepayers.

One of the problems facing Scotland is that too many local authorities are squeezed by Government policy. Their rate support grant is cut, and that forces them to increase the rates. In addition, the revaluation effect is proving an even greater problem. The tragedy for the Government is that as a result of revaluation the public have finally discovered that the game is a bogy. The Government claim that they have the interests of ratepayers at heart, but that has been shown to be empty, shallow, and a sham. Their policies over the last five years have meant that the ratepayers of Scotland have paid, year in and year out, more and more for less and less.

This relief will not cause widespread rejoicing. It just means that ratepayers will be forced to spend more and more for still fewer and fewer services. It is no great relief to ratepayers to be told they will have to pay rate increases of 30, 40 or 50 per cent., and no great relief for them to know that they may yet have to pay rate increases of 200, 300 or 400 per cent. next year. The ratepayers of Scotland now know that, and any short-term recovery which the Government achieved by producing this deus ex machina has evaporated, as the polls in Scotland clearly show.

After the next election the Minister will not be able to hold up his head in Scotland, because he and his colleagues will be swept out of office and the city of Edinburgh will return alliance Members of Parliament. They will, of course, be drawn equally from Conservative and Labour-held seats. The Minister would be well advised to take away this squalid order and to return with one that gives to Scottish ratepayers the £50 million which the Secretary of State promised at the Conservative party conference earlier this year. If he cannot do so, I and my hon. Friends will force a Division and vote against the order.

12.20 am

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I shall follow the spirit of the debate and speak only briefly. Since you invited us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to address our remarks to the method of calculation, it is strange that the Minister did not explain to the House why £20 million was missing. At the Conservative party conference, the Secretary of State promised that £50 million would be available——

Mr. Ancram: No; £40 million.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister says £40 million, but I had the impression that he promised £50 million. Even so, £40 million is still £10 million above the figure that the Minister now says will be available. It is remarkable that, after it was suggested that £50 million would be made available, only £30 million will be provided.

If the Government could convince us that this was a speculative calculation, that they had to keep the amount within the £50 million limit, and that they were not sure how much they must shell out, I could understand the need to be cautious and not to incur the wrath of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But they have estimated that the cost of the aid will be about £30 million. If they can estimate what a multiplier of 3 will produce, surely they could adjust that multiplier so as to increase the number of people falling within the net and therefore honour the promise made by the Secretary of State.

If the Government were trying, in desperation, to attract a modicum of political support by promising this aid to ratepayers, it is strange that they have back-tracked on that promise. That sort of thing would undermine confidence in any political party. Indeed, had the Government been floating a company on the basis of that prospectus, they would have ended up in the dock because of promises made but not honoured. The entire procedure is a swindle. The only joy is that this £30 million is £30 million more than ratepayers might have received. However, that will be of no consolation to the ratepayers —including, I suspect, some hon. Members—who had hoped to benefit to a small extent, but who have discovered that they fall just short of the multiplier and will not so benefit. Tens of thousands of ratepayers will be deeply disappointed.

I cannot understand why the Government will not pay the administrative costs of the scheme. It is a simple matter. If they have so much spare cash, they should give £1 million to our hard-pressed local authorities. Indeed, it is an insult to say that local authrities will not be penalised

[Mr. Wilson]

for implementing the Government's scheme. It was a remarkable piece of effrontery by the Minister to say that, given the small sum involved and the fact that the Chancellor had already agreed in principle to give that £1 million to local authorities.

It is deeply disappointing that the Government have not introduced a new multiplier that would reflect the need to spend the £50 million that was originally offered. Instead, they have restricted aid to £30 million and so lost much of the benefit that this move might have brought.

12.24 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) and I would like clarification on one issue. We understand the Chancellor of the Exchequer to have said that this is a one-off operation, and is not to be repeated.

Mr. Ancram *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister shakes his head, but I think that he had better clarify the matter, because what the Chancellor said is at odds with my understanding—and of course I will give way and be corrected—of what he said.

Mr. Ancram: I cannot, and obviously would not, without reference to reports of what the Chancellor said, try to quote him exactly. What he was saying was that new money which was available this year would not necessarily be available next year. That does not preclude this scheme being financed in other ways.

Mr. Dalyell: In what other ways?

Mr. Craigen: In the same way as the £38·5 million in regard to the Health Service.

Mr. Ancram: I have said to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that these are the matters which are for consideration, and we have to consider all the decisions which we make about expenditure — in particular the matters relating to local government finance, which take place in the autumn. I am not being discourteous to the hon. Gentleman in saying that at this time of the year, before those decisions are taken and before consideration is given to the implications of them, I am not in a position to answer the question.

Mr. Dalyell: We will look forward to see what happens when autumn leaves are falling.

Mr. Craigen: I think my hon. Friend should take it that the Chancellor in effect was saying that this is an unrepeatable offer and that, if the scheme continues, it will be at the expense of the general body of ratepayers.

Mr. Dalyell: I think that we might want, as soon as *Hansard* is printed, to write to the Treasury and try to get a view from Treasury Ministers, because this is important.

I am not at all happy about the sheer administrative costs of this operation. If this money were available, there are certain other things in the Lothian area which ought to be done. First, I speak here as much as a Member of Parliament representing Lothian as the member for the main organising committee of the Commonwealth games. Is it understood in regard to the Royal commonwealth pool that the roofing work, unless £750,000 is spent, could become dangerous? I have checked and rechecked this. If the money is simply not available for a basic site for the Commonwealth games, where is the money going to come from to do necessary structural roofing repairs to the Commonwealth pool?

Secondly, is it true that £130,000 is needed urgently for Meadowbank and the James Kane centre and that, if this is not done, both those places may close?

Thirdly, the Edinburgh commarket, which is to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am finding great difficulty in relating this to the order.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is quite legitimate to talk about alternative uses of this rebate.

With regard to the Warrender baths, which are closed, £100,000 is urgently needed if they are to be re-opened. If they are not re-opened, training facilities for the 1986 games will be open to considerable question. This is very relevant. If the Minister cannot answer now, perhaps he could write to me about it. Paying back comparatively small sums of money with these disproportionate administrative costs is not a very sensible way of conducting our affairs.

12.30 am

Mr. Ancram: Many points have been raised in the debate and I shall answer as many of them as I can, beginning with those raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The question of capital allocations for the types of subject to which he referred are also matters for consideration in the autumn, when the Government consider what allocations can be made available. We consider seriously the bids that are made and the priorities put forward by local authorities and try, within available resources, to ensure that, so far as possible, those priorities are met.

I take issue with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that he feels that the £30 million rebate, which effectively is the cost of the order, is unnecessary and unhelpful, because there are situations — hon. Members will recognise them in their constituencies — where, for instance, commercial organisations, such as small shops, might find themselves faced with rate increases, because of severe revaluations, which could put them out of business. The purpose of the order, as I have previously pointed out, is to try to mitigate the worst effects of revaluation without undoing revaluation itself.

Mr. Kirkwood *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) recognises the value of the order, because originally he asked the Government to provide £4 million or £5 million, and he sees the amounts that the Government are providing are generous. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Member for Linlithgow will reflect on some of the people whose problems and burdens will be considerably relieved by the action that will take place under the order.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) raised again the question of the £50 million and what he referred to as the missing £20 million and the multiplier. In fairness to my right hon. Friend, it is important to recall what he said at Perth, when he announced the sum of £40 million for commercial or non-domestic ratepayers. He referred to a scheme, the cost of which would be about—

Mr. Dewar: Not "about," but "at least."

Mr. Ancram: He may have said "at least." I do not have the exact quotation with me, and the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I would not want to be held to a quotation without having the reference before me. It was clear from that time on that we were talking about a certain cost. That cost, on the best estimates that were available to us at the time, was £40 million for the commercials and, as we announced the following week in the House, another £10 million for the domestics. Those estimates were on the high side. We accept, as more work has been done on the valuations, that the cost will be considerably less.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East criticises the three times multiplier, but we had to take account of setting a level of multiplier at which eligibility for benefit would begin and which would not, of itself, undo revaluation completely. I am sure that he accepts, as an ex-practising solicitor—he may still be practising—who in the House has previously expressed certain expertise on valuation and admiration for revaluation, that it would not have been sensible for the Government to have undone one side of revaluation—the losing side—while leaving the other side untouched.

We had to set a level which we believed dealt with the worst effects of revaluation. It is, interestingly, a level which is below the average multiplier of revaluation in the previous revaluation. We believe that it was the right figure, and the cost, as I said works out at £30 million.

Mr. Wilson: I find the Minister's attitude somewhat ingenuous. If Ministers and the Scottish Office were successful in screwing out of the Treasury £50 million, that money should have been made available to ratepayers who are finding it extremely difficult under the three times multiplier to meet increased rate demands for which they have had no opportunity to budget. That extra money would have alleviated the distress that many people are feeling.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman uses the rather indelicate phrase, "screwing £50 million out of the Treasury." It was not like that. The Government arrived at a scheme that involved the three times multiplier, and the cost followed that. That has been the position from the beginning, and it remains so. Opposition Members who, from the end of March and through April, were calling for sums of £4 million or £5 million, now find it difficult to accept that the Government have given a generous provision to aid ratepayers.

Mr. Craigen *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, even though we have been through this so many times before.

Mr. Craigen: I have the words spoken by the Secretary of State in Perth. He said that he expected the scheme would help the 50,000 ratepayers who are most badly affected, and that it would cost £40 million. As 62,500 are to be helped over the three fold threshold, why was there that miscalculation in Perth?

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman talks to assessors, he will find that the analysis takes place over time, and that the evidence presented to us by COSLA, which led to us accepting that the figure would be £30 million, was not given to us until 12 June, because it was also working on the figures. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) has confirmed my recollection that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had agreed to a scheme then and gave an estimate of the cost.

The hon. Member for Maryhill asked a number of questions. He asked about the reimbursement of rebates. We have in mind, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told COSLA, that 50 per cent. of the estimated amount of rebates will be paid at the end of September. Most of the balance will be paid at the end of December, with the remaining 5 per cent. awaiting a more final figure from the authorities. That met one of the requests made to us by COSLA.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about advertising and the publicity that would be forthcoming from the Scottish Office. Again, we shall give some national publicity to the order, so that eligible ratepayers know that they need to claim, unless they have not heard from their local authority by the time that the local advertisement appears in the press, on or before 23 September. It is important that it is done that way round, because it was decided on the advice of COSLA that the order should be administered in this way.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the sheriff court appeal and the assessors' concern. The basis of the order is comparison between old and new rateable values on the same property. It is up to local authorities, which are best placed to decide, whether the property is the same. The Scottish Office guidance circular will be discussed with COSLA before we issue it.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the authorities would deduct the rebates from the rates or pay the rebates in cash. Some authorities advise us that they will do one thing, and others the other. It depends on their procedures. There is provision for both those procedures in the order.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked about the rebate payments that might have to be made after a successful appeal. After any valuation appeal is decided, some payment to or from a ratepayer has to take place. If he loses, he has to pay the 10 per cent. that he has deducted from his bill; and if he wins, the authority arranges for him to be credited or paid back. The order provides in article 6 for the revaluation rate to be recalculated, and for this recalculation to be part of the adjustment to the ratepayer's account, which will have to happen anyway. To put it more simply, it will all come out in the wash when the final adjustment is made.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) made a singularly unconstructive speech. He is obviously still labouring under the impression that giving aid to ratepayers is some form of warped priority, to use his words, on the part of the Government. It became clear that he would rather not have the order, nor the help that is being given to the ratepayers. He told us that he and his hon. Friends will vote against the order unless the three times multiplier is changed. He knows full well that that is in the primary legislation, not in the order, and is not capable of being changed tonight. It was fully debated when the primary legislation went through, and he did not vote against it then. He has shown his true colours today. He has shown, as Liberals so often do, that all they are out for is the main chance. When it becomes clear to the ratepayers of Scotland that the Liberal party was prepared today to stand up and say that it would rather that the ratepayers of Scotland did not get this £30 million, the ratepayers will be able to judge which party has their interests at heart.

Mr. Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Has the Minister sat down, or is he giving way?

Mr. Ancram: I have finished, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 147, Noes 7.

Division No. 283] [12.40 am

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Speed, Keith
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Livsey, Richard
Steel, Rt Hon David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. James Wallace.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) Order 1985, dated 9th July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th July, be approved.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

FOODSTUFFS

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6707/85, a proposal for a Council Directive concerning the examination of animals and fresh meat for the presence of residues, and 4793/84, a proposal for a Council Directive concerning sampling and analysis for the monitoring of foodstuffs for human consumption; and in respect of 6707/85 supports the Government's approach in seeking cost-effective arrangements which will benefit consumers and meat traders and in respect of 4793/84 supports the Government's endeavours to reach an acceptable agreement on the proposal.

FUEL

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 9153/82 and 6544/83, draft Directive and Amendment on crude oil saving through the use of substitute fuel in petrol; and Nos. 8369/83 and 7959/84, draft Directive and Amendment on rationing for commercial road transport between Member States in the case of fuel shortage; and supports the Government's intention to seek implementation of the principles contained therein.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

Hospital and Welfare Services (North Down)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

12.51 am

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I am glad, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was successful in obtaining this Adjournment debate, even though it is taking place at nine minutes to 1 o'clock in the morning after a fiercely fought Scottish debate.

Over the years I have taken many opportunities to draw attention to the parsimonious attitude of the Eastern health and social services board to the hospital and welfare services in the North Down area, and I make no apology for doing so once again. However, it is necessary for me to point out that in addition to the other parts of County Down, the Eastern health and social services board also takes within its jurisdiction the whole of the city of Belfast. Throughout the years this ridiculous situation has worked to the detriment of the people in my constituency and elsewhere in County Down. If it were a parliamentary constituency, the authorities would be accused of gerrymandering, because the boundary of the Eastern health and social services board is so eccentric. It works to the disadvantage of the health of those who live outside the city of Belfast, and it works particularly to the disadvantage of those living in the North Down area—an area of ever-increasing population which has already outstripped the available hospital facilities. This is due principally to the drain of finance and resources away from North Down and into west and north Belfast, two areas of declining population.

I blame the Eastern health board and the Department of Health and Social Services for the decline in hospital facilities in the North Down area, but in fairness to both it has to be said that the former Stormont Government began the rot. Direct rule is blamed nowadays for nearly every mishap which occurs in the Province, but we must never forget that it was the former Government at Stormont who agreed that Belfast should be included in the area of the Eastern health board, with North Down, Ards, Downpatrick and other parts of County Down.

The former Stormont Government decided in the early 1970s to build the enormously expensive tower block at the city hospital in Belfast. The cost of that development escalated from £14 million to £60 million. I cannot say that all that money would have gone to the rest of the Eastern health board area if the tower block had not been built, but I am certain that substantial sums and a new hospital have been denied to the North Down area because the tower block voraciously ate up a vast amount of the money available to the Eastern health board.

The former Stormont Government also agreed vast additional capital expenditure for the upgrading of existing hospitals in west and north Belfast, where the population has been declining for years. As a result of those decisions, severe limitations were imposed on the financial resources of the Eastern health board. That is reflected in the cheeseparing of the budgets for Ards and Bangor between 1983 and 1985.

The direct treatment costs at Belfast city hospital total about 55 per cent. of all its costs—about the fifth highest proportion in the Eastern health board area. So far, no estimate has been made of the consequences of bringing the tower block into partial use later this year and into full use next year. If the experience of other hospitals is a good guide, we can expect the direct treatment costs to increase as soon as the new building is brought into daily use. The hefty running costs of the tower block will drain more vital money away from the North Down area, which desperately needs financial help to improve the health, welfare and hospital services of local people.

The people of North Down and Ards live in the fastest growing and most urbanised area of Northern Ireland, and everyone in Northern Ireland recognises that fact. The North Down area plan envisages growth continuing well into the next century. Everyone knows that the proportion of elderly people in the area has increased and is expected to continue to increase for the next few decades.

It is common knowledge that insufficient money has been spent over many years on hospital services for the elderly. I have drawn attention many times to the failure of successive Governments to recognise what is happening to the age distribution of the population, but no action has been taken to ensure that a sensible reallocation of funds is made to take account of the situation.

A few years ago plans were announced for an extension to the geriatric unit at Crawfordsburn hospital, but nothing has been heard of that recently. The plans have been quietly pushed aside and conveniently forgotten by bureaucracy, yet the proper care of the elderly is urgently required in the North Down.

While the Government are preaching that more of the elderly should be cared for at home, the health board's officials are announcing the curtailment of meals on wheels services, the closure of day centres and the cutting of other services intended to encourage our senior citizens to remain in their own homes.

Some people have made representations, as I have, to the Government on behalf of the elderly. We should pay tribute to the contribution to the community that elderly people made over the years of their active lives. I should like to think that in their declining years others would fight their battles for them to ensure their right to a decent life and adequate provision.

I do not oppose the report of the joint review team in its entirety, as some people do. It contains a few good and sensible ideas, but it has its limitations. Some of its proposals are wholly unacceptable, such as the envisaged community hospitals to replace the existing hospitals at Bangor and Ards. During the seven years that the team took to report, millions of pounds were spent on carrying out new building programmes and on equipment in the north and west Belfast areas. Those programmes helped to consolidate the outmoded policies and thinking which had already deprived North Down of a proper hospital service.

The compiling of the report began seven long years ago. It alleges that it deals, not with the cost of hospital services, but solely with the hospital requirements for the next 20 years, and how the assessed needs can or should be met within that period, on the basis of the physical resources presently available and which can reasonably be made available.

I do not believe that the joint review team had costed the availability of finance and general economic trends at the fore when it considered the facilities required for the area. Central to the thinking of the report is the concept of the community hospital. The fact that that concept has

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

not yet been fully accepted or properly thought out has not deterred the team from relying on it. I have not come across one general practitioner in North Down who sees himself helping to staff such a hospital in future. Some doctors, if they have the time available from general practice, are prepared to visit their patients in hospital, but they are not prepared to mislead their patients into believing that a community hospital with the type of profile envisaged by the joint review team report is as good as the present hospital services—bad as those facilities may be in the Bangor hospital.

One of the most valuable aspects of general practitioner services at present is home visiting by consultants. The family doctor finds that sort of support invaluable. It is available because consultants are located in the local hospitals. If changes are made and the consultants then become located in large teaching hospitals, home visiting will be continued with great reluctance. Moreover, visits to local health centres will eventually come to an end.

The financial reality is that the Bangor, Ards and Downpatrick hospitals cost considerably less than any of the hospitals in west and north Belfast. The Royal Victoria group of hospitals consistently overspends its allocation. The Mater hospital now costs more per patient than the Ulster hospital at Dundonald. The waste of money that continues at the Royal Victoria hospital can be gauged from the document entitled the "Redeployment of Resources", which was published in July 1985.

According to the report, the Royal Victoria hospital has been asked to reduce its overspending by £1·5 million. If any further proof were needed to show that the Royal Victoria is the most incompetently managed hospital in Northern Ireland, the report provides it. Yet it is the cost-effective hospitals of the North Down area that are being compelled to make yet another large saving this year, to the grave disadvantage of the people of the North Down area, who deserve better from the Eastern health and social services board.

The board has been less than honest with the report of the joint review team. It has said repeatedly that the report is not a statement of policy and that it is a consultative document only. The consultation period is stated to last until 30 September. That is what the board says, but in his latest letter to me of 5 July the Minister rather gives the game away. He says that he cannot intervene to stop the board taking irreversible decisions. It appears from his letter, however, that he is happy to accept the main thesis of the joint review team's report and that he actually supports it. I hazard a guess that since 1977 the Minister's departmental officials have been pushing that line of hospital development which the report advocates.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Kilfedder: As I have told the Minister, I have a great deal of ground to cover.

Mr. Taylor: It is on that very point.

Mr. Kilfedder: I have told the Minister in correspondence that I do not believe that the report of the joint review team is impartial, unbiased or genuine in its examination of the hospital needs of the North Down area over the next——

Mr. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kilfedder: —20 years. I urge the Government to guarantee adequate hospital facilities at the Bangor hospital and the provision of a casualty department. It is extraordinary and unacceptable that there is no casualty department in an area with a high density population, and a population growing year by year.

I urge the Government to provide a new acute hospital in the area between Bangor and Newtownards for the people of North Down. Until such a hospital is built, I urge the Government to designate the Ulster hospital at Dundonald as the hospital for the people of Dundonald and the North Down area. That will prevent patients from being sent to the Belfast hospital, which causes even greater difficulty and stress for their relatives in their efforts to visit them.

The saddest aspect of all recent public expenditure cuts has been the shabby treatment of the elderly in our society. It is indefensible for the Eastern health and social services board to contemplate closing Crawfordsburn hospital, which provides vital geriatric beds in the area. More geriatric beds should be provided at the Ulster hospital at Dundonald, but only in addition to those provided already at the Crawfordsburn hospital.

It is lamentable that the board, which has the Government's backing, has failed to provide sufficient opportunities to give relief to unmarried daughters who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of their elderly parents, looking after the parents when they are no longer able to look after themselves. Those supportive daughters would benefit from a holiday if their relatives could make regular, short-term stays in a geriatric bed in a hospital.

The savage reduction in the home help service has meant that elderly people living on their own do not have sufficient help to enable them to manage. One of the many letters that I have received on the subject of home help and welfare provision for the elderly states:

"My wife suffered a severe stroke 2 yrs. ago, she is now 75 yrs. old, she was in the hospital for a time, until she was over the worst. The stroke left her without power in her left side . . .

We have no home help, only a nurse coming once a week to bathe my wife . . . I will be 80 yrs. old next month and 3 months ago I hurt my back while attending to my wife."

That letter describes the agony and strain suffered by many people who need assistance.

The cuts in the meals on wheels services and the closure of a number of vitally needed community centres for the elderly in North Down will make life more difficult for our senior citizens, who deserve better from bureaucracy and society. One senior citizen wrote me a letter stating:

"Dear Mr Kilfedder

The senior citizens of Kilcooley,"—

in my constituency in Bangor—

"who attend the centre, in Carnalea Meth Church hall, have been told that the centre is closing down. They only have a few hours on Wednesday, and enjoy the activities and lunch (50p) provided. At the moment, they have a quiz going and have got into the finals and are pleased at this achievement, a simple pleasure which costs nothing, so they are to be deprived of even that"

by the Eastern health board. The lady mentioned that most of the folk in the centre are in their 70s and 80s.

The public expenditure cuts have not even left out the mentally handicapped in North Down who need more money. The chairman of the Bangor and District Society for the Mentally Handicapped, Mr. Matt Murray, sent me a letter regarding the summer activities scheme at Clifton

school for the mentally handicapped at Bangor. The school was told that the health board had decided to cancel the scheme. The chairman of the health board stated:

"The Board regrets any reduction in services to the mentally handicapped but, as you are aware, the Eastern Health and Social Services Board is required to make efficiency savings on an ongoing yearly basis. The Board is doing its upmost to protect priority groups like the mentally handicapped but it is not always possible for them to totally escape the effect of savings."

Eventually, as a result of offers from Barnardo's, it was possible for arrangements to be made for a shorter and less adequate period of summer help. That help is needed by parents to enable them to have a holiday during the nine weeks' summer holiday when their mentally handicapped children would normally be at home. The parents need that period of respite to renew themselves to look after their relatives.

I plead with the Under-Secretary of State to help the people of North Down, who desperately need proper hospital facilities and welfare services.

1.14 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) has covered a lot of ground, and I do not have much time in which to reply. He has dealt not only with the long-term proposals for development of hospital services in the area of the Eastern health and social services board, contained in the report of the joint review team, but with the more recent proposals of the Eastern board contained in its consultation document, "Redeployment of Resources." In both cases he has quite understandably concentrated on the effect on the North Down area, which he represents with such distinction.

The first point that I wish to make concerns the status of the different proposals. The development of hospital services in the Eastern board area is essentially a matter for consideration in the first instance by the Eastern board itself. The board is seeking to establish a pattern of hospital provision which will meet the needs of the people of its area in the years ahead, and to that end it is considering the development of hospitals throughout its area, including North Down. The JRT report deals with those long-term considerations and makes a number of recommendations. The board is consulting on those recommendations, and those consultations will continue until 30 September, after which the board will reach decisions on future hospital provision in its area.

The hon. Member referred to what I had said to him in a letter. He was selective in his quotation, because I said that where any decisions taken by the Eastern health board involved the closure or change of use of existing facilities, the formal approval of the Department of Health and Social Services would be required. Where the board decides to close a hospital, there are formal procedures that must be gone through.

Meanwhile, the board has certain financial responsibilities. In common with the other health and social services boards, it is responsible for balancing its budget, for deciding priorities and for living within the available resources. To enable it to live within its enhanced financial allocation for 1985-86, the Eastern board has decided that it needs to look for additional economies. Proposals for achieving them are contained in the document "Redeployment of Resources," and, again, comment from interested parties has been sought by 30 September 1985. It is reasonable to consider both sets of proposals at the same time. It would have been curious had the board decided act in any other way.

I should like to deal, first, with the recommendations in the JRT report specifically—to give it its colloquial name — specifically those which affect the hon. Members constituency. In doing so, I should say once again that these are not proposals of the Eastern board; they are recommendations of the joint review team upon which the Board is currently consulting.

The review team has recommended that Ards and Bangor hospitals should cease to provide acute care and that the main specialties presently provided should transfer to the Ulster hospital at Dundonald. Both hospitals would adopt a supporting role to the Ulster hospital and fulfil the broad functions of community hospitals providing post-operative treatment and convalescent care. In addition, they would provide day surgery and outpatient clinics. Minor casualties would continue to be treated at Ards hospital, but all major casualties would go to the accident and emergency department at the Ulster hospital.

The hon. Member for North Down has talked about the drift of population away from Belfast to areas such as North Down and argued that as a consequence acute hospital facilities should be provided as close as possible to the areas where they are needed. I agree. It is of course, a fact that extension of the catchment population of the Ulster hospital—a point that he mentioned—to include most of the North Down and Ards local government districts is one of the recommendations of the joint review team. The Ulster hospital is accessible to the people of the North Down area. With increasing efficiency in the utilisation of available beds in other Belfast hospitals—a point he properly made — it will surely be a natural development for the Ulster hospital to take an increasing proportion of its work load from the North Down and Ards area.

On the question of geriatric provision, the hon. Member has rightly drawn attention to the importance of providing an adequate number of geriatric beds for the North Down area. In proposing that Crawfordsburn hospital should close because of its unsuitability for the care of long-stay geriatric patients, the joint review team recognised that the inpatient services currently provided there would have to be relocated at the proposed community hospitals in Newtownards and Bangor, and that capital investment might be required to provide some new accommodation for geriatric patients. That recommendation is included in the consultative process which the Eastern board is currently undertaking.

Perhaps in the two minutes that remain I can make some general observations on what the hon. Gentleman said. It is completely untrue for people to suggest that the Health Service or the personal social services in Northern Ireland in the past few years have been subjected to cuts. We have seen a real increase in expenditure on the health and personal social services of about 8 per cent. Per capita spending on the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland is 25 per cent. higher than it is in England and Wales, and in the Eastern board area it it 25 per cent. higher than the average for Northern Ireland. We have maintained capital spending in Northern Ireland over the past five years. None of that suggests cuts.

We have to make more efficient use of the money that we spend on the health services. There is at present an imbalance between acute care and community services.

[Mr. Chris Patten]

We have 30 per cent. more acute care beds in Northern Ireland than on this side of the water. I am very keen to see us develop acute care facilities so that they are nearer to patients, and I am keen to see us develop the role of community hospitals.

I think that whoever stands at this Dispatch Box answering debates such as this for the next 10 years will be making much the same point—that we need to get a better balance between acute care and community services. That is in the interests of the people of the hon. Gentleman's constituency and in the interests of people throughout Northern Ireland. I believe that even if the hon. Gentleman were making this speech — as he might perhaps one day—he would be driven to precisely the same conclusions as I have reached this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 18 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL
Lords amendments agreed to.

DURHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed.

BERKSHIRE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 23 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Land

1. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received representations about the loss of agricultural land in southern England.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): I have received no such representations.

Mr. Baker: Is my hon. Friend aware that agricultural land is being lost to development in the south of England at a wholly unacceptable rate? Is she further aware that every acre so lost diminishes our environment and contributes to greater pressure on farmers? Will she add her weight to ensure that that deplorable trend is reversed?

Mrs. Fenner: The Government have a commitment to the protection of agricultural land, and I attach great importance to the protection of such a finite national resource. I am, however, always ready to examine critically the precise methods of implementing the Government's policy in this area.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister accept that in southern England, as in Leeds, housing policies have a great deal to do with the loss of agricultural land——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is what I was hoping would not happen.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I will rephrase my question, Mr. Speaker. For every three old houses demolished, only one can be built, and that inevitably pushes out development. What talks has the Minister had with the Minister for Housing and Construction——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about agricultural land.

Consultancy Fees

2. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has made any studies on the impact of consultancy fees on small farmers.

Mrs. Fenner: I have recently commissioned an independent survey designed to provide information by farming type and size on the industry's current and future use of advisory and related services.

Mr. Ross: Does the Minister accept that the work of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service over the years has been much appreciated by agriculturists in general? When does she expect to introduce the proposed scale of charges? Will she give us an assurance that the charges will not be unnecessarily high and will not include bureaucratic, fastidious extras?

Mrs. Fenner: Professor Bell, in his report, made a point about the excellence of ADAS, but recommended that the beneficiaries of the services provided by ADAS should contribute to the cost of those services. Detailed work on the implementaion of Professor Bell's report is in hand, and my right hon. Friend hopes to be able to make a further statement on progress before the summer recess.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that last year alone we spent £53 million on agricultural education and another £8 million on farm training supported by the agricultural training board? Does she agree that it is a misconceived belief held by Opposition Members that all farmers are thick and welcome such unsolicited advice?

Mrs. Fenner: I am sure that our advice and training services are excellent and of great help to our agriculture industry.

Food and Drink Federation

3. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many meetings he or his officials have had with the Food and Drink Federation in the last 12 months.

Mrs. Fenner: My right hon. Friend or his colleagues have met federation representatives at their invitation five times in the last 12 months. Throughout this period there have been frequent and continuing contacts between my officials and the federation. The most recent meeting at senior level took place on 11 July.

Dr. Twinn: When my hon. Friend next meets members of the Food and Drink Federation, will she be able to give them good news about the imminent introduction of a national voluntary code of practice for nutritional food labelling? Is she aware of the anxiety of people in the industry that the introduction of retailers' schemes, although welcome as a sign of intent, could cause confusion because there is no common standard?

Mrs. Fenner: I am aware that too many systems will confuse the consumer. Comments on the Government's

grant guidelines are being evaluated. The Government have already said that they will consider laying regulations concerning the format of nutrition labelling.

Cereal Prices

4. **Mr. Latham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest position regarding the negotiations over cereal prices in the Common Market.

5. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with efforts to reduce the European Economic Community grain surplus.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): The Agriculture Council earlier this week was again unable to reach agreement on cereal prices. The Commission, however, stated that for the coming marketing year it would apply prices for cereals based on an abatement of 1·8 per cent. It also stated that it would be authorising member states to make an end of season payment for common wheat and rye of breadmaking quality and putting proposals to the management committee to reduce the delay in the payment period for cereals bought into intervention and to operate a special intervention measure for breadmaking wheat towards the end of the 1985-86 marketing year.

The Council will return to the question of cereal prices at future meetings and, in addition, the Commission has said that it intends to bring forward proposals in the autumn for modifying the cereals regime so that decisions on the future of the regime may be taken by the end of 1985.

Mr. Latham: What sort of Fred Karno outfit is it when the non-elected bureaucrats arbitrarily fix cereal prices because the elected Ministers cannot agree? Surely our farmers and consumers deserve a better arrangement.

Mr. Jopling: I agree that this is an uncertain area. The Commission claims that the Council's failure to take decisions is contrary to its obligations under the treaty and that the Commission has a duty to fill the gap as far as possible. The Government do not think that it would be profitable to add to the uncertainty. The price reduction of 1·8 per cent. will therefore be applied in the United Kingdom, pending a final decision by the Council.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As technology and improved techniques will continue to boost cereal production throughout Europe, is it not vital to have an enforceable and realistic policy of controlling surpluses? As the 1·8 per cent. price cut will not do the trick, and as my right hon. Friend must have a realistic policy, can he tell us what it is?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend has heard me say time and again that discipline by price is the best way in which to control surpluses. The combined result of the Commission's decisions is that the support price for 1 tonne of wheat will fall by an estimated 7 per cent. in real terms in 1985-86. That follows a reduction of more than 9 per cent. in real terms during the previous three seasons.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Is the Minister satisfied about the legality and propriety of the method by which the 1·8 per cent. abatement is being made?

Mr. Jopling: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there is a precedent for the Commission moving in, in circumstances such as these, when there is a legal vacuum. The Government do not think that it would be profitable to add to the uncertainty.

Mr. Torney: Is the Minister aware that this country has a surplus of 4 million tonnes of grain and 3 million tonnes of wheat used mainly for animal feed, which is not required? Is he further aware that putting goods into intervention costs the British taxpayer £40 million a year? What is he going to do about that appalling situation?

Mr. Jopling: I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would applaud the efforts that I have been making to apply even stronger cereal price cuts. I should have thought that he would agree with me that it was a significant step forward over the past three years to have had a reduction of 9 per cent. in real terms. The Commission's decision for this year implies a reduction of a further 7 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Deakins: As an important principle is at stake here—whether the Commission has the power to overrule and override the veto of a member Government—will the Minister confer with his colleagues about the possibility of having the matter referred to the European Court of Justice for a ruling?

Mr. Jopling: It is not the Government's intention at the moment to refer this matter to the court. Under the guarantee threshold arrangement, this year there should have been a reduction of 5 per cent. There is, therefore, a strong argument for saying that there should be a reduction in cereal prices this year, although I wish that the reduction was more than 1·8 per cent.

Mr. Parris: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the failure to reach a decision, however looked at, is disastrous for the Community? Can he explain what will happen about storage, given that there is already a record amount of grain in intervention store in this country and that a record amount of cereals has been planted and is about to be harvested? What will happen to the new crop?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend is a brave man to assert that there will be a record harvest. That is not a certainty. I hope that he will reflect on the fact that over the years there has been a major change in the attitude of the Council of Ministers and the Commission, and that although three years ago we were talking about a double digit increase in cereal prices, this year there will be a fall of 7 per cent. in the price of this season's wheat in real terms.

Mr. John: Does not the fact that Ministers were talking about a two-figure price increase so recently mean that the position is desperate? Will he confirm that the Commission's report reckons that the profit margin on cereals throughout the Community is between 20 and 30 per cent. and that this year's end of season stocks will be 10 million tonnes higher than last year? What hope do we have that in the autumn, or at any other time, the Commission will be less feeble and Ministers less faint-hearted than they have shown themselves to be this summer?

Mr. Jopling: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give me credit for having been the most robust Minister in arguing in the Council of Ministers for reduced prices. I was the only member of the Council of Ministers who argued consistently that cereal prices should be reduced by the full 5 per cent. that was implicit in the guarantee threshold. I shall continue to argue in that way.

Sea Fisheries Committees

6. **Mr. Patrick Nicholls** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of Sea Fisheries Committees byelaws.

Mrs. Fenner: Sea fisheries committees, through the application of byelaws, can make a valuable contribution to fisheries conservation at local level. We are satisfied with the operation of those byelaws, but we recognise that the procedures governing their confirmation, set out in a statutory instrument dating from 1938, need to be brought up to date. A revision is now under discussion with the SFCs.

Mr. Nicholls: Will that revision take into account the circumstances in which scallop fishermen in my constituency can find themselves, namely, that their licences have been revoked by the Southern sea fisheries committee and that the advertisements giving notice of that intention are put into newspapers which the committee knows do not circulate in the area in which those fishermen live? Does that not amount to a substantial injustice? Will the Minister consider using her powers to revoke that byelaw, because an injustice has resulted?

Mrs. Fenner: I appreciate the difficulty with the present statutory advertising procedures for fishermen outside the district covered by that sea fisheries committee. Those advertisements were placed in seven local newspapers, and the committee met the statutory requirement. However, I do not accept that the restrictions imposed to safeguard scallop fisheries in the southern district were unjust. We are considering whether it would be advantageous to require SFCs to advertise in the trade press, which is widely read in the industry.

Dr. Godman: To what extent is the north-east England drift net fishery shaped by sea fisheries committee byelaws? The Minister must know that there is a growing demand in Scotland for that fishery to be outlawed. Will she ensure that the interests of those fishermen are not harmed by any changes in the law?

Mrs. Fenner: We are considering the net fisheries in the north-east area, and future arrangements for it are under review. We hope to announce our conclusions soon. A later question on the Order Paper may also relate to that matter.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister recognise that the Northumberland sea fisheries committee is an extremely experienced body in the operation of its byelaws? Will she take good account of its advice on the matter raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), and on the Scottish Office's proposed regulations on the carrying of monofilament nets by boats? Will she ensure that the advice of the Northumberland sea fisheries committee is taken fully into account?

Mrs. Fenner: We always listen to the wise advice of the sea fisheries committees.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that the sea fisheries committees could take a notable lead by banning the use of monofilament nets, as has already happened in Scotland? Why will the Ministry not do the same for England and Wales?

Mrs. Fenner: We have no evidence that monofilament nets cause any more damage to fish escaping than do mutlifilament nets. We have no intention of introducing a general ban.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Where sea water netsmen for salt water species find that their interests come into direct conflict with those of anglers on rivers, how does the Minister propose to resolve that dilemma? Is she aware that in west Cumbria it is almost impossible for sea netsmen to lay their fixed engine nets and that the law no longer favours them, although it should favour both sides?

Mrs. Fenner: The Ministry can review all such fisheries. As I said earlier, we are examining the north-east net fisheries for that very reason.

Mr. Mark Hughes: Will the Minister think again about monofilament nets? All the evidence shows that they are a disgrace and should be banned throughout our inshore fishing areas. Does she accept that the Opposition would welcome an urgent revision of all sea fisheries committee byelaws and the necessary statutory instrument to bring that about?

Mrs. Fenner: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Ministry's directorate of fisheries research keeps the effect of those nets under constant review.

Food Manufacture (Transport Costs)

9. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide figures for 1984 for the percentage cost of the transport element of food manufacture costs in the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Fenner: On average, transport costs probably represent about 5 per cent. of food manufacturers' costs in the United Kingdom, but there will inevitably be considerable differences between manufacturers. I am not aware of the position being markedly different in the European Community as a whole.

Mr. Thurnham: I thank my hon. Friend for her answer. Is she aware that the CBI has said that transport costs in Britain are twice as high as those in the rest of the EC? Will she consider those differences further?

Mrs. Fenner: The evidence that I have described does not show that to be the case, but any evidence that United Kingdom manufacturers are being disadvantaged because of transport costs should be passed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. John: Does not the huge concentration of food processing plants in the south-east of England involve a double journey of food from the growing areas to the processing plants and back again to be sold? Should we not encourage food processing plants to be dispersed throughout the regions, thus avoiding such extra expense?

Mrs. Fenner: There has been some reallocation of food processing plants through the regional programme. The Centre for Physical Distribution Management, in a survey of distribution costs in the United Kingdom last year, found that transport costs of food, drink and tobacco manufacturers were on an average 5·77 per cent. of sales. The figure varied tremendously between firms, from 0·35 per cent. to 9·97 per cent.

Aujeszky's Disease

10. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been paid in compensation to pig farmers for losses incurred because of Aujeszky's disease in each of the last three years; what is the aggregate loss to farmers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: About £25·3 million has been paid to owners in compensation for slaughter of pigs affected with the disease — £21·5 million was paid in 1983, £3·4 million in 1984 and £350,000 so far this year. In addition, I understand that Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. paid about £3·7 million for disruption costs. It is not possible to give a total figure for farmers' losses in the campaign.

Mr. Freud: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he show some sympathy to the industry, which tried to follow his philosophy of helping itself, only to find that the costs were vastly in excess of the estimates? Is it right for the Government to escape completely from the consequences of what the Standing Committee called at least a failure of communications, and at worst maladministration?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman will recall that this scheme was started at the express wish of the industry, and it was on the absolute understanding that it was to be producer-financed. As the hon. Gentleman has been honest enough to acknowledge, the figure of £6 million was an estimate. I remind him that my Department has already contributed more than £3 million in veterinary and administrative resources and in laboratory testing. I remind him as well that the Select Committee, in paragraph 23 of its report, said:

"it does not appear that MAFF has any contractual obligations to bail out the industry".

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my right hon. Friend aware that although no Standing Committee has reported on this matter, contrary to what the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) has said, the Select Committee on Agriculture has done so? Does my right hon. Friend accept the obligation which the House knows falls upon him and the recommendations of that Select Committee report? Does he not have a statutory duty to take an effective interest in the prevention of animal disease in this country for the benefit of the nation as a whole, not just of agricultural producers? If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland can get £50 million a year to reduce the rates burden, cannot my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food get a few more million pounds to help to put the eradication fund back into solvency?

Mr. Jopling: The Select Committee report makes it clear that

"it does not appear that MAFF has any contractual obligations to bail out the industry".

Estimates were made, and it was made clear that one could not be precise about how much this disease would cost. I am bound to draw to the attention of my hon. Friend, although he may know it already, that the fund's overdraft of £14 million has been made a good deal higher because of the just short of £4 million of extra costs represented by consequential losses, which were paid out by the fund against my Department's advice. I do not believe that, in spite of the Select Committee's report, there is a duty on my Department to bail out in this case.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that I get the distinct impression that he is standing at the Dispatch Box bragging about how much the Government are paying in compensation? What sort of effort are the Government, especially the Minister, making to stamp out the disease? That is what my farmers want to know. Let us hear about it.

Mr. Jopling: I am delighted to hear of the hon. Gentleman's great interest in the matter. Since the scheme began in March 1983, 500 herds, including 420,000 pigs, have been slaughtered. Since June 1984, only 17 cases have been confirmed, compared with 92 in May 1983 at the height of the campaign. There are likely to be a few remaining foci of infection, and the efforts of the state veterinary services are geared to identifying those few remaining cases.

Mr. Key: Does my right hon. Friend agree that pig farmers are not financial experts, that the sum is modest compared with the rest of the agriculture budget, and that he is setting a dangerous precedent if he says that the Government will not be responsible for parts of the agricultural sector, if farmers have agreed otherwise, even if there is a risk of disease? One can, in particular, foresee antibiotic problems in fish farming.

Mr. Jopling: In this case we had a scheme to deal with a disease, on which the industry placed high priority. The scheme was embarked upon at the specific request of the industry, on the absolute understanding that it was to be producer-financed and that Government money would not be involved. In spite of that, my Department has spent more than £3 million monitoring the programme. That is an extremely generous sum.

Mr. Mark Hughes: Does the Minister accept that to hide behind the absence of a contractural obligation is unacceptable to the farmers, that animal health is his responsibility, and that ultimately he must pay for the good health of our pig population?

Mr. Jopling: I do not accept that. The industry said that it wanted to operate the scheme and would finance it. We said that the cost would be at least £6 million, and it has cost more than that. We made it clear that estimating how much it would cost was an unpredictable science. We should not pay any more towards the scheme on top of the £3 million.

Confectionery Exports

11. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what value are the United Kingdom's exports of confectionery for the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Fenner: Overseas trade statistics for 1984 provisionally value exports of sugar confectionery, not containing cocoa, and chocolate confectionery at £239,039,000.

Mr. Gregory: In view of the importance of that key sector of the economy, will my hon. Friend, who represents the sponsoring Ministry, hold discussions with the representatives of overseas states which seek to restrict the import of confectionery? They are fixing artificial barriers to a leading food export product, and the sooner they understand that those artificial barriers are not in the interest of world trade, the better.

Mrs. Fenner: We are well aware of the industries involved. My hon. Friend discussed the matter with the Cocoa Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance at a meeting on 26 June, and it was the subject of an Adjournment debate on 24 May. We made it clear that we would continue to take every opportunity to dissuade United States authorities from imposing restrictions. Meanwhile, we remain in close touch with the United Kingdom trade and the Commission.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that the British confectionary industry is excellent and should be enjoying a greater share of the export trade? Will the Government ensure that both the United States of America and our Common Market partners are not allowed to erect artificial barriers, so enabling the industry to maintain and achieve the markets that it deserves?

Mrs. Fenner: I hope I made it clear that we shall argue the case strongly and in every forum that we can. The Government are committed to promoting exports and assisting exporters.

Mr. Greenway: What is the value of our imports of confectionery? In view of the high standard of our industry, why do we need imports?

Mrs. Fenner: I cannot find the figure for the value of imports. I can tell my hon. Friend only that the value of our exports is £40 million to the United States alone.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is not one of the constraints imposed by other countries the requirement for much more detailed listing of the sugar content of confectionery? Is that not a perfectly proper thing to do, which we would value in this country, so that people may choose what they eat?

Mrs. Fenner: We are not convinced that that is a perfectly proper thing to do. That is the case that we are making.

Common Agricultural Policy

14. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost of levies and duties to the average family of four due to the common agricultural policy arising from the difference between farmgate prices and cif to the United Kingdom port prices plus port charges, but excluding all European Economic Community tariffs and duties, for major traded agricultural commodities.

Mrs. Fenner: In 1984 the United Kingdom collected some £387 million of levies and duties on imports of agricultural products from countries outside the European Community, equivalent on average to about 53p per week for a family of four.

Mr. Marlow: As my hon. Friend knows, agricultural support before we joined the Community was paid through taxation. Now agricultural support is paid through the common agricultural policy and through the infinitely higher price that Community produce sustains compared with world market prices. Effectively, that is a food tax on the consumer. I am sure that my hon. Friend would like eveybody to know what the factors are in the argument. Will she develop that theme so that we may know from week to week and month to month what food tax consumers in this country are paying?

Mrs. Fenner: Any question that my hon. Friend wants to table about the effects of levies similar to the one that I have just answered will, of course, be answered. However, I know my hon. Friend's views on Europe. Security of supply in Europe is valuable, too, although we are confronted with some surplus now, and there are other very good reasons for our membership of the Community.

Milk Quotas

15. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will issue advice to dairy farmers with milk quotas who wish to acquire further quota by means of leasing or purchase.

Mr. Jopling: I am actively pursuing in Brussels changes to the Community regulations to allow quota to be transferred separately from land. There is resistance, however, and I cannot predict the outcome of our negotiations at this stage.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that one of the fundamental planks of the solution to the problem is knowing how long the quotas will stay, or whether quotas will be taken off or revised? Will my right hon. Friend press that point so that the industry is given the underlying confidence to enable it to plan?

Mr. Jopling: As my hon. Friend knows, quotas were introduced for a period of five years, with a review at the end of three years. I was interested to see recently that the National Farmers Union issued a press statement saying that it hopes that quotas will remain. I understand that it would be an important matter if there were a free sale of quotas separately from land, but I do not believe that we shall be able to move towards taking a view one way or the other at least until the review at the end of the third year.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I am sure that the Minister is well aware that many dairy farmers in Britain are in dire financial trouble because of the Government's policy. He is well aware that he introduced a policy that was unacceptable to the people. Does he accept that many dairy farmers are trying to advise the Government to introduce a scheme to look after the interests of those who were severly hit in 1983-84?

Mr. Jopling: I congratulate the hon. Member on what appears to be his reappointment as agricultural spokesman for the Liberal party. I note what he said about milk quotas. Travelling around the country as he does, I am sure he has discovered that farmers are becoming increasingly accustomed to working with milk quotas and seem to be attaching some importance to their continuance.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend accept that the acquisition by lease or straightforward purchase of an additional quota by dairy farmers is the only way that some of them will be able to remain in business and avoid having to sell some of their land or perhaps the whole farm? Will he give some guidance on, and inject some urgency into, the problem along the lines of the question asked originally by my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd)?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend takes a close interest in these matters. He will know that I have said repeatedly that I should like to move as soon as possible to the leasing and

sale of quotas. That will be done when we can get more support from other member states and from the Commission. At the moment, it would mean major changes in both Community and domestic legislation, and the Community and some member states are strongly resisting a sale and purchase scheme. It therefore follows that changes will be difficult to achieve, and I cannot predict the outcome of negotiations. I am pressing as hard as I can to get a leasing of quotas to meet the problem to which my hon. Friend has drawn our attention.

Mr. Nicholson: Will the Minister give serious consideration to the plight of the young dairy farmer who is in a position neither to purchase nor to lease a quota? Will he consider giving such people a start on the bottom of the ladder so that they may have a future? Without young dairy farmers coming in, the industry will eventually die.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman will have heard me say many times that because of the problems of the young man starting in the dairy industry it is important to get more flexibility into the system. I have said that from the beginning, and I shall continue to do what I can to secure that flexibility.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be most helpful if we could get a united front in this country? Does he think that it would be a good idea to bring together the Country Landowners Association and the NFU so that they can reach a common decision? Does he further agree that the Liberal spokesman is probably away discussing the rating of agricultural land?

Mr. Jopling: Events are moving so fast that I am not sure who is to be the Liberal spokesman on agriculture.

We are doing what we can to get a united view among all interested parties about how quotas could be made more flexible.

Mr. John: We cannot be sure who many of the party spokesmen will be in the autumn.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the problems with quotas is that in the Community more milk is being produced than is being consumed? Will he bear in mind that that is an urgent problem which needs to be faced by the Council of Ministers? If it is not dealt with, we shall have another panic measure in a few years' time.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on a most important point. Many people tend to forget that this year we shall produce about 98 million tonnes of milk and consumption will be about 85 million tonnes. That is why the Commission is currently examining the possibility of another buy-out scheme financed either wholly or partly by the Community, in order to cancel that quota and reduce the 13 million tonnes surplus.

Beef Industry

16. **Sir John Farr** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the level of returns in the beef fattening industry.

Mr. Jopling: In the first half of 1985 producer returns, taken as market price plus variable premium for finished beef cattle, were slightly lower than in the corresponding period of 1984. This reduction was, however, partly offset by lower prices of compound feedingstuffs.

Sir John Farr: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his efforts to retain the beef premium scheme, which has made so much difference to the industry, but does he agree that the business of beef fattening and finishing has now become so unprofitable that there is a real risk of the English beef joint disappearing from the Sunday dinner table?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said about the variable premium payments, which are worth between £2 million and £3 million a week to the industry. Intervention has played a greater role since the introduction of the carcase classification grid last year. The United Kingdom intake is now running at about 1,000 tonnes of forequarters per week. The suckler cow subsidy was doubled to £24·74 per cow last year. This year, the hill livestock compensatory allowances have become available in marginal areas for the first time. In addition, private storage aid was made available earlier this year.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Prime Minister aware of the hardship and suffering that her Government are causing all people, but patients especially, because of the restricted drug list in the National Health Service? Is she aware also that old people now have to pay between £7 and £10 a week to obtain the drugs that they require, for which there are no alternatives? Will she shake up the Department of Health and Social Security, which admitted in a letter dated 17 June that it had not the resources to reply to the letters of complaint that it was receiving, to make sure that hon. Members can obtain information about what is likely to happen in the future? Will she take steps to make sure that the Department is overhauled and that the restructured list is extended?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman said about the prescribed drug list. Every penny that is saved by prescribing generic drugs instead of specific named drugs goes back into patient care and therefore enables more medical services to be supplied. I should have expected the hon. Gentleman to be grateful for that. I shall look into his complaint about the Department's failure to reply to letters.

Mr. Neil Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to condemn all racial harassment? Will she condemn especially those who jump to conclusions about these issues in advance of police investigations, especially in the Kassam case in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: I gladly join my hon. Friend in condemning unreservedly all racial harassment. It should not occur in a country such as ours. If it does, it must be dealt with. I agree with my hon. Friend that the specific case to which he refers is a matter for investigation and that it is not for us to jump to conclusions.

Mr. Hattersley: Since the Department of Health and Social Security now concedes that it possesses figures for both gainers and losers under the Government's new social security plans, why did the Prime Minister pretend that no such figures existed?

The Prime Minister: I have made it perfectly clear in the House that illustrative figures will be published at the right time when decisions have been taken on the White Paper and that no effective figures could be published until then.

Mr. Hattersley: If the figures had only this minimal importance, why was the paper which included them withdrawn from civil servants for destruction, on instructions from the Department, immediately after the Prime Minister made her dubious statement to the House a month ago?

The Prime Minister: I have made it very clear that the time to publish a range of figures is when decisions have been taken on the structure at the time of the publication of the White Paper. Other figures would be purely speculative. I note that the right hon. Gentleman has nothing more significant to ask.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister must know that she is wholly unconvincing when she tells us that the Department of Health and Social Security called in a paper and had it shredded for figures that were wholly speculative. Is it not more likely to be the case that she wanted to suppress the figures because they demonstrate that under her proposals 1·8 million families will lose housing benefit altogether, and 600,000 families will be denied supplementary benefit?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that, when the Leader of the Opposition was asked about his figures, he said:

"I am not going to put figures on two or three years hence."

If we wished to conceal figures, we would hardly have undertaken to give an illustrative range of figures in the White Paper this autumn. We could hardly have wanted to be concealed that which we intend to reveal when the time is appropriate.

Q2. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michael Brown: With over 40 per cent. of tax revenues coming from those on below average income, does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we are to help the low paid, tax cuts must be the priority in her deliberations with her Cabinet colleagues?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I accept that tax cuts are a priority. As my hon. Friend is aware, we have done a great deal to increase the tax-free allowances. We have put up the tax-free allowances in our time by 20 per cent. in real terms. There is more to be done because, as my hon. Friend is aware, some 40 per cent. of pensioners come into the range of income tax and, as he has already said, many people below average earnings pay far too much income tax.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister deny the reports that were circulating last week that, instead of attending the world conference of Finance Ministers with the IMF and the World Bank in October, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be attending the Conservative party conference at Blackpool? Does she agree that it is time for British leadership on issues such as interest rates, currency stability, the fight against recession, Third world development, and debt, and will she tell her right hon. Friend that he really ought to go to the world conference?

The Prime Minister: I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman thinks it surprising that the Chancellor should think it important to be at a party conference. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman would not put off certain engagements to be at his own party conference.

Mr. Parris: With so many more newsworthy issues facing my right hon. Friend, will she not forget the problems that face agriculture as we go into the summer still with no agreement on cereals, and with a regime on dairy products which faces with ruin many small dairy farmers in hill and marginal land?

The Prime Minister: I am indeed aware that many small farmers have been placed in difficulty. As my hon. Friend is aware, we had to take action on the common agricultural policy, but it does not make sense to pour more and more money into surpluses. Therefore, we are taking action steadily to bring down the surpluses. I think that that is correct.

Q3. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Would the right hon. Lady care to define to the House and to the 11,000 people who had their homes repossessed last year because they could not pay their mortgages, 40 per cent. of whom went into arrears because of unemployment, the term "property-owning democracy"?

The Prime Minister: A record number—over 60 per cent.—of all people in houses own their own homes. That is excellent, and is in no way counteracted by the fact that a very small percentage have had their homes repossessed. The number of people having difficulties in meeting their mortgage payments is still well under 1 per cent. of the total.

Q4. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forsyth: In view of my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) recognising the vital importance of tax cuts in generating economic growth and job creation, will she consider introducing an accelerated programme of disposal of state assets in order to support significant cuts in tax rates over a number of years? Will she recognise that that would have the added benefit of restoring much more of the economy to the disciplines of the competitive private sector?

The Prime Minister: Yes. It is important to go ahead with the privatisation programme for its own sake. It improves the performance of former nationalised industries, it enables many people working in those

industries to come into share ownership for the first time and it enables managers to manage on a commercial basis. All those are good things in themselves and they help to reduce taxation.

Mr. Torney: Will the Prime Minister give further consideration during her busy day to her decision to abolish wages councils for workers aged under 21? I represent the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, which has a mass of members who come under the wages councils. Will the Prime Minister realise, as those people do, that her Government, having created mass unemployment, are using it to cut the standard of living of thousands of young workers throughout the country, including members of my union who know that their conditions will be worsened by the Government's action? Will the Prime Minister reconsider her decision and not abolish the wages councils?

The Prime Minister: No. The decision announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment yesterday will, I believe, improve the employment prospects of young people and will be a further step towards relieving the burden of regulations on small businesses. I remind the hon. Gentleman that 16 wages councils have been abolished since 1969, and 14 were abolished by Labour Governments.

Q6. **Mr. Jim Spicer** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the major problems in famine areas are the provision of transport and lack of infrastructure. Will she take advantage of next week's meeting in Washington of party leaders of the International Democrat Union to press for better co-operation in those areas, if necessary, by the secondment of NATO military personnel to the United Nations?

The Prime Minister: I am reluctant to try to do that centrally through the United Nations, as I do not think that it would be the best way. There is a United Nations relief co-ordinator in the stricken areas, including Ethiopia. We co-operate through him and he asks for bilateral military aid where it is required. As my hon. Friend knows, we have been giving considerable help in Ethiopia through the Hercules and by other means. I think that that bilateral action, through the United Nations local special co-ordinator, is the best way to continue.

Mr. Hume: In the light of the Prime Minister's statement to the American Bar Association earlier this week that no ransom would be paid for kidnapped people in this country, will she tell me why the Government have never taken action against insurance companies in the City of London which conduct a multi-million pound business providing insurance cover against ransoms after kidnaps? Does she agree that the existence of such policies is an encouragement to kidnapping, as is proved by the fact that everybody kidnapped in Britain and Ireland by terrorists over the past number of years held such policies?

The Prime Minister: I tend to agree with the hon. Gentleman that the existence of such policies is conducive to kidnapping and can encourage the kidnapper in his terrible work.

Q7. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 18 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that a CBI report forecasts that 370,000 new jobs will be created in 1985? Does she agree that if that is realised 1 million new jobs will have been created since the last election? Is that not something to give hope to the unemployed?

The Prime Minister: The CBI report certainly gives hope. I hope that young people will be encouraged by the fact that 640,000 new jobs have been created in the last two years. As the news from Eurostat shows, more new jobs have been created in Britain in the last year than in the whole of the rest of the European Community.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Now that the House is about to go into recess, will the Prime Minister give a message of comfort to the nation and the House that she will not undertake any official visits during the recess?

The Prime Minister: Many people who have made important invitations would take considerable discomfort from such a reply.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business until the Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 22 JULY — Consideration of Lords amendments to the Social Security Bill, the Interception of Communications Bill and the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol, Etc.) Bill.

Remaining stages of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975.

Motion on European Community Document No. 9427/79 draft directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of all member states concerning liability for defective products.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 23 JULY—A debate on a Government motion to approve the statement of changes in immigration rules laid on 15 July (House of Commons Paper No. 503).

Motion relating to the statement of changes in immigration rules, Cmnd. 9539.

Remaining stages of the Child Abduction and Custody Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 24 JULY — Motion for the summer Adjournment. It will be proposed that the House should adjourn until Monday 21 October.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

THURSDAY 25 JULY—Motions on orders and regulations relating to the uprating of social security benefits and other related matters.

Motion relating to the Housing Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations. Details of relevant documents will appear in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 26 JULY — Debates on the motion for the Adjournment.

European Community documents to be debated:

Monday 22 July

Relevant documents

9427/79 Liability for Defective Products Explanatory Memorandum by the Department of Trade and Industry dated 1 July 1985

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

HC 159–xxii (1979-80) paragraph 1; and

HC 5–xxvi (1984-85) paragraph 1

Thursday 25 July

Relevant documents

Report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security Benefits Uprating Order 1985, Cmnd. 9567.

Uprating of mobility allowance Statement prepared pursuant to section 37A(4) of the Social security Act 1975 as amended by Section 3(2) of the Social Security Act 1979

(House of Commons Paper No. 491)

Mr. Hattersley: May I ask the Leader of the House two specific questions? In the light of today's publication of the report by the Select Committee on Defence about the future of the royal dockyards which unanimously condemns the Ministry of Defence's approach to privatisation and the Ministry's failure properly to consult, may we be categorically promised an early debate and that no action will be taken until the debate is held? Secondly, after the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol, Etc.) Bill is passed — I hope that it will be and that my hon. Friends will ensure that it is—are we to hear no more about violence and safety at football grounds? Is it a fact that after the Prime Minister made the headlines in Downing street two months ago we are to be left simply with that wholly inadequate measure?

Mr. Biffen: Public order legislation has been promised for the next Session of Parliament and doubtless will feature prominently in our discussions then. We shall consider the right hon. Gentleman's first point through the usual channels.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 895?

[That this House believes that, in the interest of obtaining better value for money, local authorities should be required by law to submit to competitive tender a wider range of their functions and services.]

It stands in my name and those of no fewer than 191 of my colleagues. It seeks to compel feeble local authorities, in the interest of ratepayers, to submit their contracts to competitive tender. Although I accept that there may not be time to debate this matter before the House rises for the recess, can my right hon. Friend assure us that the Government have not lost their nerve on this issue, even if some local authorities have?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is a touch pessimistic in the sense that there are a number of opportunities during the week ahead when that matter might be debated. I shall certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to that point.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Secretary of State for Education and Science make a statement next week on the Prime Minister's proposal to reintroduce direct grant schools and student loans, or does the Secretary of State need more notice of these proposals, in which case he might prefer to make the statement after the recess? Why will the debate on Tuesday on the immigration changes be taken on a Government motion rather than on a prayer tabled by my colleagues? Are the Government so desperate to get their word in first?

Mr. Biffen: It is a sign of the seriousness that the Government attach to this matter that the subject will be debated on a Government motion. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman finds anything extraordinary in that.

Of course I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the hon. Gentleman's first point. I am sure that he will not have overlooked the fact that Tuesday is Question Time on education matters.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members support what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about direct grant schools? It is extraordinary that the hon.

[Sir Kenneth Lewis]

Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) had the nerve to raise that matter since it was the president of the SDP, when she was in the Labour party, who did away with those schools. If we cannot bring back direct grant schools, will the Cabinet realistically discuss some means of increasing the number of free places that are available in public schools and make all public schools give some free places to children who do not have the chances that I had as a boy when I went to grammar school?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has clearly shown that Parliament will have a lively debate on this topic, and dare I suggest that it might start on Tuesday.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Can the Leader of the House confirm that, following consultations through the usual channels, the Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Order will not be moved tomorrow so that further discussions can take place?

Mr. Biffen: That is perfectly true. I am grateful for the representations that were made last week which gave rise to that change.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am grateful that the Water (Fluoridation) Bill was not included in the Government's timetable while I was in Moscow with the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs? This shows that the Government are open to further argument on the matter. Is the reason why that legislation is not included in next week's business the fact that the Government may be having second thoughts because Mrs. McColl has been granted full legal aid to go to the European Court of Human Rights and that the Government wisely consider that it is better to hear the results of the court's findings before jumping too quickly into legislation?

Mr. Biffen: While my hon. and learned Friend was getting a preliminary sense of Siberia, a number of Conservative Members made the most powerful representations to the Government to ensure that the legislation reached the statute book.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that all Scottish Back Benchers, with one exception, are very much concerned about the corporate plan for steel? Will he give the House a categorical assurance that no decision will be taken on the corporate plan until the House resumes after the summer recess? Will he assure us also that there will be no inspired leaks and that hon. Members will have all the rights in the world to discuss the corporate plan?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point and the importance of the decisions for Scotland that will be implied in the corporate plan. I shall ensure that his views are conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In view of the anxieties that are being expressed by the Confederation of British Industry and other representative elements of industry about product liability and the directive which will probably be issued from Brussels in the near future, does not my right hon. Friend think that it is time that we had a debate about this matter because of its very wide ramifications?

Mr. Biffen: I wholly sympathise with my hon. Friend if he nodded during the litany that I announced for Monday's business, which includes precisely the debate that he seeks.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Given the generosity of young people, particularly last weekend at Wembley and in Philadelphia, is it not time that the Leader of the House arranged a debate to illuminate the hypocrisy of his Government, and in particular the hypocrisy of the Prime Minister who on Monday and Tuesday attempted to bask in the reflected glory of the actions of young people over the weekend and then on Wednesday turned on those same young people and removed those under the age of 21 from the protection of wages councils, as if lads and lasses in hairdressers earning £33·40 a week were responsible for the 5 million unemployed in this country?

Mr. Biffen: I always enjoy the contributions of the hon. Gentleman. They are a lively reminder that consensus, thank Heaven, will never reign here. The points that he has mentioned could well be raised either on the motion for the summer Adjournment, or on the Consolidated Fund Bill, or on the Adjournment debates. I wish him well in raising that point on any of those occasions.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): In preparing his speech for the Adjournment debate next Wednesday, will my right hon. Friend be asking the Departments concerned, particularly the Treasury, for all the reasons why between now and Wednesday there should be a further fall in interest rates?

Mr. Biffen: The last time I had to make this speech I took the precaution of not accepting briefs from any Government Department, and nobody noticed the difference.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House seek to add to next Thursday's business on the uprating of social security benefits the latest report of the Public Accounts Committee on the system of paying benefits so that this House can reject early enough, to stop people from worrying, the idea that millions of pensioners should be bribed to stop using post offices to collect their pensions?

Mr. Biffen: It is not within my competence to judge whether it would be in order to make those points in next Thursday's debate, but the hon. Gentleman is probably skilled enough to try—and to try with success.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): While my right hon. Friend is casting around during the summer recess for matters to debate upon our return, will he consider providing Government time for a debate on small businesses and upon the many excellent moves that the Government have made to encourage them?

Mr. Biffen: I shall bear that request very much in mind, but it is not for me to say what will be the disposition of ministerial personnel in the autumn. I have no doubt, however, that in the light of the Queen's Speech there will be plenty of opportunities for my hon. Friend to make exactly the speech that he seeks to make.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Following the question of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) on an early-day motion urging the increased privatisation of local authority services,

since the hon. Gentleman is not obliged to declare his own financial interest in these matters, will the Leader of the House give urgent consideration to a debate in Government time on the recent report on the outside financial interests of hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: Yes; that is a very fair request.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that no decisions will be taken or commitments made, particularly those of a constitutional nature, at any inter-governmental conference that may take place between now and the return of the House after the summer recess before the House is given the fullest possible opportunity to debate the proposals?

Mr. Biffen: The best that I can do is to refer my hon. Friend's request, for which I have a lively sympathy, to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Can the Leader of the House say what provision will be made for the recall of Parliament during the summer recess to deal with the problems facing certain local authorities—for example, Liverpool, Lambeth and Edinburgh? Is it not a fact that Parliament would have to be recalled to make a decision before anything could be done? Can he say what will be his intentions during the long summer recess to deal with this very important question?

Mr. Biffen: At this stage I am trying to get to the point where I can recommend to the House that it adjourns. Unless and until I have got that far I would not want to think about its premature recall.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend say when we might expect to hear the Government's intentions in relation to the House of Lords amendments to the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill? Will he bear in mind the widespread objection that there would be in the country to making that Bill an abolition Bill?

Mr. Biffen: That is still under consideration, and at this point I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Bearing in mind that a poll organised by the Edinburgh *Evening News*—not a Socialist paper—indicated 65 per cent. support for the so-called rebel Labour council, will the Leader of the House arrange another debate next week so that the alliance especially may show its support for the Government? It is clear that locally the alliance supports the Tories. Will the Leader of the House ensure that democracy speaks and that the alliance explains its true position?

Mr. Biffen: Last night's debate on the affairs of Edinburgh was rather enjoyable, and things are never quite as good a second time round.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will not be surprised if I return to the theme of law and order and say that throughout the country there will be great disappointment that once again there is not to be a full debate on the subject in the House of Commons, particularly in the light of the remarks this week of the Prime Minister and the Police Federation. Will my right hon. Friend accept that, whether he wants to debate it or not, it is probably the second most important subject that the people of Britain want to have debated in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that he, meanwhile, will be considering how best he can ensure that the matter comes before the House during the Consolidated Fund debate on Wednesday.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the decision of the House of Representatives in the United States on South Africa, and South Africa's invasion of Botswana, can the House look forward to a debate on South Africa before the recess?

Mr. Biffen: Clearly there will be no debate in Government time, as is indicted by the programme of business that I have announced for next week. I accept at once the seriousness of the situation, but I am sure that it is a topic that will await us in the autumn.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Although the House is to be very busy next week, will my right hon. Friend give serious consideration to having a debate on the workings of the local DHSS branch offices in Leicester, which in the past week have been working to rule? Some of the civil servants and members of the Society of Civil and Public Servants have refused to handle my constituents' claims on the ground that the union is fighting to have no more overtime and no casuals allowed to help. Is not that a shocking situation? Should not my right hon. Friend provide time to protect my constituents who need to have their claims answered?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has outlined a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation. He may well find that there will be opportunities in the Adjournment debates, or in the debate on the Consolidated Fund, for the matter to be raised.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of the loss of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), will the Leader of the House, during the course of Cabinet meetings in the recess, impress upon his Cabinet colleagues the need to introduce a Bill based on Warnock, or some related measure, during the next Session of Parliament, and for its inclusion in the Queen's Speech?

Further, may we have a debate on genetic engineering in the first month of the next Session?

Mr. Biffen: I can give no undertaking to provide time for a debate on genetic engineering in Government time. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that in no sense can I anticipate what might be in the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Has my right hon. Friend noticed that, on Tuesday afternoon, I shall be seeking leave to introduce the Local Government (Prevention of Political Corruption) Bill under the ten-minute rule procedure in the light of widespread abuse under sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 by Labour local authorities passing ratepayers' money to their political supporters and advertising pet political causes? If I am fortunate enough to be given leave to introduce my Bill, will my right hon. Friend give it Government time?

Mr. Biffen: It would be the denial of any prudent sense of optimism if I were to encourage my hon. Friend to think that he could do other than get a propaganda coup on Tuesday.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will there be a debate or a statement on the policy to withdraw the Hercules from Ethiopia?

Is the Leader of the House happy that there will apparently be no further statement on the Government's role in regard to Johnson Matthey Bankers? Does he think it satisfactory that Sir Patrick Sargeant and others can, on the radio, publicly cast the most serious aspersions by implication on the professional competence of the officials of the Bank of England? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that some of us do not believe that Mr. Kit McMahon and others in the Bank of England did not at least consult officials before acting in regard to Johnson Matthey Bankers? May we be told when the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Secretary were warned from circles relative to the bullion market and the gold market that there was possible fraud in relation to Johnson Matthey Bankers?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises issues that go very wide. In respect of Johnson Matthey Bankers, the matter might be ventilated on the Consolidated Fund debates and the Adjournment debates on Friday. As for the use of the Hercules for famine relief in Abyssinia, I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's points to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Wales to make a statement next week about rising unemployment in Wales, especially as the National Coal Board has today announced the closure of yet another pit in my constituency? My constituency already has the highest male unemployment in Wales—28 per cent.—and it will now rise to 33 per cent. As Wales is continually being denied investment by the NCB, will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Wales to say how he intends to increase employment prospects in Wales, especially in my constituency?

Mr. Biffen: Although I do not accept the implications of what the hon. Lady is arguing, I realise that the matter has a real constituency consequence and I shall most certainly pass on her request to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that, on 29 May, the Home Secretary imposed a visa restriction on all people wishing to leave the Commonwealth country of Sri Lanka to travel to Britain? Is he further aware that it is unprecedented for such an imposition to be made on a Commonwealth country? In answer to successive questions, the Leader of the House has given an undertaking that the matter will be debated before the summer recess and that it will be debated and voted upon at the same time as the immigration rules next Tuesday. May we have an assurance that this issue will come up next Tuesday and that there will be a separate discussion and vote on this aspect of Government attacks on people seeking refuge and asylum in Britain?

Mr. Biffen: The second item of business that I announced for Tuesday was the motion relating to the statement of changes in immigration rules, Cmnd. 9539. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be able to make his speech then.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister to visit Liverpool during the long recess to meet councillors, trade union leaders, the unemployed, the sick and pensioners to see what damage the Government's policies have done to the city? Will she do that before she agrees to a commissioner being sent in to Liverpool and the possible gaoling of elected councillors?

Mr. Biffen: As the request has been put to me, I shall of course pass it to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the attacks made in the House on the devoted people who work in the understaffed offices of the DHSS in Leicester and elsewhere and who are sick to death of being blamed for their inability to serve the public, which is caused entirely by the Government's reduction in resources, when may we have a debate which will let it be known how deeply we deplore those attacks on such excellent public servants?

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry that the hon. and learned Gentleman, whom I have known all these years, should be so nettled by the advocacy of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). I suggest that the hon. and learned Gentleman, no less than my hon. Friend, should look to the occasion of the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House use his best endeavours to ensure that a statement is made next week on safety at sports grounds? Will he confirm or deny the fact that Mr. Justice Popplewell's interim report into the Bradford fire disaster is with the Home Secretary or will be within a few days? As that report may contain important lessons for football clubs throughout the country, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be intolerable if we were to go into the recess without having an opportunity to put questions to the Government on that important matter?

Mr. Biffen: I recognise that there is a widespread desire that, if Mr. Justice Popplewell's interim report is available, the House should have a chance to hear a statement on it.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): In view of the United States' continuing threat of aggression against Nicaragua and the participation by Right-wing extremists from this country, including the vice-chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students, who have gone on patrol with the Contra terrorists in that country, is it not about time that we had a full debate on the problems in Central America?

Mr. Biffen: I suspect that the Federation of Conservative Students frightens me much more than it frightens the Sandinistras. The hon. Gentleman's other request will of course be considered.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does the Leader of the House agree that Scottish Question Time should appear more frequently in the parliamentary timetable?

Mr. Biffen: However I answer that question I shall be crucified. It is a very ungenerous question to put in the closing days of the Session.

Consolidated Fund Bill and Summer Adjournment

3.57 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Wednesday 24 July.

Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Tuesday 23 July. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later that day. Normally the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

In addition, I remind hon. Members that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 26 July, up to eight Members may raise, with Ministers, subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Estimates Day

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY]—*considered*

ESTIMATES 1985-86

Department of Trade and Industry

CLASS IV, VOTE 4

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further sum not exceeding £39,501,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1986 for expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry on export promotion, trade co-operation, regulation of trading practices and consumer protection, and other services including grants in aid and international subscriptions, and other grants.—*[Mr. Channon.]*

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that the debate should relate to United Kingdom trade with China following the approval by the House of the recommendations of the Liaison Committee.

3.58 pm

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I wish to speak on the motion on class IV, vote 4, because it is clear from the report which the Select Committee on Trade and Industry had the honour to present to Parliament on Monday of this week that we are worried about the adequacy of the vote and wish it to be examined during today's debate, and further examined by the Government in the light of the contributions that I am sure hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish to make.

As Chairman of that Committee, I express my thanks to the hon. Members who helped in the preparation of the report, who were assiduous in carrying out the investigation and who conducted themselves extremely well during our visit to China to examine the problems and opportunities of trade with that country. I hope that it is not inopportune or out of order for me to say that the clerks and staff of the Committee performed an excellent task. Although they are not often praised in the House, may I also thank the printers, Greenaway Harrison Ltd., who not only last Friday produced a proof of the report, but had it on the desks of the Committee's members at 10 o'clock on Monday morning.

We visited China as the guests of the financial and economic committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, and had the honour of being met by Vice-Premier Li Peng. The embassy of the People's Republic in London and our embassy in Peking rendered tremendous service to us, and we wish to thank Sir Richard Evans and his staff, especially Mr. Charles Haswell, who accompanied the Committee on its tour. We also wish to thank Mr. Christian Adams and Mr. Andrew Seaton of the British Trade Commission in Hong Kong for the assistance that they gave us.

The House may already have sensed from what I have said that the tone of our report is one of earnest desire, and the belief that it is possible to co-operate with the People's Republic, to the benefit of everyone in Britain, through advancing our trade. Our Committee is solution-oriented. The reports that we have published demonstrate that it is not problem-dominated. All our reports to the House—I

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

cannot promise that this will continue — have been unanimous and have sought to be constructive, but we have not hesitated, as Ministers from the Department of Trade and Industry will know, to confront them when we believed that such confrontation would be constructive.

China is a buyer's market. It is also the last great untapped market in the world. It is a difficult market, and we praise British exporters for the quality of their products and the success that they have already achieved. However, if I tell the House that, if one travelled through China and saw 1 million people a week, it would take 20 years to see the entire population, hon. Members can gauge the size of the market, the country and, I hope, the opportunity.

Most people talk about the high technology goods needed in countries such as China, but there are many opportunities for exporting what could be called low-technology goods. We could also export what I could call, without wishing to denigrate the value of the products, second-hand goods, because China is moving up the scale of economic development and needs many of the products and processes that were common in the west 10, 20 or 30 years ago.

The Chinese market does not only present opportunities to export hardware. The Chinese need advice in accountancy, banking, insurance and international trading practices. They also need product support to meet the priorities that they have designated as the lead tasks of the next five-year plan, which will be launched in January 1986. Those tasks are designed to meet their needs in energy, transportation and communications.

I must report that the position of our sales to China is less one of accomplishment than one of opportunity. Britain is a long way down the list of OECD countries that export to China. It supplies only about 3 per cent. of all exports to China, which compares badly with Japan and the United States, which together supply about two thirds of China's imported goods and services. We are outranked by Japan, whose exports are worth £4·5 billion a year, the United States at £2 billion a year, West Germany and Canada at £700 million a year each and Australia at £500 million a year. Britain's exports are worth only £300 million a year. The Committee believes—I am sure that this will be endorsed by other hon. Members — that Britain is not exploiting all the available opportunities. Whatever the Government can do to make such exploitation possible will not only benefit employment and profit in Britain, but will give pleasure to the Chinese Government who, after the signing of the Hong Kong agreement, wish to trade with us. I am sure that we could take advantage of that.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): One of the most important industries in Scotland is the offshore oil and gas construction industry. That industry must be export-minded in its approach to further developments. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that enough is being done in China to persuade the Chinese to purchase such high-technology hardware from the United Kingdom?

Mr. Warren: We discovered that, although a great deal is being done in all industries, it is not enough. When we met representatives of operators in the South China sea and in the Bohai sea, we discovered that in many cases the Chinese were eager for the most basic help, such as writing specifications to determine the quality of goods that should be demanded of those who supply them. Bristow Helicopters is already there, and British Petroleum is already drilling. The expertise of BP in the Forties field is directly applicable to the opportunities that lie in the deeper waters to the south of China.

During our visit to Canton, we met representatives and the general managers of the companies which, under the Chinese Government, are responsible for the exploitation of those oil reserves. Although no deal of significant commercial quality has yet been struck, British representatives still believe that they will be successful. I hope that the other members of the Committee will agree with me when I urge those who have that unusual expertise in deep-water oil exploration off the Scottish coast to get together with their Chinese colleagues. As the House knows, in offshore engineering, the ability to supply products and services immediately is paramount. No lead time is available. Companies must be there on the day that oil is struck. I value the hon. Gentleman's intervention and commend it to the House.

The Select Committee members were not the only people to express the views set out in our report. I hope that the House will be glad to hear about a letter sent to me on 5 July 1985 by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, following the visit of the Chinese Premier to Britain. She said:

"The Chinese Government share our view that the opportunities for expanding our trade and economic links have never been better. I believe the committee have chosen an opportune moment to investigate this important subject."

As we travelled extensively throughout China, we were given shopping lists of Chinese requirements in every city and plant that we visited. Without doubt, the leadership of China has created eagerness and a dedication to economic growth at all levels of authority, and the wish to succeed is strong in the Chinese people. On a personal note, I should add that it was rare to come across people of such universally high intelligence in whom good sense is a common quality.

Until recently, Chinese financial reserves were strong, but they have been spending quickly. However, it was evident from our discussions in China and from discussions held with our visitors when the Chinese Premier came to Britain that they are conscious that their rate of spend must be matched to their ability to replenish their resources.

Recently, they have imposed certain constrictions on the way in which goods are handled for imports, but, on the other hand, they have opened up military facilities to make sure that waiting time does not attract a penalty in delivery for goods that have already been contracted. None of my hon. Friends will accuse me of being a sympathiser with Communism, but I sense that there was an economic pragmatism there in the best interests of the Chinese people in terms of what they were trying to do to develop their country.

I was also impressed by the way in which young science and business technocrats of the post-cultural revolution generation are the allies of the old guard in economic development and take an active part in policy discussions. These youngsters are causing an interesting ratchet effect. They believe that forward is the only direction of motion after the experience of Maoism and the cultural revolution.

The Hong Kong agreement is an important step forward. The Select Committee, having had the

opportunity to visit China and Hong Kong, knows that the Hong Kong agreement is regarded by the Chinese as a bridge of opportunity between our two countries that is not sensed as clearly on this side of the bridge, in Parliament and the country.

The period of the next five-year plan starting in January 1986 gives us enormous trade penetration opportunities while it is being drafted over the next several months. In this plan, the Chinese will be accentuating the need for two-way trade, whereas we all tend to regard exports as being the prime opportunity. I hope that we can understand that, to import, the Chinese have to export. If we acknowledge this, we shall have made a gain over other nations that have ignored this. I have to say this rather quietly, lest others take note of what a humble Chairman of a Select Committee says.

Without any qualification, I can say that the big United Kingdom firms such as British Aerospace, GEC and others in that league are establishing sound credibility that can enhance the opportunities for small firms, and the important factor is not only the totality of the contracts that go to them. From information that we have gleaned from them, probably only about one third of the total value of the contract goes to the prime contractor. Two thirds of the value will go to those down the chain of contract, most of whom will be small firms. Small firms should look at China through the eyes of their large suppliers and not give up the chance of selling in Hong Kong through reputable agents and straight into China the products and processes that they have available. In this connection I was disappointed to find how few manuals of goods and services representing the interests and capabilities of small firms were readily available either in China or Hong Kong.

I declare an interest as an engineer, although not one connected with China. Looking through such eyes, I saw colossal problems in Chinese engineering firms, some of which were the fault of suppliers, although not British suppliers. The standard and quality of that which this country could provide and the knowledge that, in dealing with this country, the Chinese will get a straight deal that will carry them forward is something that we should put forward in our own determination through diplomatic, commercial and trade channels at every opportunity. We supply quality, and that is what people in China want.

In getting what they want, the Chinese have to understand what is available. I have referred to those goods and services that can be made known through various normal trade communication channels. However, training and retraining in the United Kingdom of commercial, technical and particularly managing staff, sponsored by partnerships between the Government and state and private companies, is most important. This would be a cost-effective method to promote trade.

I have already given a long list of favourable comments about trade with China, and, to be constructive, I would be failing in my duty if I did not also make some unfavourable comments. It is obvious that there must be uncertainty about the future of society in China. There have been political upheavals over a number of years, but the present stability seems better than that which existed when I visited the country four years ago. Substantial progress has been made, and I had a welcome shock at the way in which ordinary Chinese people have been able to make progress in their personal lives.

Market penetration is enormously difficult, slow and expensive. Just about every representative of a major company to whom we talked in Peking told us that it cost them £50,000 a year to keep just one person there, excluding the salary. It is obvious that, as it is a Communist state, purchasing machinery is politically based, and, naturally, there are tensions between state and political authorities over industrial objectives. They arise from the fact that central Government have decided that they will sub-contract responsibility down the chain to the provinces, with the results that one might expect.

When one exports to China, one is faced—this is no reflection on the Chinese — with the fact that their purchasing skills are poor. A hard deal is not necessarily in the best interest of the buyer any more than it is necessarily in the worst interests of the supplier. It is always important that one should, within the limits of language and definition, have a deal that is happy on both sides. I hope that the Chinese can move forward to promote sensible customer-supplier relationships, to their benefit as well as the benefit of those whom we are supplying.

I have already, in reply to an intervention by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), drawn attention to the fact that a substantial upgrading is required in Chinese systems of specifications and a knowledge of how quality assurance can operate, as opposed to what is called quality control. It is important that they understand the technology of quality assurance, which is practised in the Western world and which they are eager to obtain. That is an opening for British companies that can export such knowledge, and an opportunity for small companies at that.

The British Executive Service Overseas — BESO — has some retired, or supposedly retired, managers and engineers who rendered an enormous service to the rest of the world and have already proved themselves in China. I have found out from it that in one year the voluntary retired managers and engineers, a part of BESO that is jointly funded by Government and management, has received a request for specialist advice from the Chinese for chemical, steel, vehicle, ceramic, electronic and light manufacturing industries specifically linked by the Chinese to their re-equipment needs.

BESO has already completed some 12 assignments, which have yielded new contacts with potential British suppliers. It stresses the fact, and I endorse it, that contact and communication, however achieved, are keys to the trading expansion in the China market.

I must give a personal impression of Hong Kong, which I am sure will not be supported by other members of the Committee. I was surprised at it because I had had the opportunity to visit Hong Kong on a number of previous occasions. When I sat down opposite representatives of the Hong Kong Government, I rather felt as though I were facing not my allies but a foreign Government. With 1997 only 12 years away—I say only 12 years because when one looks back 12 years one realises how short 12 years can be—there was not the coming together of purpose that must develop between the British and Hong Kong Governments as the identity of interest becomes coincidental. The Chinese Government are both a Government of an independent territory and a partner Government in a joint agreement with us. I am aware of the high standards and good practices of those who participate in the Government of Hong Kong, and we were delighted that they were so helpful to us. I hope that my personal comment will be seen to be constructive. The

[Mr. Warren]

Hong Kong Government may not have recognised their responsibility for the promotion of United Kingdom exports, but I hope that they will as we approach 1997. The Hong Kong agreement, seen from China, and as it should be seen from the United Kingdom, may not appear in the same light from Hong Kong, but I hope that the vision will shortly become the same for all three.

The Chinese certainly expect our Government to act vigorously as a constant partner in United Kingdom enterprises selling into China. The Chinese leadership is inexperienced in world trade practices. That is not a critical but a constructive comment. They certainly gauge the credibility of a foreign trader by their standards, and they study how the trader's Government help him to promote his products. The Select Committee has said without qualification that the visible and practical partnership rationale, including soft loans, should and must be a facet of growing importance.

Other hon. Members wish to speak, and they will no doubt enlarge on the 12 recommendations submitted in our report.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): From which budget does my hon. Friend see additional soft loans being made available? Is he thinking of the Overseas Development Administration budget, aid and trade provision assistance or some other source?

Mr. Warren: It is always nice when an hon. Friend reminds me of what I should say. I was about to come to that point, which is difficult to answer. Rather than decide from which budget the additional loans should come, all available Government resources, whether from the Export Credits Guarantee Department, ATP provision or whatever, should be considered together as total assistance. The various sources should not be presented as an obstacle course to British exporters. At present traders must often look into the ECGD or argue a case for a soft loan. We welcome the Government's recent announcement that soft loans will be granted to Indonesia, and we hope that that is merely the litmus test to prove that they work. One cannot ignore the way in which competitors and their Governments support their exports. There is no point in saying that that cannot be done, because it must be done, and we must get on with it without hesitation.

I must be daring and criticise my Government because I am a Select Committee Chairman. The Select Committee was dismayed at the statement on 10 July from the Department of Trade and Industry. Paragraph 3, dealing wih soft loans, states:

"Officials are discussing with the financial community what mechanism might be devised for providing soft loans. It will be some time before these arrangements can be finalised."

There is no time. That must be done now. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade to tackle the problem without hesitation, and to respond to that challenge today.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): During his interesting visit, did the hon. Gentleman hear about the work of the overseas projects board? Some hon. Members believe that the United Kingdom should give much more help to our overseas projects, considering what other countries are doing.

Mr. Warren: The hon. Gentleman refers to the point that I was making. The total available resources should be considered together rather than separately.

In the report's conclusions we stated the need for a positive commitment by United Kingdom companies, if they are to enjoy a share in the growth of the Chinese market. It is easy to pontificate, and I must declare an interest in that in the past I had a great opportunity, and much misery, in trying to export overseas. A previous Prime Minister said that exporting was fun, but the only fun that I found was when I succeeded, and that was less often than I failed. A long-term commitment towards China is needed. The Chinese like working with people whom they know. I recommend that British companies hang in there. Success will undoubtedly come when the Chinese become used to working with them and know about them.

It is essential that British companies send appropriate executives. The eager salesman will not do. They must send the sales director to China so that he may be given the appropriate introductions in China. Chinese business can be enhanced through a partnership with British business men. They should tour the various symposia which are organised, especially by the provinces in China. We visited Sichuan province, which has a population twice the size of that of the United Kingdom. I am fond of making the analogy that an increase of only 2 per cent. in the telephone lines in China would be equivalent to the whole of British Telecom. The opportunities are enormous and we should not merely consider the opportunities in the capital, the coastal cities or special economic zones.

The Government have a stronger duty than they may be seen to perform at present to collect intelligence information, as the Americans do. They have a stronger duty to fight to prevent people from stopping COCOM from exporting products which have no military significance to China. I am extremely worried at the rumours about substantial American computer companies engaging in sales drives in China. We fear that soon they will say that the items can be sold, and they will tell COCOM that they can be sold. By then we shall have been outflanked, and will be without a chance of bidding for the contracts, some of which are said to be worth $800 million.

COCOM is a voluntary organisation, which has no legality. It operates a sound principle of standing up against the dangers of exporting to Warsaw pact countries, but there can be no rationale for refusing to export commercial standard micro-electronic circuits, which can never be used in military applications, to China.

We recommend an increase in staffing and in the quality of staff available at our embassy in Peking, our consulate in Shanghai, and our representation in Hong Kong, which covers much of south China. Government support should follow trade opportunities. To look at the size of China through the eyes of the Treasury may be a myopia which cannot be tolerated by British exporters. The Government must recognise the opportunities and the rewards that can come from backing our exporters with the support and services that only they can provide, and that the Chinese expect to be available to our exporters.

One is amazed at the volume of work that our people in China carry out to support our Government. If the Government, even a non-interventionist Government, choose to play the part of entrepreneur, they must be the entrepreneur and not stint themselves. If ECGD cannot back projects exporting to China, Turkey or anywhere where somebody wants to give a company a contract, I hope that the Government will look at the market, go to

the City and encourage merchant bankers who, I understand, are eager to have the opportunity to get in there and support the export credit guarantee business.

It is my belief that Her Majesty's Government can and must provide accelerators of opportunity. The British Overseas Trade Board is a good organisation which deserves more support. The Export Credits Guarantee Department, which we examined in detail, is also a good organisation that deserves more support. The Overseas Development Administration and all the other agencies are working effectively. One could criticise them in some detail, but we should like them to be seen collectively and to be assured that they have the support of the whole of Her Majesty's Government. I have referred to soft loans. I merely reinforce my request that they should be acted on as an opportunity without which British exporters will lose out in the short term, and not just the day after tomorrow.

The United Kingdom is a great commercial nation. We are innovative and constructive. None of us is other than eager to prove our capability in competition and our competitiveness in price, quality and delivery. That we have made known to the Chinese. They would welcome a further demonstration of it not only through the products that they have already contracted but through further bids. They are well aware of our capabilities and eager to work with us.

I should like to place a challenge before Her Majesty's Government to respond equally, to play the part that they must play to represent our commercial strength without qualification or hesitation but with favour to all those who now take their exporting talents into the new world of opportunity that China offers us, a world where we can gain in employment and mutual profit, and above all where we can gain in peace between two nations that want to live together.

4.31 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren). It may be appropriate for me to take this opportunity, despite our obvious political differences, to pay tribute to his excellent work as Chairman of the Committee.

It has been obvious for a long time that British manufacturers suffer from a variety of disadvantages compared with competitors in most developed countries. Like other hon. Members, I have drawn attention to them many times in the Chamber. For example, despite certain recent changes, energy costs are still a disadvantage to British manufacturers. Again, despite recent changes in the rate between sterling and the dollar, exchange rates are still creating problems. Many industrialists assure me that the pound sterling is still grossly overvalued against European currencies, and it is in Europe that our main competitors are based. Interest rates are also an intolerable burden on British industry.

However, even if the British manufacturer can overcome all those obstacles, he is still up against the fact that the British Government do not provide him with the backing in the export market that most other Governments provide for their exporters. That is the essence of the debate.

I get worried about the extent to which the British Government take the holier-than-thou attitude—that we must never step one inch outside the rules of international trade, whatever others may do. I am not urging the Government to go around the world breaking the rules, but I wish that they were as expert at bending the rules as others. That is all that I ask. If we compare the attitude not only of this Government but of others over the years with that of the French, German, Japanese and American Governments, we find that we are always the righteous ones. The others do not care very much. If they can get away with it, they will break any rule in the book, to the enormous advantage of their industries. That matter should be seriously considered. I make that point not only in relation to China, but in general, although I appreciate that the debate is particularly about trade with China.

The Government should be very worried about the fact that West Germany is exporting almost three times as much to China as we are. If the Government are not worried about that, they should be. If they are, I hope to hear from the Minister what they propose to do about it.

During the detailed inquiry carried out by the Select Committee, we learnt about the immense opportunities for increased trade with China. I do not wish to repeat what was said by the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye in his excellent speech, but I agree with almost everything that he said.

Certain things need to be done. We made a series of recommendations in our report on which I hope action will be taken. I should like to quote just one example of the sort of potential that there is in China. The Committee was stranded for a day in Dalian in north China. It is a huge industrial city with a population of 4·5 million. We were stuck there simply because a bit of mist came down on the airport. It was nothing serious, but it meant that flying was suspended because there are no radar installations in the airport. I do not know whether the General Electric Company, Marconi or other British companies in that business, which are already established in China, have noticed that. If they have, I do not know whether they have tried to do anything about it. Most important—I do not know this, either—if those companies have tried to do something about it, have they been stopped by the COCOM restrictions? That is the most worrying feature. On the wildest stretch of imagination, no one could pretend that putting radar into Dalian airport could present a military threat to Great Britain. To suggest such a thing would be ludicrous. That is an example of the sort of thing that is now worrying me about our failure so far to take advantage of the opportunities that are there.

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to reinforce my hon. Friend's important point. My constituents at Hewlett Packard, which supplies precisely such communications equipment, are extremely worried about that, and the chairman of the company, Mr. David Baldwin, has brought the matter to the attention of the Department.

Mr. Crowther: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment. No doubt he will have noticed our recommendation on that point in the report.

One area in which China is most anxious to develop is railway transport. There are tremendous opportunities for British industry. After all, Britain used to be the world leader in the manufacture of locomotives and other railway rolling stock. It is not an awful long time since the railway and ring rolled products department of the British Steel Corporation in my constituency had a substantial export market. Regrettably, it has contracted now; but here is a tremendous opportunity for increasing exports in a big way.

[Mr. Crowther]

I should like to know what plans British locomotive manufacturers are making in conjunction with the Government to break into and take a big slice of the Chinese market. If they are not making such plans, they should be. If the Government are not helping them to make such plans, they ought to be. The essence of what I am saying is that there should be partnership between the Government and industry, because on that basis we can succeed. Industry cannot go out on a limb without backing from the Government and expect to succeed, because it is up against the far more effective operations of foreign Governments who look after their industries much better than we look after ours.

I hope I am wrong, but my impression is that Ministers do not know and do not care very much about this great potential market. I see little evidence so far that they have taken it seriously. Indeed, I see evidence that they are not taking it seriously. An example of that is the reduction in the resources available to the British Overseas Trade Board. That has caused concern to many British manufacturers, not only in relation to trade with China, but in other connections.

The British Materials Export Group has expressed serious concern about the reductions in BOTB resources. A flat rate has been set for the next three years, but in practice that means a cut over that period. The view of the BMEG is that overseas trade fairs are the most effective means of supporting small and medium-sized firms in new markets. We heard evidence in the Committee that resources for overseas trade fairs have been reduced and, as the BMEG points out, it is small and medium-sized firms which benefit most from this kind of activity; they are supposed to be the firms that the Government are most anxious to support.

In a written question on 24 June 1985 I queried the action of BOTB in withdrawing from the Interbuild exhibition in Birmingham. That is an important exhibition for people in the building materials industry, and the organisers were hoping for a substantial inward mission of buyers from all over the world, including China. Our overseas posts were led to believe by the BOTB, right up to the end of March, that BOTB resources would be available to help finance this inward mission to the Interbuild exhibition. But at the last minute the board said, "Sorry, we have no money."

The written answer which I received from the Minister assured me that the decision not to provide British Overseas Trade Board support for the inward mission to Interbuild '85 was based not on eligibility but on the availability of funds. That is precisely the opposite direction to that in which we ought to be going. We should be putting more resources into this kind of promotion. I am afraid that unless there is a substantial change in the Government's attitude towards organisations like the BOTB, all the reports of Select Committees are going to be a waste of time.

What is going to be done about the size of our embassy staff in Peking? All the members of the Select Committee were alarmed to find that only five people were employed in the commercial section of the embassy. China is the biggest country in the world and it has an enormous potential market. I entirely support the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye in his praise of the staff. They are excellent people, but there are too few of them. As a result, they are not able to get around that huge country to look for opportunities for British business. They sit in Peking, mostly on routine work. We made a recommendation about that in the report, and I hope the Government will take it seriously.

What is the Government going to do to increase the number of Chinese students in British universities? I read in the "British Council News" in June about evidence given by the director-general of the British Council to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. He was drawing attention to the fact that there are 10,000 overseas students in Japan, and that by the end of the century it is planned to have 100,000, most of them from south-east Asia. I am sure that many of them will also be from China.

We ought to pay more attention to the long-term benefits of having overseas students in our universities. The Committee drew attention to that in a previous inquiry in connection with the ASEAN countries. There is not the slightest doubt that a student who has had the benefit of attending a British university and who then returns to his own country, which may be China, Indonesia, Malaysia or wherever, is likely, when he attains a decision-making position, to be influenced in favour of the country where he received his advanced education.

Dr. Godman: I support everything my hon. Friend has said on the need to attract Chinese students to our universities. The obverse side of that coin is: how many British students are studying Chinese in our universities? How many of the members of our embassy in China are Chinese speakers? One of the most formidable barriers to the export of knowledge, which was mentioned by the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), is language. How many of our people in China are fluent in Chinese?

Mr. Crowther: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. There are many Chinese speakers in the embassy. As to the other part of his question about the extent to which people in Britain are learning Chinese prior to going to seek trade in China, I cannot answer that. However, it is an extremely important question and I hope we can find the answer to it.

It has been said many times in this House that Britain, once the workshop of the world, is now, for the first time in its history, importing more manufactured goods than it exports. It was made clear to the Committee during a previous inquiry on trade with the EEC that that fact does not worry the Secretary of State, but it certainly worries many people. It worried the Committee and it certainly worries me. It worries people who take a responsible view about the future of this country. I am one of those old-fashioned folk who believe that manufacturing is at the heart of wealth creation. As we have established, there are enormous opportunities for British manufacturers to play a crucial role in the development of the Chinese economy, and that would be to the great benefit of both nations. If the Government fail to give British industry all the support they can in every possible way, the Government will not only have missed a great opportunity, but seriously neglected the national interest.

4.49 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The first two speakers in this debate so far and the report illustrate the considerable help that the fairly new structure of Select Committees can

be in highlighting certain factors, not only for the House but for the country as a whole. The real benefit is that we were able to investigate with and talk to manufacturers and exporters in Britain. In China we were able to see what is being achieved and how, I am afraid to say, some things are not being achieved. We were then able to analyse why that is so, and investigate what can be done to improve the situation. Therefore, if ever there was proof of the usefulness of Select Committees, this report is it.

The greatest opportunity for British industry to expand its exports massively lies on the mainland of China, and I am sorry that British industry is not taking up the challenge. It is not often that a nation is given an opportunity such as that now available to Britain. I say that because, before the settlement in Hong Kong, Britain was, if not the least favoured nation, quite a long way down the league table in trade with China. But, since the Hong Kong settlement, the opportunities are greater than ever before. The reason lies not only in what Britain has to provide. Another factor is involved. The Chinese Government, having escaped from the Red revolution and having had many of the tenets of Marxist Communism questioned, are considering the trading aspects of a Socialist economy. The Chinese have seen the problems caused by Russian imports into their industry, and they do not want to see America and Japan taking the place of Russia as a dominant factor in their industry. For that reason, they are more than welcoming to Britain and to British industry. We now have a honeymoon period of perhaps 18 months or two years in which that will remain the position. If we do not grasp the opportunity with both hands, we shall be extremely foolish.

I reinforce the views expressed both by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther). There are three factors that British industry has to understand fully if it is to gain Chinese business. The first is the importance of the financial package attached to any business that they propose. The second is the technological input of that business. The third is the training that that business can bring.

There is no doubt in my mind that Britain has suffered because the Chinese have not thought that the British Government were really keen on doing business with them. Britain is the only major country to have done nothing to provide any soft lending to the Chinese Government. Finland, Denmark and Italy all provide soft funding arrangements to encourage business. Those arrangements are tied to industrial expansion in their countries. Yet the British Government have done nothing. The criticism from the Chinese is understandable. Whether it be with Government funds or whether it is done with some of the International Development Association and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development lending that is available and much of which has not been taken up, the Government could take a lead in trying to ensure that British firms were encouraged to trade overseas.

The second factor that will benefit any company trying to do business with China is to show that it is willing to share with the Chinese the technology that it is bringing into China. The criticism that I heard again and again was that the Chinese told this to the Japanese and American companies, but that they did nothing. We must show that we are willing to share that technology—I am talking not about the highest-tech defence equipment but about medium and moderate technology which we have had for many years and which the Chinese will get in six or 10 years regardless of whether we help them. Why should not we help them and gain the industrial benefit?

It is obvious that we could take a lead in this way from some of our competitors, and I urge that it should go hand in hand with training. When we talk about exporting to China, we want to tie into the package the willingness of the exporter to take Chinese people and train them in marketing, in the technologies of the industry and in project management — a subject which they are still coming to understand. We should be offering the Chinese a degree of co-operation that they have not seen from many of the other firms trying to do business with them.

That ties in with the excellent contribution by the hon. Member for Rotherham about the need to ensure that we encourage Chinese students to come here. Nothing would please our universities more than to be given a little assistance from the Government so that this might be done.

I believe that the Government should be doing more, and I draw the attention of the Minister for Trade to an amendment proposed in the Committee but unfortunately not carried. It contains a considerable amount of sense because it underlines that aid ought to be tied to the business that we can obtain in China, especially in the next two years. If the Department of Trade and Industry cannot win the battle with the Treasury—it is not the DTI's wish not to get the money; the opposition is from what is frequently described as "the damned Treasury"—it may be that in conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, even if the Committee's strong recommendations cannot be accepted, an expansion in aid to China could be made by the Government reallocating existing funds even if, for the next two years, it is done at the expense of the Commonwealth. I know that that will not be a popular suggestion, but we need to increase the aid that we give if we are to see the increase in industrial strength and the creation of wealth which will in turn enable yet more aid to be given. If we have not got that industrial strength, the amount of aid will decline. I have always believed in the advantages of tying aid to business.

British industry must realise the difficulties in its way. Reference has been made already to the language problem. In addition, the distance is considerable. Account must also be taken of the cost of living and maintenance in China. What is more, doing business in China is not simply a matter of getting hold of a potential customer and agreeing on a deal. One has to realise that central planning ministries have major importance. Further, the deal must be understood and accepted by the Treasury or the Finance Ministry. One has to realise that the deal must be acceptable to the Ministry with responsibility for the industry in question, and then one has to deal with the firm or organisation. That is why there is a time factor, and why many people have gone to China not understanding these problems and have come away disappointed. That is why it is important that we should spell out in the report exactly what has to be done.

However, I believe that the benefits are considerable. I believe that there is a special encouragement that the Chinese Government will be wanting to give to Britain in the next two years. They will not give us anything—let us not believe that. It has to be a proper business deal. But I believe that, while in the past we have not been able to obtain the business, in future we will be able to do so.

[Sir Peter Emery]

I refer now to something which has not been mentioned so far in the debate, the aspect of joint ventures in China, which I believe the Chinese Government are very keen to stimulate involving the development of British industry in China. I am not saying that we will be there for ever. I believe that, like most countries, in time the Chinese will want to take control of the totality of that joint venture, but if that joint venture is for a 10-year period or an 8-year period it ought to be a considerable benefit to Britain and, if properly structured, a considerable benefit to the firms that enter into it.

With regard to the great advantages and benefits that we have, we have Hong Kong business, which is already structured within Red China. I was amazed to find that some members of the National People's Congress of Red China had a visiting card giving the full title of a member of the People's Congress and another card which was the business card of a Hong Kong business man. Indeed, they were only too delighted to encourage one to come and see them and use their facilities for trying to do business in China. We have great friends in Hong Kong who are crying out to assist British business in parallel with their own expansion. But there is so much more that British business can do. Let us please realise the benefits that Hong Kong could provide as a permanent feature, enabling business to be carried on. That would help overcome some of the financial difficulties that people resident in the region experience in keeping full-time staff.

I believe that there is one factor that is an innovation. It is an innovation I welcome, and which should be trumpeted fairly hard. The Select Committee has decided to produce a guide, a small pamphlet. It will set out not the whole of the report but, as guidance for any person who wishes to consider doing business in China, the pitfalls, the advantages and many of the points which have been, and I know will continue to be, made in speeches in the debate.

I end as I began. The report is an illustration of what the Select Committees can do. We are innovating by producing direct assistance, as a Select Committee in the name of the House, enabling British business to achieve more exports. China is an area of great possibilities for expansion.

5.3 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As the first Member to speak in the debate who is not a member of the Select Committee, I wish, I am sure on behalf of other Members not on the Committee to thank the Chairman and the members for this valuable report and to welcome the opportunity to debate it.

It has already been said that considerable importance must be attached to future trade with China, particularly because of its large market. I share the view of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) that it is a matter, for concern, not complacency, that we are dipping into deficit on the balance of trade of manufactured goods. Because of the size of the population of China, there are clearly considerable opportunities.

I was a member of the all-party group which visited Japan in February this year. It was clear to us that Japan has recognised the potential of the Chinese market and is making every endeavour to take advantage of all the opportunities it offers.

We now have further opportunities because of China's open-door policy. We have reached an agreement with the Chinese Government on Hong Kong. As the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said, our relationship with Hong Kong gives us particular advantages in being there on the doorstep, and we should take advantage of the settlement on Hong Kong.

There are particular opportunities for exports in high technology. China is in the process of modernisation. It is seeking to expand its telecommunications network. As has already been mentioned, it is developing its energy resources. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to our potential, as a country that has already developed offshore oil resources, to export some of our offshore technology to China. When one considers the advantages Norway has taken from developing its offshore techniques, I sometimes regret that British industry has not latched on in the same way. None the less, there are still opportunities at home and, given the development of these technologies, for export to a very important market in China.

While there are obvious advantages and opportunities, there are also problems, some of which have already been mentioned. There is the basic problem of distance. There is also the question of culture—an oriental culture and a culture of a system based on centralised planning. The effort and time taken in achieving export orders in China will be much greater, for example, than is the case in trading relationships with our partners in the European Community. Nevertheless, I believe time and effort will be well spent. There is a tradition in the Chinese culture that, if a relationship of trust and good faith is built up and established, and a market developed over the years, they will be loyal to the products, if we give them high quality products.

The problem of language has been referred to. That is probably even more of a problem as one gets into the provinces of China and away from the main city centres. Japan clearly has certain advantages over us because of its proximity, and because it does not have quite the same language difficulties. The United States has certain advantages because it has within it second generation Chinese who perhaps fled from China but who are now going back with a knowledge of the culture and of the language. We can perhaps overcome some of our disadvantages by encouraging Chinese students to come and study in our universities. I think that that is one of the most effective ways in which we can promote trade in the longer term, as well as encouraging some of our students to learn Mandarin and Cantonese.

I do not want to overestimate the problem of language, but I discovered on my visit to Japan, and it may well be the same in China, that while in our embassy in Tokyo we have people who are very skilled linguists—and it is appreciated by the Japanese that those people have taken the time and effort to learn the language—they do not always have great commercial expertise. A lot more can be done to ensure that in the embassies, in particular in Beijing, our representatives not only are skilled in languages but also have a certain commercial nous.

The Select Committee report mentions the problems of exporting high technology, with particular reference to COCOM. There is no legal basis for COCOM and no treaty has been ratified by the House. Indeed, I do not think that COCOM's functions have ever been debated in the House. I have no doubt that there is merit in keeping

from our potential enemies in the Eastern bloc information that is important to our security. However, the worth of an organisation such as COCOM must be called into question if it is abused by other countries. As the hon. Member for Rotherham said, we always stick to the letter of the law, but other countries manage to bend it. Sir Peter Matthews told the Select Committee:

"The goalposts get moved from time to time and they are usually moved by the Americans at strategic moments when they are just about to score a goal in the new position."

The first four annual reports of the export administration division of the United States commerce department showed that licences issued for computers and semi-conductor manufacturing equipment and electric test equipment between 1981 and 1983 resulted in substantial exports from the United States to China, totalling $98 million in 1980, $117 million in 1981 and rising to $143 million in 1983.

We should investigate whether the United States has been trying to get round the COCOM rules to establish a market in China at a time when pressure was being put on British-based companies, such as ICL, not to export. The American figures do not show the multi-million dollar deals done by American companies on the very day in 1983 when the Reagan Administration announced a significant relaxation in what they were prepared to allow to be exported to China. That included one deal of $800 million.

My hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who has looked into the matter in detail, has established that the Foreign Office was not advised of that relaxation and did not know about it until April 1984. The House is entitled to ask why the Foreign Office did not know and what liaison exists with the Americans, with whom we are supposed to enjoy a special relationship, and between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office. Our exporters have been blocked, whilst last year IBM took four floors in the biggest hotel in Beijing for two months to offer a full range of IBM machines to the Chinese Government and officials. That is scarcely fair competition.

The House will be interested to hear from the Minister for Trade how the Government view the COCOM arrangements. Will he explain what has been happening in trade with China over the past three or four years? Why does the United States always get away with it, at the expense of our industries? Can the Minister confirm that the COCOM agreement is to be extended to cover software, in which we have particular expertise, and thereby further hinder the development of our export opportunities?

I welcome the Select Committee's recommendation that there should be a liberalisation of COCOM rules for trade with China. It is important that the Government ease trade relations with China, particularly for trade in high technology, but they must take other action, including the provision of soft loans and assistance to enable our industry to seize the opportunities that are open to us.

Even a Government committed to the free market must realise that in trying to build up trade relations with China we are not dealing with a free market. The aid and assistance given by our Government must be commensurate with the size of the opportunities open to our exporters.

5.14 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): A much more illustrious public speaker than I — which includes most public speakers — said that if one wanted to get a message over, one had to be like a hit record and keep repeating the theme time and again.

I am more than willing to follow up the theme that I developed in an Adjournment debate in the early hours of 1 April when I stressed that there had to be greater support for British exporters if we were to stay in the world of the manufacturer and provide jobs for our people.

I welcome the opportunity to re-emphasise some of the points made in that debate, and I endorse the thanks given to the Select Committee for its report, which will be a valuable talking point and shows the direction that we should follow.

In the world of exporting, we take about 8 per cent. of the market, but we take only 1 per cent. of the Chinese market. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hounton (Sir P. Emery) said, we are not taking advantage of the tremendous opportunities that are open to us. We have recently gone into surplus with our trade with China, but the opportunities still stretch ahead of us and could provide us with almost an El Dorado if we make the necessary efforts.

We must be careful and clever in going into the Chinese market. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) said that the Chinese had poor purchasing skills. They have already spent up to the hilt in their 1985 budgets and they will have problems providing any more orders for the rest of the year. We know that there is a five-year plan in China. Only the companies that get in early in the game will get the contracts. Those that hang around or come in late and those whose Governments do not support them early enough will lose out.

I welcome the provision of the £39 million in the Estimates, but I doubt whether it will be adequate to tackle the whole Chinese market. Over the past few years, the Japanese have put £3 billion into that market. The Japanese are good at exporting. They have taught us one or two lessons and we should be wise to take the hint from them.

We do not realise the problems and the competition confronting us. Recipient countries are demanding that a support mechanism, such as soft loans, should be put up front when the tender is submitted. I understand that the Indonesians have passed a decree that no company can pre-qualify for tendering without agreeing to 25-year loan terms, grace periods and certain interest rates. I understand that China is making demands for similar terms. I have some evidence that the Japanese are offering 30-year loan terms, seven-year grace periods and 2·7 per cent. interest rates. We must stop trying to match those offers and initiate offers ourselves if we are to get the contracts.

Efforts have been made in the City to produce a private financial package. I welcome those efforts with all my heart, but whatever financial mechanisms are developed for soft loans, I doubt whether private sector arrangements will be enough.

If we are to make a worthwhile impact in China, it will cost us about £50 million annually. The Select Committee has recommended that funds should be increased so that resources for China are not diverted from other markets.

[Mr. Richard Page]

We have to retain a world presence as well as taking the opportunities in China. That implies that we cannot eat into the aid and trade provision of £66 million.

I emphasise what I said in my Adjournment debate. We must increase the flexibility of the aid and trade provision. It must roll on from year to year, and we must end the rigid divisions between sectors. We must not lose contracts because of various quirks of timing.

The Select Committee pointed out the value of establishing a presence in the Chinese market. It said:

"there can be longer term advantages of establishing UK exporters in a growing Chinese market, where the repeat orders can make the loss leading worthwhile."

The value of additionality is not always fully taken into account when the Treasury does its tight and careful calculations.

The role of the British Overseas Trade Board in world markets has been mentioned. A striking fact is that the bulk of our overseas trade is in the hands of major corporations, but 80 per cent. of the users of the BOTB services are firms with fewer than 200 employees. The majority of contacts by the BOTB in 1984 were with small firms, which took advantage of the springboard offer to bring them into the export market.

We must make small profitable firms producing quality goods aware of the export opportunities and the services available. Too often when Ministers attend business functions they are told by small firm owners that they know nothing about the BOTB or about moving into the export market. In the next few years we must plan a modest increase in the BOTB's budget of £27 million a year to ensure that small companies are aware that they can almost piggy-back into the export market.

Earlier this month my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said that 1 per cent. of our world trade creates 250,000 jobs. If we lose that world trade, the jobs will be lost. The converse also applies. For every 1 per cent. increase in our world trade, we shall gain 250,000 jobs.

The opportunity exists to do business with China. My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton made that point forcibly and ably. I welcome the extra support, but I hope for flexibility within the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry so that we can react quickly to opportunites to seize contracts.

5.22 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I agree with the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) that quick reactions and flexibility are of vital importance.

I echo what the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said about paying tribute, where warranted, to the work of our parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House who are Members of the Select Committee. I willingly pay that tribute because the report that we are discussing is of high quality. It is clear that hon. Members from both sides worked hard on the report and when they were in China. Such trips are not joyrides but hard work. I thank our parliamentary colleagues.

I strongly agree with the Chairman about the need for old friends. I understand that one can get nowhere with the Chinese unless they are old friends. I organised and went with the Scottish Council for Trade and Industry delegation to China 15 years ago. It was the first delegation to go there. I might be asked why the Scots went. It was partly because some of us tried hard with Mr. Pei, the charge d'affaires. I shall believe until my dying day that there was some confusion about the Scots being like the Albanians—a small and oppressed group which should be encouraged. I do not kid the House when I say that we were taken to the Sino-Albanian friendship commune. It was a good delegation, which included Louis Portman of Leyland and a small mink farmer from Midlothian who is still in business. Since then I have counted myself as an old friend of China, albeit with ups and downs. That is my reason for taking part in the debate.

I could not agree more strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) who eloquently expressed his feeling about the holier-than-thou attitude about which many of us have been worried for a long time. As my hon. Friend said, others seem to be more adept at bending the rules and cutting the corners than we are and we lose out time and again. That hits work and employment in Britain.

I wish to raise a specific point. Bluntly, I have a constituency axe to grind. Hewlett Packard has been in South Queensferry for two decades. Mr. David Baldwin and Mr. Denis Tompkins and their colleagues have pleaded with those who represent constituencies in which Hewlett Packard factories are based, and with the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) who represents the area in which the firm has its headquarters, to do someting about the COCOM regulations. The subject was debated yesterday, and the Minister said:

"Exports to China were mentioned by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and many of my hon. Friends. We are playing a leading part in talks in COCOM . . . My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) referred to Professor Ashworth's letter, to which I shall of course reply."—[*Official Report, Fifth Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.*, 17 July 1985; c. 25.]

I tabled a written question yesterday to ask

"the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what conveniently available figures he has for the average time it takes a British exporter of high-technology equipment to receive a decision on a COCOM application, compared with the practice by Governments in Germany and Italy."

The answer was:

"I regret that this information is not available."

I make no complaint about that reply because, as I said on Friday, I am against asking questions which lead to statistics which are expensive to find. If I am told that it is too expensive to find an answer to a question, in most circumstances I accept that.

Reputable people at Hewlett Packard say that their German and French colleagues receive much quicker answers than we can expect here. They say that the reason might be shortage of staff in the Department, but, whatever the reason, we must react more quickly. This is an all-party occasion, and I agree with the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and others that flexibility and quick reaction are of great importance.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I quote three of Professor Ashworth's arguments. He said:

"The British Government should urge COCOM to lift restrictions on trade in goods other than those which genuinely meet military applications."

The word "genuinely" should be emphasised. He went on:

"The fact is that almost any civilian product or process technology could with time and determination be re-engineered to military use. But that is an argument for no trade and is being used to restrict market opportunities for British firms. If lines are

to be drawn let the restrictions apply to technologies which realise military applications rather than ones which could inter alia enable such applications."

Surely there can be no objection to that.

Professor Ashworth continued:

"Apart from trimming the lists to the minimum, the interpretations of whatever restrictions are agreed in the issuing of export licences should be liberal. The presumption should be that the trade should proceed unless a sound argument is advanced for prohibition."

Are we sure that we do not tag on to the Americans from time to time? Professor Ashworth went on to say:

"The industry fears that the possible deliberate or inadvertent confusion and/or combination of COCOM restrictions with the US 'extra-territoriality' laws will operate to the detriment of UK industry interests."

What is the Government's attitude? I realise, of course, that the Minister may be giving a thought-out reply in a letter to one of my colleagues. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman could have made some reference to this matter in his reply. It was obvious that it would come up in debate. I am aware also of the answer given in the other place to Lord Hatch.

I declare an interest in that I am a National Union of Railwaymen-sponsored Member of Parliament. I should like to follow what my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham said about railway equipment. The Yugoslavs have signed a series of trade agreements with Argentina. Among the areas for planned trade and co-operation is electrification equipment for the Argentine railways. As these railways were originally built almost entirely with British capital and technology, there is a certain poignancy in this, although the decline of Britain's role in South America began long before 1982. I am not making too many assumptions about the conflict in the south Atlantic, although it had some effect on that decline.

The same goes for China. Many of the railways which we saw 15 years ago were British-made. Although the Chinese are developing a considerable railway industry, do we not have a part to play? To what extent were British Railways workshops consulted by the Government, as the Swindon works was, before its closure was announced, and other works would have been had there been any other Government? That is what the French and Germans do so differently.

Recently, the Siemens offshoot, KWU, agreed to build the second stage of the Atucha nuclear energy plant in Argentina with West German finance. That was not necessarily a project in which the United Kingdom could have been involved, but it showed how other countries are developing their trade with Latin America and China. We have heard that German participation in China is three times greater than British participation. How did that come about? It is heart-rending in view of the efforts that were made to establish a British presence in China when it opened up again in the late 1960s.

Britain is now very much behind the rest of its European partners. The reason why Britain is very much behind has a great deal to do not only with soft loans but with the Overseas Projects Board. Following the comments of Mr. Roy Withers about Britain's willingness to give loans compared with that of our competitors, I asked the Minister in a written and an oral question about the Overseas Projects Board. What is the right hon. Gentleman's attitude towards that board? Are the implicit criticisms by Mr. Roy Withers justified? Is this a matter that we should examine? What is the board's role in relation to the Chinese?

One of the great universities of Europe, the university of Edinburgh, has a distinguished school of Chinese studies under Dr. Chinnery. As with many other departments, there is a danger that that department will be cut back and back. I know that the Minister for Trade is not an Education Minister, but I must ask him, given the special circumstances, the need to understand China and the need for certain British people to speak Chinese, what is the input of the Department of Trade and Industry into the question of university cuts? If we do not take this whole matter in the round and have an overall policy, Britain's trade with China, where our competitors are formidable and keen, will not get very far.

5.34 pm

Mr. Martin Stevens (Fulham): My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has not invited me to help him to draft his speech in reply to the debate, but there is no reason why I should wait to be asked. My right hon. Friend will tell the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) that our increased diplomatic staff in China has the best record of Chinese speakers of any mission in Beijing. He will refer to the reintroduction of the consulate in Shanghai. He will mention that, as a result of our mission, the Chinese Deputy Premier authorised his statisticians to sit down with our mission staff to reconcile the argument whether our trade was in balance with China or whether, as the Chinese claimed, there was a trading balance in our favour of £300 million. My right hon. Friend will tell us that money is invested in a new and improved transmission system in Hong Kong for the BBC. The quality of reception of Chinese language broadcasts was one of the deficiencies that was most frequently drawn to our attention. Nothing could less expensively increase our influence in the People's Republic of China.

My right hon. Friend will speak of the intention to increase the number of Chinese students in Britain and will point to the scholarships offered by Lloyd's of London. He will point to the significant increase—from a low base, it is said—in trade with China so far during 1985. I had better not go on or my right hon. Friend will sit in silence at the end of the debate, with nothing left to say. I have made those points because it is not right for us to act and speak as though the Government have done nothing and do not care about China. That is not so.

I should like a slightly different approach to be taken. I should like greater flexibility, as other hon. Members have said, in the Government's attitude to any overseas market. We shall be said to be besotted with trade with China because the Select Committee has just returned. People who visit another country always return home thinking that our relationships with that country are the most important items on the international horizon. Our commercial relationships with China is one of the most significant factors on the commercial horizon. I should like the Government to adopt a market-oriented approach to China and other countries, rather than what might be called, in a business, a product-oriented approach.

If one is going into the business of selling, the old adage —the customer is always right—is correct. We must tackle the Chinese market on the basis of meeting and matching their desires and not simply saying, "We have a lieutenant-colonel as military attaché in Paris. It would be embarrassing to have an officer of higher rank in

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Beijing." That stereotyped bureaucratic approach is the reverse of the approach that business people should adopt towards countries in which they want to sell their goods.

I should like the Government to consider new initiatives. One of the most important ways to enter the Chinese market is to offer to carry out a feasibility study. The United States will get the contract to build the new airport in the special economic zone adjacent to Hong Kong because it has spent $750,000 on a feasibility study. This is not a huge sum in political terms. Nevertheless, it is not a sum to be tossed lightly into the pot. Why are the Government not much more ready to provide the money for feasibility studies? Why do they not say, "If you get the contract, my dear fellow, we shall want our money back"? That does not seem to me to be a wasteful approach. Because of the way that they do business in China, not because of the way that we do business, it would help to bring in contracts that we should otherwise lose.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace)—I hope that I am not putting words into his mouth—said that the Chinese have the happy quality of not forgetting their friends. That is true. The only way for the British Government and British industry to approach the Chinese market is on the basis of a continuing relationship. My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) spoke of an eight or 10-year period. One ought not to look at this as quite such a brief flash in the pan. When we met him the deputy Premier referred to trade with China in the middle of the next century.

Sir Peter Emery: Indeed.

Mr. Stevens: What?

Sir Peter Emery: Indeed.

Mr. Stevens: I am so unused to the unstinted endorsement of my hon. Friend that I felt that I must have committed some blunder or social offence. I thank him for his endorsement. What was I saying?

Sir Peter Emery: Perhaps I may help my hon. Friend along the route of his argument. Reference was made to joint ventures. I suggested that even if joint ventures were for as short a period as eight or 10 years they were worth doing, but I endorse entirely my hon. Friend's point that they could continue for 30, 40 or 50 years. Trade with China will be very considerable. That was his line of argument when I so rudely interrupted him.

Mr. Stevens: Having tipped me off the rails, my hon. Friend has gracefully replaced me on the tracks. We asked the deputy Premier whether by the year 2050 the Chinese, having sucked in all the technological transfer that they so ardently desire from the West, would use their very low labour costs to "do a Japan" on us and flood western markets with their own products at a fraction of the price. He, like all the Chinese leaders that we met, was clearly aware of these anxieties and told us that, with a population of 1 billion, the overwhelming bulk of the goods that China produces in the next half century will be needed for the consumer requirements of the Chinese people. As a nation, China has a wretchedly low standard of living. Indeed, some of our Opposition colleagues were busily photographing their dwelling houses for use in their next general election addresses over the caption, "Thatcher's Britain". Much progress needs to be made before the living standards of the Chinese people begin to match those which we in the west take for granted. Their leaders know this perfectly well. Ours was not a political mission. It was no part of our job to talk about the political future of China. However, one may speculate about whether the present political institutions will remain unchanged at the end of 50 or 70 years of free enterprise economics.

The Chinese are making enormous efforts to welcome people to China from all over the world. In 1984 there were 12 million tourists, of whom 11 million were people of Chinese origin who were returning to China to visit relatives and perhaps to provide help. The building of new hotels was proceeding apace. It was almost a question of hotels being erected the day before we arrived to provide appropriate accommodation for us. As a team, the Select Committee is austere. For its members a bowl of lentils is a feast. Toss in a turnip and it becomes a banquet. However, some of the hotels in which we stayed in Communist China offered a degree of luxury, service, elegance and cuisine that I have never experienced anywhere else in the world. That may also be an attraction for some of our fellow countrymen for whom the fleshpots hold out a greater inducement than they do for parliamentarians.

The Chinese were very explicit about the list of goods that they hope to sell in Britain and the list of goods that they hope to buy from us. They want to sell electrical machinery, motors, generators, hand tools, labour-intensive goods that we on the whole are gradually ceasing to produce, cotton piece goods, tea, bristles, rosin, textiles, tungsten, minerals, such as antimony, rice and canned vegetables. They are already buying coal mining equipment and know-how, aircraft and offshore oil expertise, but they want to buy 300 Mw and 600 Mw power stations, rubber goods — I cannot supply the details — and telecommunications goods. There is no reason why our Government cannot make sure, as no doubt they have already made sure, that the people in this country who deal in such goods know that these items are desired by China. However, several major British firms that are involved in the activities in which the Chinese are interested do not appear to have visited China, and their absence was sorrowfully commented upon to us by British business men who are already in China.

I said earlier that I should like the Government to be imaginative and flexible when responding to the special needs of the Chinese market, and I mentioned the funding of feasibility studies. One might also mention the emulation throughout the Pacific basin of the Japanese trading house system, which has been so successful and which has brought into those markets many firms that are too small to enter them on their own. The Chinese do not expect British business men to outsell their rivals on every point. We must be price competitive. They told us that the French are the most expensive but that we run them a very close second. We must offer soon to China some form of soft financial provision. We must also offer to transfer know-how and technology. We are very good at that. We are much more liberal than some of our competitors in those matters. From that it follows that the firms that are most likely to build up and sustain long-term relationships with our Chinese friends are those that are developing new technologies every year. There is nothing new in that as a system but it is new for the Chinese. They accept that we shall sell them last year's know-how while we are

ourselves perfecting next year's. There is a great deal of scope and long-term opportunity for those who grasp that point.

I should like to add a few words about the Chinese as people. They certainly think of us as people. They have not, over the centuries, been any too keen on foreigners, but now that circumstances compel them to open their doors to foreign business people they are beginning to compare us with the others who are entering their markets. We shall be comparing them with others in whose markets we are trying to sell.

The Chinese are extraordinarily tough in bargaining but extraordinarily agreeable as human beings. Their sense of humour is comparable to ours. Even in Beijing, which is the most Communist city, where the little blue suits, caps and macs are most frequently seen as the uniform of all men and women, the children are beautifully dressed and cared for. If sentiment were to be our only guide, there would be even more reasons for seeking to do business in China than those to which reference has been made in the debate.

The Select Committee, as has been kindly said by colleagues who were not members of it, worked very hard. I endorse everything that was said in the magisterial opening statement of our Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren). I hope that the debate today will be heard and echoed among those who it is most important should respond actively and positively to what we are saying in the House this afternoon.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The wind-up speeches are expected to begin at 6.20 pm. There are four hon. Members hoping to speak. I hope that they will co-operate so that they can all be called.

5.53 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): If I cannot be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be as rapid as possible. It is always a great pleasure, if not a challenge, to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens) whose erudition and depth of detail in research are an example to every hon. Member.

While I concede that there was an element of work in our trip to China, I rather enjoyed it, and the bowl of lentils and the odd turnip were not obvious to me by their presence. There were many 13-course banquets. If my hon. Friend casts his mind back to Canton, Shanghai and other delightful places, he might just recall the odd sea slug and other things that we enjoyed at that time.

On the general question of public expenditure, which is what the debate is supposed to be about, I might be regarded as a hawk rather than as a dove and as a dry rather than as a wet. I fully recognise the need, in the context of the Government's financial strategy, for restraint and for resistance to special pleading, except where there is a medium-term or long-term benefit to the economy from that public expenditure.

In the past we have all seen mountains of public money thrown at various industries here or abroad that were either dying on their feet or had gross over-capacity, and could not possibly ever again achieve a competitive position. Often that expenditure has been justified on social grounds, but in my judgment the reasoning has been essentially short-term, without any hard thinking about the longer future. Surely it must be much more sensible to invest public money where there is a likelihood of success than to use money that we can ill-afford in trying desperately to stave off failure. I make those general points in relation to my own attitude only to indicate that I have taken considerable persuasion to reach the conclusion that the Government are spending too little in developing our trade with China.

In so far as anything is certain in this uncertain world, first, it seems to be true beyond peradventure that there is a huge market in China of which at present we have far too small a share. Secondly, that market is growing rapidly as the present Chinese Administration expands the economy. Thirdly, other countries have realised the potential and have decided to put their money where their mouths are and, as a result, are obtaining footholds in that market. It will be very difficult to supplant them once they are established.

Whether the companies involved are admitting any profit in the ventures undertaken up to now is a matter for conjecture, but certainly the companies and the Governments concerned have made a judgment that returns in one way or another will be there in the future. That is especially true of the Japanese but equally of various European countries, even Denmark.

If we stand back — here I agree with the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther)—and take a lillywhite attitude to providing soft loans, cheap credit or whatever is the description, my judgment is that in 10 or 20 years—and I gather that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me—we shall bitterly regret it.

If in some other way British industry and trade could establish itself in China without Government assistance, I should be delighted, but, to coin a phrase, there is no alternative. If we take the long view, a partnership between British industry and the Government in China can and must be the only way. I think that the Government have come to recognise that. Their recent decision, on similar arguments in relation to Indonesia, as the Chairman of the Select Committee pointed out, underlines the point that the pragmatic approach to rapidly expanding markets is already Government policy.

Obviously, the detail of a soft loan policy is a matter for discussion. I hope that it would not take the form of general cheap credit. I hope that it would be on the basis of stringent examination of individual ventures, which should pass the test of ultimate profitability.

There are, of course, risks and difficulties, not merely economic but political as well. If I may take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham, I think that it is the responsibility not only of the Committee but of the House to try to make some judgment about the political future. The open-door policy has been of relatively short duration, certainly in the Chinese scale of thinking. When we inquired about China's population control policy, we were told that it had been decided to bring down the population from 1·8 billion to between 600 million and 700 million in the year 20400. We said, "Surely you mean 2040," and they said, "No, we mean 20400." That is the scale of thinking; that is the time scale in which they see the future of their country. Ten years of an open-door policy and of an expanding economy is like a flash of light.

I shall not enter the game of Chinese euphoria, but the open-door policy and the policy of general economic expansion have already run into some trouble, and there

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is no point in British industry and the British Government not being aware of it. The scope and the pace of the reforms are already being re-examined.

Imports of refrigerators, cars, television sets and motor cycles are apparently, according to recent reports, clogging the seaports. Railways are so seriously congested that there are grave coal and steel shortages. One factory in four throughout China is idle because of electricity cuts. It seems clear that there will not be an easy progression of 7 per cent. a year of economic growth. Even an old horse like me is willing to urge the Government to spend more money supporting British industry and trade because the Chinese leaders accept that there are difficulties. In a conversation with Trinidad's Prime Minister, Deng Xiaoping said that, although there were difficulties,

"I believe that our policy will succeed. If one method proves ineffective, another will be used."

I was sceptical about whether Chinese political society will be such in the next 10 years that people can expect a return on capital. Having met people in China, I believe that there is such a prospect, in spite of the difficulties. It would be entirely wrong not to expect difficulties—there could be difficulties for a considerable time. We must bear it in mind that a society that has already turned 180 deg in the past 10 years could quite possibly turn another 180 deg in the next 10 years.

Even the special economic zones are not terribly successful at the moment. We went to Shenzhen, which is now described as an experiment, although it was not so described previously. Only one third of production is being exported, and investment has been terribly disappointing. Moreover, the area is notorious for its currency black market and smugglers. It sounds just like the West, doesn't it? Whatever the difficulties, however, there is enormous potential. We should not think that British industry and trade will be transformed overnight, because it will not be. However, given the circumstances that I and others have outlined, the Government have a duty and a responsibility to do something quickly.

When I look at the Estimates, which are supposed to be the basis of this debate, I see that we are not spending much, not merely on China, but on anything. The sums involved seem, even to a wicked old monetarist like me, rather like back pocket money. I can think of ridiculous things on which we spend money, yet cases such as this deserve money but do not get it. If I am asked to pick a figure out of the air, I would say double it for starters and see how we get on.

6.2 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am not a member of the Select Committee and I should like to offer my compliments to the Chairman and his colleagues on producing a useful report with sensible recommendations. I hope that the Government will examine it most carefully.

I should like there to be a growth in our trade and friendship with China but I cannot foresee the day when lots of Chinese fishermen fish for salmon on the Tay. Of course I should like more Scotch whisky to be exported to China. I should like other indigenous products such as salmon and knitwear to be exported there, but I shall confine myself to the offshore oil and construction industry. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say about the prospects for that industry in the growing Chinese market.

The offshore oil and gas industry is a significant element in the Scottish economy, and hence in the United Kingdom economy. The industry will have to continue to change rapidly if it is to remain the wealth earner and employment generator that it is at the moment. Scores of thousands of people in Scotland are employed in the industry and the emphasis will have to switch to export-led demand.

Our yards are now among the best in Europe. I include in that Scott Lithgow, which is in my constituency, UIE, which is on the Clyde, and Methil, which is in the east of Scotland. We now have the experience and knowledge to seek exports to China, and we need as much help as we can get from the Government. I appreciate the work being done by the Minister of State, Department of Energy, the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), who has made at least one journey to China in an attempt to increase exports.

Because of developments in our offshore industry, we must develop our exports. Scott Lithgow and Ferguson's in my constituency are actively involved. Ferguson's has just won a remarkable export order for two offshore supply vessels for Canada to work in the Beaufort field. The management and work force of Scott Lithgow are at one in their endeavour further to develop work in the design and construction of semi-submersible rigs. What are the prospects for such structures in the Chinese offshore industry?

As Scott Lithgow is a front runner in that technically advanced field, it is essential that it is given all possible aid to sell its products in China and elsewhere. The managing director, Mr. Fudge, who is perhaps the most inappropriately named manager that I have met—there is nothing soft-centred about this laddie — and Mr. Duncan McNeil, the convenor of the shop stewards, are working in the closest co-operation further to develop the reputation of the company.

What are the Government doing to encourage the export of such structures, not the intellectual property which goes with the design and construction of them? It is an important industry to Scotland and hence to the United Kingdom. It is essential that that export market is developed in the next 20 years.

6.8 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): I too am not a member of the Select Committee and would like to compliment the Committee on its report, not least because it is succinct and makes clear recommendations. I shall not repeat what I said on 5 July.

Since I have been a Member of Parliament, we have had major export drives to the Soviet Union, when Lord Wilson of Rievaulx was Prime Minister, to Iran and to Nigeria. All three of those have gone wrong, but for different reasons.

My plea to my right hon. Friend, therefore, is that we treat trade with China as a topic on its own. We should give it its own budget. We should analyse the work that is put into that trade and what we get out of it. Nigeria went foul on us and every other export market suffered. If something goes wrong with the China trade other export markets will suffer. If we get our act together—the report helped to pave the way—I hope that whichever

Prime Minister and Government are in power in five years' time will see the success that follows from a concentration of resources and good marketing and agree to make resources available for other world markets.

I know Singapore reasonably well. We have worked closely and successfully with the Chinese there. The same applies to Hong Kong. No one has as good an entreé to Hong Kong as we have. We should be able to do something there.

Paragraphs 58 and 59 of the report say a great deal about soft loans. It is not surprising that we have difficulty competing with Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Austria, France, Sweden and Italy. They all give soft loans and we do not. I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee. Problems of overexpenditure and funding come before that Committee. I should like to see a report from the Comptroller and Auditor General illustrating the competition that we face as a result of other countries offering soft loans. We must have a significant soft loan budget for China. That budget must be allowed to be rolled over. The Public Accounts Committee recommended that the defence budget be rolled over. I recommend that a soft loan budget be rolled over.

We must be able to make decisions reasonably quickly. I am not asking for decisions within one, four or eight weeks—they should not take more than eight weeks—but at the moment we go on, month in month out, waiting for decisions. My right hon. Friend will not want me to mention a certain dam.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that good news is on the way.

Mr. Morris: That is even better. Soft loans are the key to improved trade.

The Export Credits Guarantee Department is important. The Public Accounts Committee received written evidence from Northern Engineering Industries plc. I shall quote one sentence:

"The crucial requirement for success is that the supplier should be internationally competitive in cost terms to exactly the same extent"

as his competitors. Northern Engineering Industries plc said that it would not have obtained £500 million of business if it had not had support from ECGD. That was good hard evidence. It is rubbish when Mr. Byatt and his colleagues say in their report that there is no evidence of a follow-on employment benefit.

I am sorry to have to mention the Bosporus, but I have a letter from a friend in Bedford who says that as a result of failing to secure the second Bosporus bridge and the Saudi airport terminal contracts, 50 redundancies are being made at Redpath Dorman Long. The key point is that that company is to be wound up and the staff and expertise in that hitherto British-dominated specialty in world terms disbanded. We cannot afford such things.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told me in an Adjournment debate that each 1 per cent. trade gain or loss represented 250,000 jobs. That is a sign of how important our export trade is. One GEC major contracting subsidiary had 7,000 suppliers. The majority of those suppliers are in the black country, the north-west and the north-east. That is why capital goods companies are vital to this country's future prosperity.

My right hon. Friend must respond to the report within 60 days. The recess is ahead of us. I am sorry to make him work ever harder than he normally does during the recess, but I should like to see the response in a form different from that which is normally made to a Select Committee report. I should like to see a marketing plan for exporting to China as the response to this imaginative document.

6.14 pm

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): As the Committee's final contributor this afternoon, I realise that, having only five minutes in which to speak, I must be brief.

China is committed to fast economic growth and peace. It is presently undergoing a controlled revolution which will be more far-reaching in its effects than the cultural revolution. Whilst China remains a Socialist country—if Socialism means the state ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange — it is also a country where collectivism, central control and doctrinal Communism are being rapidly replaced by individual responsibility, the profit motive and reward for effort.

Capitalist principles are being applied and the economy is taking off. People are becoming more prosperous, and that heralds tremendous opportunities for British exporters. We have already heard about many of those opportunities — raw material development, transport, commercial services, tourism and consumer goods. They all provide opportunities for British exporters.

Whilst I was in China, I kept an eye open for export opportunities for people in my constituency. They were many and varied. Companies in my constituency have a great deal of expertise to offer on oil exploration. We can offer refining equipment — even second-hand refining equipment. We have a redundant refinery which could easily be sold to the Chinese. We can assist with lead additives. The Chinese Government have not been as foolish as our Government in seeking to take lead out of petrol. The Associated Octel Company has already made plans to attend the trade fair in Peking. It hopes to do substantial business there.

Nuclear enrichment offers opportunities. China has a booming nuclear industry and nuclear power generation requires enrichment. We have an enrichment facility. We have already signed contracts with the Soviet Union, and I am sure that similar contracts could be signed with China.

There are opportunities for chemicals and fertilisers. Chinese agriculture is booming. There is an enormous need for chemicals and fertilisers and for the plant to manufacture them.

We have a great deal of coal expertise to offer. China has a great deal of coal to get out of the ground.

Even in an industry as outdated as water transport, we have something to offer. The Chinese need to develop water transport to move raw materials to the industrial centres.

Those are some of the opportunities available to firms in my constituency. Those opportunities are repeated hundreds of times across the country. If we could ensure that everyone who goes to China returns to preach the message of the opportunities available, British industry would see that they are tremendous.

We have heard a great deal about the barriers to trade in China—the distance, the difficulty of the market, the need for long-term commitment, the high cost of offices

[Mr. Mike Woodcock]

and hotels, the poor telecommunications, the Government's unwillingness to provide soft loans — although I note what my right hon. Friend has said—the difficulties faced by commercial staff in our industries and the COCOM restrictions. Despite all that, business could do a great deal to capitalise on the available opportunities.

Some large companies are doing well. Members of the 48 club are doing well. All companies that wish to export to China must recognise that country's different cultures and values. Those companies must be prepared to go there and negotiate locally over a long time scale and to maintain a local presence. They must be prepared to take advantage of the unique joint venture arrangements in China and of the special economic zones. If they do that, they will soon reaise that China can be an excellent base for exports to all the countries in the far east.

Only three hours ago I talked to Gerry Boxhall, the chief executive of Vickers Defence Systems — a company that has concluded many successful deals in China—and he is flying to Peking on Saturday to talk about a possible joint venture. I asked him what advice he would give to British exporters, and he said that four things are essential. First, take time to ensure that one deals with the right man. It is easy to choose the wrong man and to spend a long time going down the wrong tunnel. Secondly, find out what the Chinese want. A company should not enter China with its perspective of what the Chinese want; it should listen to them. Thirdly, as has already been said, send the top man. The Chinese will not do business with anyone other than the top man. Fourthly, beware of "Mr. Fixits"—the many agents who purport to be a good link between Britain and China.

What can the Government do to help? We have already heard a plea for increased staff in the commercial section of our embassy. It is absurd to have only between five and seven commercial staff in Peking to service a country that has 25 per cent. of the world's population. It is also absurd to have only three British members of staff in Shanghai to service an area that is bigger than the EEC. The Government should also press to liberalise COCOM rules. I say no more about that, because it has already been mentioned several times. The Government must provide soft loans to China. In that respect, we welcome what the Minister said. Perhaps through our embassy, the Government could do something to provide collective office facilities in Peking from which small business men can work without having to pay the high costs of offices there.

I end with a warning. China needs technology, and we need profitable exports. We have the basis of trade to our mutual advantage. But some—perhaps the cynics—may say that the Chinese want cheap, or even free, technology transfer, capital goods at uneconomic prices and soft loans on extended terms, which almost mean payment out of profits. It could be argued that, if we are not careful, we shall export technology on terms that destroy jobs in the United Kingdom for little commercial gain. United Kingdom firms may be lured into uneconomic business, believing that a foot in the door will lead to profits later. However, that door may be closed when the transfer of technology is completed.

My visit to a Shanghai factory, where workers were earning less than £30 a month producing shirts with Van Heusen labels, gave me a vivid insight into the possible effects of technology transfer on British jobs. I offer those thoughts not as a deterrent, but as a warning to companies to ensure that the business they do in China is profitable and advantageous to them and to United Kingdom interests.

In the long term, Britain can compete with China only if it is ahead in technology and if it has better management and marketing skills. Let us look to China with optimism, but with realism.

6.23 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) on his report and on the speech with which he opened the debate. It has been universally agreed in the debate that the report is valuable and has been an extremely useful spur to a greater and proper recognition of the immense opportunities offered by the Chinese market. Many contributors to the debate bore witness to the immensity of that market, to the prospects for growth and to the political changes, which mean that there is a new readiness to open trade doors.

In 1978, I had the good fortune to visit China at an interesting moment in its history. The cultural revolution had just ended, and Deng Xiaoping had not yet properly asserted himself, but there were extremely high hopes about the prospects for trade with China. It must be said that, almost immediately, those hopes were dashed. For about three years after 1979, trade with China suffered severely. The Select Committee report makes clear that Britain now enjoys only 1 per cent. of the Chinese market for imports.

That is worrying, because Britain of all countries should have the inside lane. We have a long involvement with Hong Kong which, in turn, gives us a privileged commercial entree. In the wake of the political agreement to settle the future of Hong Kong, we bask in the warmth of a new glow of friendship and approval from Peking. It is entirely appropriate that we should now try to reverse what is, in all conscience, a disappointing trade performance so far. I am sorry to disturb the welcome, all-party consensus that has dominated the debate, but it must be said that that disappointing performance is of a piece with our general trade performance. My hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and others have said that, from 1983 onwards, we have had a deficit in our trade in manufactured goods that is growing rapidly and disastrously.

The report makes clear that British industry could do much for itself. I am sure that industry will read the report with interest, and will look forward to receiving the handbook which, interestingly and innovatively, the Select Committee intends to produce.

However, the debate is primarily about the Government's responsibility for promoting exports to and trade with China. I am in a slight difficulty here, because whenever I tax the Minister with the fact that our trade in manufactured goods has declined, he usually replies, "What are you worried about? We are balancing our trade. We could not continue to produce goods and rack up great surpluses. In any case, the Government can do nothing about the loss of trade in manufactured goods."

The Government are being inconsistent. On the one hand, they argue that the decline in our trade has been the inevitable consequence of North sea oil and other factors. On the other hand, the Minister and others rightly lay

considerable emphasis on the need to improve competitiveness and productivity. What is the point of doing that if no improvement in our trading performance is possible? However, if it is possible, by improving competitiveness and productivity, to improve our trading performance, those are matters for which the Government must take some responsibility.

On export support and promotion, the Government's position is sometimes similarly confused. On the one hand, understandably, and with the support of most hon. Members, the Government express outrage at an episode such as the loss of the Bosporus bridge contract. On the other hand, the Government, wedded strongly to their free market ideology and their dislike of subsidy and public spending, are tempted by the thought that they should stand aloof from efforts to support our exporters in those difficult markets. From time to time, there is a worrying element of what one could call unilateral disarmament in the Government's position.

The Select Committee has served a useful purpose in drawing attention to the undeniable fact that such a policy will get us nowhere in our trade with China. For the Chinese, soft loans and extended credit terms are essential. They are an intrinsic part of the deal, on the basis of which the Chinese will decide whether to give business to us or to our competitors. With the Select Committee, I welcome the belated step the Government have announced that soft loans will be extended to China. However, we must remember that that step will be taken within the present limits of the aid and trade provision. Therefore, it is a diversion of resources rather than an increase. Aid will be provided on existing terms, which in many cases will not match those offered by our competitors. As the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye said, there seems to be a lack of urgency in introducing the new regime. I urge the Minister to make clear that he sees the urgency of what is required and that he will move rapidly to make sure that our exporters are not at a disadvantage in this important matter.

The problem for the Government is that some years ago they commissioned the Byatt report, which was produced from within Whitehall. Although the report was published, it was never debated. It purported to show that there were serious lapses in the reasoning to support export promotion. Its conclusion was to the effect that such promotion was undesirable and probably unnecessary and impracticable.

Understandably, that report created anxiety and led to some uproar among the business community. That must have been increased by the signs that the Byatt report philosophy had taken root to some extent. For example, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in a speech made over a year ago to the association of engineering employers in the west midlands, referred to the report in approving terms.

However, what seems acceptable to civil servants and Ministers does not necessarily commend itself to firms engaged in the actual business of trying to obtain such orders. Not surprisingly, industry has reacted strongly, sharply and critically to the Byatt report. The Government's own Overseas Projects Board published its fourth report in April this year. It said that the Byatt report was "seriously flawed". It continued:

"recently we have become very concerned at the Government's apparent ambivalence as reflected in delays in handling ATP cases, some curtailment of the ECGD's facilities and pressure on ECGD to adopt a more cautious attitude to 'country risk' than that taken by many of the UK's competitors. These developments leave a feeling that the Government may not fully understand industry's needs and serve to undermine confidence".

That body was set up by the Government and consists of leading industrialists and financiers, so it is not normally critical of the Government. Therefore, I trust that the Government will take some notice of what it had to say.

Mr. Wells: What does the hon. Gentleman understand by an increase in soft loans and the place in the budget from which it comes? I understand that the Labour party believes that the ODA's budget should be expanded and that the ATP should not take an increased share of that budget. I understand that his proposal, and what he is approving, is an expansion of the ATP, but without expanding the ODA budget. In that case, we shall be in serious difficulty in other sectors of export support, as 70 per cent. of the ODA's bilateral budget goes to the acquisition of British goods and products.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw a distinction between the ODA and the ATP, but I assure him that, while we would wish to see, and have argued persistently and strongly for, an expansion of the ODA budget, we are entirely in support of industry and many of the bodies that I am about to cite when we say that an increase in the ATP is also required. I hope that there will be no misunderstanding on that.

After the Overseas Projects Board report, the next blow was struck by the National Economic Development Office report, which was a response to the Chancellor's challenge to produce some evidence of follow on. That report is a full and detailed rebuttal of the reasoning underlined by the Byatt report. It gives in more than adequate detail, chapter and verse, example after example, of follow on business being obtained. For example, Balfour Beatty in Indonesia, with the aid of £15 million worth of provision, has secured over the past 12 years £317 million worth of business. That point is reinforced by the Select Committee when it emphasises the need for British firms not just to fly in and out of the market but to stay in it and expect to develop business over a long time.

The next response from industry was the formation into a group of 13 major British contractors employing 394,000 people, and underpinning thousands of sub-contracting firms and all the jobs that depend on that. The group has been brought into being to make the case for this form of export support on the ground that it is the essential element in obtaining an important part of the business on which they depend.

What is now needed — here I am happy to echo points already made — is for the Overseas Projects Board, the major British exporters and everybody else who has looked at the subject to agree on a substantial increase in ATP. We have to get away from the idea that we are talking about subsidy when we are talking about an essential Government effort to match what other Governments are doing to support their industry. The Japanese have an ATP budget of 40 times ours. Even the French have a provision that is 10 times as great as ours. In 1984-85, it is estimated that ATP of £59 million produced orders of £222 million. That is good value for money in anybody's terms.

As the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) said, it is nonsense that accounting rules prevent us from spending money that is available under this

[Mr. Gould]

provision. We need a roll-over provision because I understand that, over recent years, £16 million worth of this provision has not been spent, and that is nonsense.

There is also the point, made by Conservative Members, that we need to initiate the provision of help. Too often, we send our exporters into battle inadequately armed. They go in and get some interest in a contract, but then they have to come back to ask whether they can match the terms offered by foreign competitors. That gives a bad impression to start with, and inevitably leads to delay and catching up because we are lagging behind.

Something has to be done about procedural delays, as is universally agreed. There are too many bodies in Whitehall tossing ideas backwards and forwards. We had the disastrous experience of the Bosporus bridge contract.

We looked to be in danger of repeating that experience with the Samanala Wewa hydro-electric dam in Sri Lanka. I know that the Sri Lankans are keen that British firms get that contract, but there is a danger that we shall lose it. I was delighted to hear the Minister's cryptic intervention. I hope that he has some good news for us and that that good news has not come too late. It is running things rather tight to have left that project to simmer away in Whitehall for so long. It would be useful if the Minister could tell us what is happening to the shake up of the export promotion effort, which was written up in one of the Sunday papers about four weeks ago and on which we were promised results by the end of the month, although these have yet to come. Is there more good news in the pipeline?

The ECGD has faced difficult trading conditions, and unnecessary political uncertainty engendered by the process of the Mathews report and the internal departmental report, and so on. Industry is clear about the fact that we need more resources for the ECGD, particularly for its ability to cover things such as tender for contract cover.

As the Select Committee points out forcefully, there is the problem of the reduction in real terms of the British Overseas Trade Board's budget. That is a strong example of penny wise, pound foolish and it calls into question the Government's seriousness of purpose when they are willing to cut the budget of the major body designed to encourage British exports.

As a former second secretary, commercial, in our embassy in Brussels, I have considerable sympathy with the Select Committee's strictures about the staffing of our embassy in Peking. Five to seven commercial staff is simply not good enough. Three full-time staff in Shanghai is ridiculous for an area as great as the EEC, as hon. Members tonight and the Select Committee have pointed out.

There are other matters. One could go on with a long list, starting with the BBC external services and Chinese students coming to Britain — all important projects through which we could engender the relationship with China that would make the task of our exporters so much easier. Unfortunately, yet again the Government are cutting back the budgets for those projects, and doing so quite unrealistically.

I have only a minute to deal with the important and vexed question of COCOM. We had an excellent debate in Committee yesterday on this subject. The Minister for Trade was kind enough to say that he recognised the force of the argument that the rules of the COCOM arrangement should be substantially relaxed in the case of China, something for which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) argued forcefully. I am glad that he is aware of that point, and is negotiating even now to secure that relaxation. The problem of trade with China consists of all those matters, and the underlying lack of competitiveness of British industry. As the Select Committee said, the Chinese will buy from us only if we are competitive.

I shall conclude on a tendentious but accurate point. Despite ministerial rhetoric, we have lost competitiveness. Every index of competitiveness shows that we have lost ground during the past five years. Day by day the problem is exacerbated by the Treasury-dominated Government, who are using high interest rates to force up the value of the pound. This is destroying our competitive position against our most dangerous rivals. Until the Minister and his colleagues get to grips with the Treasury and persuade it that trade matters are of immense importance to our economic future, we cannot take seriously the Government's intentions for the trading opportunities with China.

If the Select Committee has done even a little to remind the Government of the immense importance and opportunities of what beckons us in China, it will have done a good job.

6.40 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): I intend to base my remarks wholly on the draft given me by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Stevens). In future I shall use him exclusively as my speech writer. I agree with all hon. Members who have said what a splendid report the Select Committee has produced. The Government congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) and his colleagues on their impressive report.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) introduced general points, and I am tempted to spend time replying to him, but that would be unfair because I want to deal with China. Nevertheless, first I shall reply to some of those generalities. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) has been the most fervent advocate of the Samanala Wewa project. The Government are delighted to offer ATP—aid and trade provision—for that project and I hope that it will be a success. We are delighted to initiate ATP in suitable cases, and there is no inhibition about that. We shall certainly try to reduce any delays that may exist, and we are constantly taking steps to improve the workings of ATP. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Dagenham rightly pointed out, ATP has been underspent in recent years. It will not be underspent significantly this year, and we have taken steps to ensure that it will not be underspent significantly in future.

I return to the specific points about China. We have had the report only since Monday, and I hoped to reply to it all this afternoon, which would be a record. However, I am slightly put off by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South, who suggested that I should reply to it in a different form later this summer. Nevertheless, I can say something about some of the recommendations this afternoon. We shall consider the report carefully and reply in the normal way when we have the time to consider it more fully. If I do not have time to answer all the points raised this afternoon, I shall write to hon. Members.

The debate and the report are well timed. Large numbers of hon. Members are well aware of the opportunity for expanding our trade with China, which is a view widely shared outside the House. Why has China become such an important topic in terms of trade recently? First, we have entered a new phase in our political relations. The United Kingdom-China joint declaration on Hong Kong was signed during the visit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Peking in December, ratified on 27 May, and followed by the welcome visit to Britain last month by the Chinese premier, His Excellency Mr. Zhao Ziyang. It has been announced that Her Majesty the Queen will make a state visit to China next year. During Premier Zhao's visit, both Governments reaffirmed their wish to see United Kingdom-China co-operation develop even faster in the years ahead.

The second main reason for renewed interest in trade with China is that the development of China's economy during the next two decades offers real opportunities for many British companies, as the Select Committee pointed out. Perhaps the greatest opportunities are in China's economic priority sectors of energy, transport, telecommunications and industrial modernisation, in which we have great expertise. There are also opportunities for co-operation in areas such as agriculture, health care, electronics, information technology, defence sales and transport. British aircraft companies have had considerable success recently. China recently signed contracts for the delivery of 10 BAe146 aircraft worth some $150 million, and eight Short Brothers SD360 aircraft.

In energy, our coal mining industry has a long history of co-operation with China. Premier Zhao visited Anderson Strathclyde, one of our major suppliers of coal mining equipment. I hope that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) feels that Scotland got a look in on that visit. Negotiations on the Guangdong nuclear project are now at an advanced stage. I hope that GEC will shortly receive the turbine generator contract when outstanding issues have been resolved.

In telecommunications, Cable and Wireless has entered into joint ventures to develop the telecommunications system in south China, and is holding discussions about co-operation in other parts of China. Other major projects are under negotiation—for example, in steel and non-ferrous metals.

There are also good prospects for growth in invisibles, which were not mentioned during the debate. The British Invisible Exports Council held an extremely good seminar in Peking, and the chairman of Lloyd's recently led a successful mission to China with the aim of further developing Britain's large reinsurance business with China.

In recommendation 5 the Select Committee suggests that we should ensure that information about tenders is disseminated effectively, and we shall certainly do our best to ensure that. Incidentally, I have received no complaints about that. For the world aid section, which is an important part of the World Bank's programme of lending to China, we shall continue to ensure that details are available as early as possible. Although the present position is not wholly satisfactory, as hon. Members pointed out, there are good prospects for the future.

There have been good exchange visits at Government level. The visit of my noble Friend Lord Young, Minister without Portfolio, who led a high level business mission earlier this year, opened up an enormous number of valuable opportunities. Later this year my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will also visit China. We have had visits from the Chinese Ministers of Agriculture and of the Environment. A great deal has been going on and the momentum must be kept up.

As the Committee stressed, China is not an easy market. It remains a state trading country where doing business can be expensive, difficult and slow. The language and cultural barriers need to be overcome. Reliable market information is hard to obtain, and it is not always easy to identify potential Chinese customers. The present pace of change has added to the difficulties.

It is essential for business men, especially newcomers to the market, to understand the potential problems and to seek advice on how to overcome them. They will need patience and perseverance, and to be competitive. As my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and others pointed out, business with China can take a variety of forms and the transfer of technology is extremely important. We have a much better record than the Japanese and nearly every other country on that. Wherever I go—I have just returned from the far east—it is pointed out that the United Kingdom is much better at transferring technology than Japan. When hon. Members go abroad, I hope that they will point that out, because it is the truth.

Joint venture agreements are a further promising area. Some companies selling to China, especially medium-sized and smaller ones, would do well to form links with one of the large international trading companies with offices in China, or to work with a Hong Kong partner experienced in trade with China.

The official export services are one important source of advice and help. I think that the Committee saw our publication entitled "Selling to China". We shall await with great interest the Committee's own publication.

In recommendation 7, the Committee made a plea for greater resources to be devoted generally to promoting exports. There are already the export services of the BOTB, the ECGD, the ATP and the trade promotion work of British diplomatic posts abroad. Up to 75 per cent. of the users of BOTB services—the figure may be even a little higher—are small firms with fewer than 200 employees. Helping large companies to win orders benefits many smaller companies through sub-contracts and equipment orders.

I understand the Committee's desire to see an increase in the funds available to the BOTB. I note that that seems to be the view of the House. The funds have been held constant in cash terms. The House will know that the resources available to the Department of Trade and Industry are, unfortunately, finite, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will examine the Committee's recommendation carefully when considering other conflicting claims on his budget.

When we have debates on other issues such as research and development, compelling demands are made, sometimes by the same hon. Members, for an increase in that budget. Others say that Government expenditure should be held steady or reduced. However, that is a very important matter, and my right hon. Friend will pay the closest attention to the views of the House.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) was, uncharacteristically, a little unfair when he said that the Government were not interested in China, or words to that effect. In fact, BOTB spending last year in support of

[Mr. Paul Channon]

exports to China was over £1 million, more per pound of exports than was spent on any other market in the world. Expenditure this year will, again, be at a high level. BOTB expects to support British groups at 12 international exhibitions. I shall not read out the whole list, but I can give it to those hon. Members who are interested.

The board also expects to support 11 outward and inward missions. It will pay a grant in aid to the Sino-British Trade Council. We are pleased that Sir Eric Sharp has become the new president. I am sure that everyone will wish to thank Sir Peter Matthews for his work as president of the council for a very long time.

Increased resources for the BOTB in China were mentioned, but we must look at the priorities elsewhere. The Committee was keen on western Europe and the countries of the Association of the South Eastern Asian Nations. We must consider whether it would be better to spend more money in western Europe, the United States, China or elsewhere. There are good cases for all of them.

Diplomatic posts are mainly a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. When I was in China not long ago, we did not have a consulate general in Shanghai, but we do now. That is a major step forward at a time when other posts are having to be closed. The Committee was informed in evidence given by the permanent under-secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that the staff in Peking has been increased by adding a new first secretary responsible for energy matters.

The commercial staffing in China numbers 10. That is larger than that of any of our European rivals. Only Japan and France have more. Therefore, our number is higher than that of the United States of America, West Germany, Sweden and Italy and is not out of line with that of many others. However, again, that is a matter of priorities. Many requests come to the Foreign Office for posts in places such as Miami. There is a strong case for reopening there, for the important market in South America referred to by some hon. Members. We are asked to put more resources there or in other places. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will study the points made in the debate about staffing.

Credit terms have been mentioned on many occasions. China is eligible for the full range of credit facilities from the ECGD. There is no shortage of cover. I do not think that firms should be deterred on that account. Until recently China has not been eligible for support under the ATP. However, the Government have decided that in future ATP support will be available for China. That is a considerable step forward. At present that is only on the usual ATP terms of a mixture of grants with export credits, and the funds available are limited.

Therefore, it is right that we should discuss with the financial community the mechanisms that might be devised for providing soft loans. That will be equally true in Indonesia as well as China, as was announced a little while ago. My hon. Friends the Members for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and for Hastings and Rye dealt with that matter. We shall proceed speedily with those talks. I cannot say what the conclusions will be today. The announcement was made only on 9 July, but when the House returns in the autumn I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye will table a question on the first day. I know that if he does not receive a satisfactory answer he will create havoc.

Resources will still be limited and most of our exports to China will continue to be paid for either in cash or on normal credit terms. Reference was made to increasing the ATP budget. I note the views of the House about that. They will be considered carefully by my right hon. Friends in the public expenditure round.

Technical co-operation has also been mentioned. Among other things, the ODA contributes to the cost of consultancies. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) talked about British consultants. We hope that that contribution will lead to commercial benefit for Britain. The ODA also contributes to the costs of Chinese students coming to Britain for further education. The number has trebled from a low base, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham said. The Committee recommended that ODA funding should be increased, and that recommendation will be considered carefully. Many companies make arrangements to bring Chinese people to Britain for training, and I hope that other companies will follow their example.

The COCOM countries have already agreed to apply controls to China more flexibly than to the Soviet bloc countries. On a British initiative, they have agreed to speed up the processing of applications for China. The possibility of further relaxations is under consideration. Britain is playing a leading role in the discussions. We have made clear to our COCOM partners the British view, which I think is widely shared, that there are several areas of high technology in which the West can contribute to China's modernisation without damage to our other interests. There will be further discussions in September, and the views of the House will be useful to us.

No applications have been made in regard to Dalian airport. I cannot see any reason why civil radar should be any problem under the COCOM rules.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred to offshore oil and gas. The prospects, which are considerable, depend to some extent on how soon oil is found in commercial amounts. British Petroleum is playing a major part in the search. Last year the Government supported a major oil seminar in Peking, Shanghai and Canton, arranged by the Sino-British Trade Council. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy went there. He takes a keen interest in the subject.

Railways have been mentioned by several hon. Members. One company — Strachan and Henshaw — recently won a substantial order for coal unloading equipment. We are in touch with the companies connected with the industry and railway electrification. There may be opportunities in the not-too-distant-future in underground railways or metros.

The hon. Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) will be interested to remember that it was owing to British persuasion that the China National Offshore Oil Corporation set up its European office in Britain despite strong competition from other parts of Europe.

The Overseas Projects Board is a valuable source of advice to me and my colleagues. We agree on the need to use the ATP flexibly and efficiently. The recent measures that have been taken will, I hope, help greatly in that respect.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) referred to the Byatt report. It provided an interesting input to thinking on this important topic. It has not met with unanimous support. It never represented Government policy. That is shown by the fact that we are already taking steps to improve the ATP. With regard to soft loans for China, we are the only country that does not have them.

There is a host of ways in which we can increase our trade with China, which I know is the wish of the whole House. Our exports to China are at a low level, but they have increased considerably in the past few years. A few years ago they were worth about £110 million. I remember going to Cyprus when we exported more there than we did to China. The hon. Member for Dagenham may criticise us for many things, but when he is talking about trade with China he is on a weak wicket. Trade with China has gone up considerably. Even taking the freakish figures for last year, which included some erratic exports, it has more than doubled. Prospects for expansion of trade are good.

The Committee has done a useful job and we shall be answering its report fully in the usual way. We are aware of the importance of exports to China and we shall do our best to expand trade. I know that the House will be vigilant to ensure that the Government take the necessary steps towards that end. But, above all, it will be for business to seize the initiative. I am sure that industry will be grateful that we have had this debate today.

It being Seven o'clock, the Question was deferred, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of Estimates) and to order [4 July].

Orders of the Day

Insolvency Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 5

AUTHORISATION OF MEMBERS OF RECOGNISED PROFESSIONAL BODIES

"(1) A member of a recognised professional body is authorised to act as an insolvency practitioner if he is permitted so to act by or under the rules of that body.

(2) The Secretary of State may by order declare a body which appears to him to fall within subsection (3) below to be a recognised professional body for purposes of this section; and any such order may be revoked by a further order if it appears to the Secretary of State that the body no longer falls within that subsection.

(3) This subsection applies to any body which regulates the practice of a profession and maintains and enforces rules for securing that such of its members as are permitted by or under the rules to act as insolvency practitioners

(a) are fit and proper persons so to act; and

(b) meet acceptable requirements as to education and practical training and experience.

(4) Any order under subsection (2) above shall have effect from such date as is specified in the order; and any such order revoking a previous order may make provision whereby members of the body in question continue to be treated as authorised to act as insolvency practitioners for a specified period after the revocation takes effect.

(5) In this section references to members of a recognised professional body are references to persons who, whether members of that body or not, are subject to its rules in the practice of the profession in question." *[Mr. Fletcher]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Alex Fletcher): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take new clause 6 — *Applications for authorisation.*

Government new clause 7 — *Grant, refusal and withdrawal of authorisation.*

Government amendments Nos. 5 to 7, 233 and 239.

Mr. Fletcher: This clause replaces the existing delegation clause 5 in the Bill, and provides that a member of a recognised professional body is authorised to act as an insolvency practitioner if he is permitted to act by the rules of that body. We expect such members to comprise the largest proportion of qualified insolvency practitioners in future. On application by a body for recognition, the Secretary of State will have regard to whether it regulates the practice of a profession and will seek assurances that it will be able to maintain and enforce rules for securing that those of its members authorised to act as insolvency practitioners are fit and proper persons, and meet acceptable requirements as to education, practical training and experience.

Our consultations with the main accounting and legal bodies will ensure that those requirements are suitably balanced between the member of a recognised professional body and the person authorised to act by the Secretary of State or other relevant authority.

The purpose of new clause 6 is to lay down the manner, content and form of an individual's application to the

[Mr. Fletcher]

relevant authority. It also gives the latter various powers in relation to applications. Amendment No. 7 deletes clause 3 dealing with applications for certificates. The relevant authority will also have to consider whether the applicant meets the prescribed requirements with respect to education, practical training and experience. This differs from existing provisions in the Bill, in that we have added education and have stipulated that training should be practical.

The effect of these changes is to ensure that those applying to relevant authorities — and we expect that they will mainly be individuals who do not belong to professional bodies recognised for insolvency purposes —will have to meet requirements equally demanding as those faced by members of professional bodies.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Minister tell us whether he sees the Department's role as supervisory? Each of the professional bodies has its own rules and regulations about training and, of course, there ought to be some uniformity between them. In future, does the Department see itself telling the Law Society, the Bar Council, the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Institute of Insolvency Practitioners exactly what remit they must follow to secure adequacy of training?

Mr. Fletcher: I would not use the term supervisory body, but, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, it is important there should be a balance of expectation between the relevant authority and the qualifications, education, training and experience looked for by the professional body. This will be done. At the moment, we are discussing with the professional bodies precisely what standards and what rules there should be for establishing this new arrangement, because there must be similarity in the way that various bodies and the Secretary of State exercise their powers. That is what the hon. Gentleman has referred to, and I hope that clarifies the point he made. It is not just a matter of making sure that the new arrangements continue to be managed properly by the professional bodies; it is a matter of saying that they get off to a good start and that rules are laid down that can be referred to if any doubt or any questions arise in future.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister has pinpointed the matter that worries me. Is the Department of Trade going to say to the Institute of Chartered Accountants or the Institute of Certified Accountants, "These are the criteria which we will demand in the training courses so that a person may become an insolvency practitioner"? If that is the case, it seems that the Department of Trade is seeking to interfere in the standards and codes of conduct of those professional bodies.

Mr. Fletcher: We are making sure that we get off to a good start. It is not a matter of laying down rules, but a matter of agreeing with the professional bodies. I take the implication of the hon. Gentleman's point, that these bodies are well used to regulating the professional standards of their members. However, we must try to achieve the maximum amount of equivalence of treatment between the individual bodies—there will be several of them—and the way the authorisation is carried out by the Department. For that reason, we are having consultations with the professional bodies and wish to lay down guidelines for their benefit as well as for our own.

I was saying that we expect that those who are authorised by the relevant authority will be mainly individuals who do not belong to professional bodies recognised for insolvency purposes. I added that they will have to meet requirements equally demanding as those faced by members of the professional bodies. That is the obverse of the point made by the hon. Gentleman. For obvious reasons there cannot be the same requirements for those applying to the Secretary of State, because they will have a different background from that of members of professional bodies. We will seek to balance them as near as we can, and our consultations with the main professional bodies are continuing on that basis. One other change is that subsection (3) will allow more flexibility in fixing the length of time that an authorisation can continue in force.

Amendment No. 5 is necessary, because, whereas clause 2 refers to certification of practitioners by the Secretary of State, the provisions introduced by new clauses 5, 6 and 7 refer to authorisation by membership of a recognised body or by a relevant authority. Accordingly, amendments to clause 2 are necessary to accommodate these changes. The amendment to clause 2, which is amendment No. 6, adds references to the mental health legislation and is as a result of an amendment moved in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). It is intended that any person who is subject to either of the specified mental health enactments will be disqualified from acting as an insolvency practitioner. Should an order under the mental health legislation be lifted, it will be possible for a person to apply for authorisation in the normal way. The hon. Gentleman will remember that we considered this matter in Committee.

Turning to amendment No. 233, schedule 9 contains the transitional provisions relating to insolvency practitioners, but makes reference only to clause 2(2). The additions to that clause expand subsection (2) into two subsections, Nos. 2 and 3. Therefore, an appropriate amendment to schedule 9 is required. The amendment to schedule 10 is amendment No. 239. Section 302(1) of the Companies Act 1985 provides that an undischarged bankrupt who is formally appointed or assumes the role of a director or liquidator of a company commits an offence unless he first obtains leave of the court to so act. The words, "or liquidator" have been rendered redundant by existing clause 238 and amended clause 248 which disqualifies an undischarged bankrupt from acting as an insolvency practitioner, which term includes a liquidator, in any circumstances. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): My calculation is that simply to read out the vast number and volume of Government amendments and new clauses, let alone explain them and debate them, would take some hours. Therefore, in commenting on many of the amendments we are constrained to be extremely brief, and I shall be brief.

When we considered the provisions in Committee we had before us a relatively simple, comprehensible structure. Either someone obtained the necessary authorisation by being a member of a recognised professional body or, if he could not achieve that, he applied for individual certification and, no doubt, obtained it from the Secretary of State.

I imagine that the Minister was telling the House that this new and much more complex structure was the

consequence of consultations with the professional bodies. I am rather taken aback to discover that what should have been a relatively simple change has required several new clauses and further amendments. So we are left with a more complicated position.

What we now face leaves open a number of questions. As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) asked, what will be the role of the Secretary of State in this? Surely he will take some sort of co-ordinating responsibility to ensure some uniformity of practice and standards, even if his role is not supervisory.

What will be the attitude of the Secretary of State and the relevant authorities to the questions which engaged members of the Committee when we discussed these matters? For example, what will be the attitude towards members of professional bodies—let us say, the Law Society or the Institute of Accountants—who have not passed specialised papers in insolvency? What rule, principle or practice will be applied?

Given that one of the major objectives of the new provisions is to make it possible for those who have never passed and are never likely to pass examinations or to gain admission to a professional body nevertheless to qualify as insolvency practitioners, what do we know about the criteria which the Minister or the relevant authorities will apply to experience? It is exactly from that area that some of the major problems have arisen in the past and where some of those who have most disgraced the profession have come. I argue that experience, while necessary as a qualifying condition simply because it is needed for transitional purposes, should be limited to that transitional period and that we should be aiming to move towards a profession where either membership of a recognised professional body or the passing of some recognised examination should be the essential precondition for entry into the profession. Will the Minister explain how the new structure will reflect upon and influence those matters?

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the Minister say what form of consultation he will be holding with the professional bodies during the summer recess? If that consultation is to be meaningful, no doubt coupled with our experience so far — it is unique in my experience to have 1,000 Government amendments made to a Bill of 200 clauses originating in the other place—surely there are bound to be more amendments recommended during the recess. What is the procedure for bringing what might be wise and sensible amendments before the House when right hon. and hon. Members return after the recess?

7.15 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I must first declare an interest as a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, which hopes to be one of the recognised professional bodies and has been engaged in discussions with the Government. I am also parliamentary adviser to the institute.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). We are in difficulty in dealing with this vast number of amendments to a Bill that has already been through the other place and in any case has been under discussion for a number of years, what with the Cork report, the White Paper and so on. It is an unsatisfactory way of dealing with important legislation.

In the new clauses we have a complete rewriting of part I. It so happens that I welcome that, so I am not complaining about the merits of what the Government are doing. However, it is not a satisfactory way of dealing with legislation, and it is extremely difficult, with not only this group of amendments but with a number of others that we shall be discussing later, to know exactly how the Bill will stand when the amendments have been made. There will be wholesale changes in the Bill if the various Government amendments are carried. I regret that we are dealing with important matters in his way.

I ask the Minister a couple of questions for clarification, and one of them follows on from what my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said. I am not clear what the relevant authority will be, as distinct from the Secretary of State. As I understand it, the definitions of "relevant authorities" are exclusive of the professional bodies. Will the Minister confirm that a number of the other new clauses which refer to relevant authorities do not refer to the procedures under the recognised professional bodies?

If a member of a professional body is not granted authority under new clause 5 by the recognised professional body, I assume that he does not have an appeal from there to the tribunal. If he is turned down by his own professional body, it appears that there is nothing to stop him applying to the Secretary of State or the relevant authority and then subsequently to the tribunal. Will the Minister confirm that all the provisions about tribunals, appeals and so on are nothing to do with new clause 5, which deals with recognised professional bodies?

I come, then, to the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South and by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the rules. By amendment No. 10, the Government will be providing for rules by way of regulation, and these rules will include

"provision as to the matters to be taken into account in determining whether a person is a fit and proper person to act as an insolvency practitioner."

As I read it, the amendment will apply to professional bodies as well as to the relevant authorities.

Mr. Alex Fletcher *indicated assent.*

Mr. Millan: If that is correct, there will be a supervisory function by the Secretary of State. He will lay down the rules by way of regulation which will apply to applications to professional bodies as well as to applications to the relevant authorities. So there will be an element of standardisation. I do not complain about that, but it is unsatisfactory. We are dealing with it at a late stage in our consideration of the Bill, and we have no idea so far what is likely to be provided for in these regulations and we have no idea how far they will impose obligations on professional bodies and how far the professional bodies will have to change their internal rules and procedures to meet the regulations.

As I see it, by a subsequent amendment there will be supervision, but at the moment we have no idea what that supervision may entail.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, and its parliamentary adviser. Obviously the institute would hope to become a recognised professional body for the purposes of the new clauses.

I have a lot of sympathy with what has been said in the debate. Part of the answer to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who asked how we would

[Mr. Tom Smith]

achieve a degree of consistency in the new arrangements, is that there is a precedent. It is not unprecedented for the Department to recognise bodies in this way because four are already recognised for the purposes of auditing under the Companies Acts. The Department does not recognise a body and leave it at that; it has a role in constantly supervising and ensuring that the body concerned maintains the highest standards. Nevertheless, a lot of detailed matters need to be dealt with.

I wish to ask two questions of my hon. Friend. First, as I did not have the good fortune to be a member of the Committee, I am not clear about the position of those insolvency practitioners who will be qualified by virtue of their experience. When the provisions in relation to auditors were enacted in 1948, only those qualified by experience up to the time that the Act came into force were recognised. That would seem to be the right parallel.

Secondly, I imagine that the changes to the Bill will be considered in another place, I hope in October rather than next week. If it is in October, those who have an interest in these matters will have had an opportunity to consider them. I understand that the new clauses under consideration today were tabled last Thursday, so that effectively there has been a good deal less than a working week in which to consider them. I hope that my hon. Friend will confirm that he is prepared to consider further representations if the interested parties have views to offer on them.

Mr. Bermingham: Consideration of the Bill is beginning to sound like the well-known musical which speaks of 1,001 nights. This is a Bill of 1,001 amendments, or small cuts. With respect to the Minister, we still seem not to have it right. I wish to draw his attention to several minor points.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said, amendment No. 10 refers to laying down the prescribed rules. Who will advise the Secretary of State what should be in the prescribed rules? We are now getting into a cyclic argument. I sincerely hope that the persons who advise the Secretary of State will be from among insolvency practitioners. I would shudder if I thought that civil servants would do this. The Minister knows well why I say that, after one or two comments which I made in Committee about advice received by Ministers on occasion.

With regard to new clause 5, I draw the attention of the Minister to the word "acceptable", which I suggest is the wrong word to use. It would be far better to use "prescribed". Indeed, new clause 12 contains a definition of "prescribed". This would perhaps get us out of the problem.

I should have declared an interest at the beginning of my speech, which I know is well known to hon. Members. I am a practising barrister and have acted as a solicitor in insolvency in the past and no doubt will do so again in future, so let the record show that the Bill is of some considerable interest to me.

I do not necessarily wish to see the Bill go on to the statute book. I shall have some comments to make on certain other clauses which are gobbledegook and will lead to litigation. Needless litigation benefits nobody. This is our last opportunity to attempt to get it right, bearing in mind that it has taken over 100 years since the last Bill on these matters was brought in by Joseph Chamberlain in 1882, if my memory serves me correctly.

Mr. Fletcher: I remember him.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister says that he remembers him. I say no more than that.

New clause 7 refers to the relevant authority which grants the application. The authority is to have regard to "the information furnished by the applicant"

and

"such other information, if any, as it may have".

It is not clear whether the applicant will have any right of access to such information. All professional bodies at some stage receive the almost malicious complaint from a disgruntled or dissatisfied customer. Surely the applicant should have access to that sort of information, if nothing else, in order to rebut the allegation. It may well be that those other sources of information contain defamatory material which, if disseminated, would cause considerable professional damage.

Mr. Gould: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the rules of natural justice suggest that the provision as drafted is curiously defective, unless the Minister were to argue — and I am not sure that this would be sufficient answer — that the right of appeal would cure any such difficulties.

Mr. Bermingham: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says.

New clause 9 seems merely to give the applicant a right to make written representations to the authority. I suggest that that is not sufficient, and that the Minister should reconsider new clause 7 if the rules of natural justice are to be complied with.

Mr. Fletcher: If I may declare my interest, I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, members of which, I observe, are just in the majority this evening, although I do not know what that proves.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) commented on the number of amendments. I apologise that so many amendments have been tabled on Report, and I know that it makes heavy reading for Members participating in the debate. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that a number of them flow from undertakings which I gave in Committee. A number of groupings encompass technical amendments or are minor matters. The group of 28 amendments, starting with Government amendment No. 20, is concerned only with the definition of security throughout the Bill. Starting with Government amendment No. 25, there are 19 drafting amendments. I take the point that this is an unusually large number of amendments on Report, although I hasten to add that I think that it is not quite 1,000.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) mentioned the question of consultation during the recess. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) asked whether the Bill will be going to another place in the spillover of the Session. The answer is yes. There is, therefore, further time for certain matters. However, it should be remembered that the Bill started in the Lords so that the ability of the other place to make amendments is restricted in the usual way.

The hon. Member for Dagenham asked about professional members who have no special training or

experience. They will not be authorised. Part of the transitional arrangements is that, if a person is acting as a liquidator when the Bill is enacted, he will continue to act as a liquidator in a liquidation. Thereafter, members of professional bodies will have to show that they have the requisite amount of training and experience before being authorised by the professional body to act as liquidator. Non-professional persons will have to satisfy requirements of training and experience and show that they are fit and proper persons in respect of professional bodies, that is, their own assessment of the fitness of the member, plus the guidelines laid down in the rules which will decide whether they will be authorised by the professional body.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) referred to the tribunal. One reason for the large number of amendments is that the professional bodies were unhappy about having a tribunal second-guessing their authorisations. That is understandable. A professional body can choose whether to seek recognition or to be regarded as a relevant body. If it seeks recognition, the tribunal will not apply to the professional body.

7.30 pm

Mr. Millan: What about someone who is not recognised by his professional body and applies to the relevant authority? There is nothing to stop that happening. That must be unsatisfactory, because if a person cannot get his professional body to recognise him as a fit and proper person it is a little odd that he should be able to go to the relevant authority.

Mr. Fletcher: The right hon. Gentleman is correct. Nothing in the Bill will prevent a person who is turned down by his professional body from making an application to the relevant authority. However, in considering the application, the relevant body will take into account the reasons why the applicant was turned down by his professional body.

Having applied to the relevant body, an applicant would have the right to appeal to the tribunal, which would take the final decision.

Mr. Gould: The Minister's confirmation of that point surely reveals that unfortunately, but perhaps typically, in his anxiety to escape the second-guessing of the professional body, he is introducing a system that allows not only a second guess, but a third guess.

Mr. Millan: Will there not be, in effect, an appeal to the tribunal against the decision of a professional body?

Mr. Fletcher: I do not think that the tribunal will take that view. We cannot write into the Bill a provision to prevent an individual from making an application.

Mr. Millan: Why not?

Mr. Fletcher: We cannot prevent people from applying for anything. If a person wishes to make an application to the relevant authority, he will be free to do so. However, I am sure that the relevant authority and, more important, the tribunal will want to know why that person had been turned down by his professional body.

Mr. Hanley: If an individual is turned down by his professional body and is successful on an appeal to the tribunal, will the Secretary of State license him to practise in insolvency or will the professional body be ordered to register that person? It is important for the integrity of professional organisations that they should not be forced to take on a person whom they had previously rejected.

Mr. Fletcher: The Secretary of State will have no power to direct a professional body to authorise one of its members to be an insolvency practitioner.

I understand the point that is being made, but it would be rare for a person to be turned down by his professional body and be authorised on appeal to the tribunal after applying to the relevant authority. If it happened, that person would be authorised by the Secretary of State and not by his professional body. It is a valid debating point, but the situation is unlikely to arise.

Mr. Tim Smith: My hon. Friend says that the situation is unlikely to arise and that he finds it difficult to envisage a person being turned down by his professional body and subsequently being accepted under the alternative mechanism. Why not put into the Bill a provision to ensure that that cannot happen? Why is that objectionable?

Mr. Fletcher: I am not sure that we can prevent people from making applications.

Mr. Gould: We can.

Mr. Fletcher: A person who wishes to make an application is entitled to be heard.

Mr. Millan: Surely there is a difference between making an application to the relevant authority in the first instance and following the appropriate procedures—it is fair enough if a member of a professional body wants to do that—and the system in the Bill, which allows someone who is rejected by his professional body, which decides that one of its members is not fit to be an insolvency practitioner—because of his lack of experience or training or for other reasons—to circumvent that decision by going through the relevant authority. Ultimately, the appeal to the tribunal is effectively an appeal against the decision of the professional body, a process which other provisions in the Bill are meant to exclude.

Given the difficulty in making further amendments in another place, I am not sure that we can alter the Bill now, but the Government have not got it right.

Mr. Fletcher: The right hon. Gentleman overlooks what I said earlier about the equivalence of treatment and standards which will be in in the rules. If a person is turned down by his professional body and applies to the relevant authority, the authority will make its assessment on the same basis and under the same rules as the professional body made its decision. The right hon. Gentleman said that an applicant might lack sufficient training or experience. I find it hard to believe that the relevant authority or, on appeal, the tribunal would take a different view from the professional organisation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 6

APPLICATIONS FOR AUTHORISATION

"(1) An application for authorisation under section *(Grant, refusal and withdrawal of authorisation)* below—

(a) shall be made in such manner as the relevant authority may direct;

[Mr. Fletcher]

(b) shall contain or be accompanied by such information as that authority may reasonably require for the purpose of determining the application; and

(c) shall be accompanied by the prescribed fee;

and the relevant authority may direct that notice of the making of the application shall be published in such manner as may be specified in the direction.

(2) At any time after receiving the application and before determining it the relevant authority may require the applicant to furnish additional information.

(3) Directions and requirements given or imposed under subsection (1) or (2) above may differ as between different applications.

(4) Any information to be furnished to the relevant authority under this section shall, if it so requires, be in such form or verified in such manner as it may specify.

(5) An application for authorisation under section *(Grant, refusal and withdrawal of authorisation)* below may be withdrawn before it is granted or refused.

(6) Any sums received under this section by a relevant authority other than the Secretary of State may be retained by that authority; and any sums received under this section by the Secretary of State shall be paid into the Consolidated Fund.". —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

GRANT, REFUSAL AND WITHDRAWAL OF AUTHORISATION

"(1) The relevant authority may, on an application duly made in accordance with section *(Applications for authorisation)* above and after being furnished with all such information as it may require under that section, grant or refuse the application.

(2) The relevant authority shall grant the application if it appears to it from the information furnished by the applicant and having regard to such other information, if any, as it may have—

(a) that the applicant is a fit and proper person to act as an insolvency practitioner; and

(b) that the applicant meets the prescribed requirements with respect to education and practical training and experience.

(3) An authorisation shall, unless previously withdrawn, continue in force for such period not exceeding the prescribed maximum as may be specified in the authorisation.

(4) An authorisation granted under this section may be withdrawn by the relevant authority if it appears to it—

(a) that the holder of the authorisation is no longer a fit and proper person to act as an insolvency practitioner; or

(b) without prejudice to paragraph *(a)* above, that the holder of the authorisation has failed to comply with any provision of this Part or of any regulations made under it or, in purported compliance with any such provision, has furnished the relevant authority with false, inaccurate or misleading information.

(5) An authorisation granted under this section may be withdrawn by the relevant authority at the request or with the consent of the holder of the authorisation." —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 8

NOTICES

"(1) Where the relevant authority grants an authorisation, it shall give written notice of that fact to the applicant, specifying the date on which the authorisation takes effect.

(2) Where the relevant authority proposes to refuse an application or to withdraw an authorisation under section *[Grant, refusal and withdrawal of authorisation]* (4) above, it shall give the applicant or holder of the authorisation written notice of its intention to do so, setting out particulars of the grounds on which it proposes to act.

(3) In the case of a proposed withdrawal the notice under subsection (2) above shall state the date on which it is proposed that the withdrawal should take effect.

(4) A notice under subsection (2) above shall give particulars of the rights exercisable under sections *[Right to make representations]* and *[Reference to Tribunal]* below by a person on whom the notice is served." —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move. That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take the following: New clause 9—*Right to make representations*—

"(1) A person on whom a notice is served under section *[Notices]* above may within fourteen days after the date of service make written representations to the relevant authority.

(2) The relevant authority shall have regard to any representations made in accordance with this section in determining whether to refuse the application or withdraw the authorisation, as the case may be."

Amendment (a), in line 1, after 'under', insert 'subsection (2) of'.

New Clause 10—*Reference to Tribunal*—

"(1) A person on whom a notice is served under section *[Notices]* above may within twenty-eight days after the date of service give written notice to the relevant authority requiring the case to be referred to the Tribunal referred to in subsection (6) below.

(2) Where a requirement is made in accordance with subsection (1) above, then, unless the relevant authority within the period there mentioned—

(a) decides to grant the application or, as the case may be, decides not to withdraw the authorisation; and

(b) gives written notice of that fact to the person by whom the requirement was made, it shall refer the case to the Tribunal.

(3) On a reference under this section the Tribunal shall—

(a) investigate the case; and

(b) make a report to the relevant authority stating what would in their opinion be the appropriate decision in the matter and the reasons for that opinion;

and it shall be the duty of the relevant authority to decide the matter accordingly.

(4) The Tribunal shall send a copy of the report to the applicant or, as the case may be, the holder of the authorisation; and the relevant authority shall serve him with a written notice of the decision made by it in accordance with the report.

(5) The relevant authority may, if it thinks fit, publish the report of the Tribunal.

(6) For the purposes of this section there shall be a tribunal—

(a) which shall be known as the Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal (in this Part referred to as "the Tribunal"); and

(b) in relation to which the provisions of Schedule 1 to this Act shall apply.".

Amendment (a), in line 1, after 'under', insert 'subsection (2) of'.

Amendment (b), in line 2, after 'service', insert

'or in a case where he has made representations under subsection (1) of section *[Right to make representations]* above within twenty-eight days after the relevant authority has given him notice that having considered his representations it has determined to refuse his application or withdraw his authorisation as the case may be'.

Government new clause 11 and Government amendments Nos. 8 and 182.

Mr. Fletcher: New clause 8 does not differ from clause 4(3)*(a)* in that it requires the relevant authority to give written notice when it grants or proposes to refuse or withdraw an authorisation. However, the new clause goes further by requiring the relevant authority to give more information to the applicant or holder of an authorisation about the date when authorisation takes place or withdrawal takes effect.

New clause 9 gives the person on whom a notice of a proposed refusal or withdrawal of authorisation is served the right to make written representations to the relevant authority within 14 days.

I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) for tabling amendment (a) to new clause 9. It clarifies which subsection in the notices clause is being referred to and we are happy to accept it.

New clause 10 differs in several ways from the existing provisions in the Bill. First, it gives a person 28 days instead of 14 days in which to require his case to be referred to the insolvency practitioners tribunal. Secondly, it requires the tribunal to send a copy of its report not only to the relevant authority, but to the person concerned. The relevant authority will have to serve the person with a written notice of its decision made in accordance with the tribunal's report and may also publish the report if it thinks fit.

I am, again, grateful to the right hon. Member for Govan for tabling amendments (a) and (b) to new clause 10. I am happy to accept amendment (a), because it clarifies which subsection is being referred to, and amendment (b) is accepted in principle, because a person who makes representations may not consider requiring his case to be referred to the tribunal until he is aware of the result of his representations. The amendment will ensure that he has 28 days to act from when he is given notice of the decision. However, there are drafting difficulties with the amendment. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to withdraw that amendment, because we intend to deal with the matter in an amendment to be moved in the House of Lords.

New clause 10 allows a person 28 days in which to require that his case be referred to the tribunal. However, if he does not make that requirement, and assuming that the relevant authority has not been swayed by any written representations lodged within the first 14 days, new clause 11 requires that the authority must await the expiration of the 28 days appeal period before giving written notice of the refusal or withdrawal.

Amendment No. 182, which amends the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1981, is necessary to place the insolvency practitioners tribunal under the supervision of the Council on Tribunals. I commend the new clauses and amendments to the House.

Mr. Millan: I do not have to make a speech because the Government agree that my amendments are necessary. I accept that amendment (b) to new clause 10 is inelegant, but I thought there was a deficiency in new clauses 9 and 10. I am glad that that is recognised and that the Minister intends the matter to be put right in another place.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

RIGHT TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS

'(1) A person on whom a notice is served under section *[Notices]* above may within fourteen days after the date of service make written representations to the relevant authority.

(2) The relevant authority shall have regard to any representations made in accordance with this section in determining whether to refuse the application or withdraw the authorisation, as the case may be.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Amendment made: (a) in line 1, after 'under', insert 'subsection (2) of'.—*[Mr. Millan.]*

Clause, as amended, read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 10

REFERENCE TO TRIBUNAL

To move the following clause:

'(1) A person on whom a notice is served under section *[Notices]* above may within twenty-eight days after the date of service give written notice to the relevant authority requiring the case to be referred to the Tribunal referred to in subsection (6) below.

(2) Where a requirement is made in accordance with subsection (1) above, then unless the relevant authority within the period there mentioned—

(a) decides to grant the application or, as the case may be, decides not to withdraw the authorisation; and

(b) gives written notice of that fact to the person by whom the requirement was made,

it shall refer the case to the Tribunal.

(3) On a reference under this section the Tribunal shall—

(a) investigate the case; and

(b) make a report to the relevant authority stating what would in their opinion be the appropriate decision in the matter and the reasons for that opinion;

and it shall be the duty of the relevant authority to decide the matter accordingly.

[Mr. Millan]

(4) The Tribunal shall send a copy of the report to the applicant or, as the case may be, the holder of the authorisation, and the relevant authority shall serve him with a written notice of the decision made by it in accordance with the report.

(5) The relevant authority may, if it thinks fit, publish the report of the Tribunal.

(6) For the purposes of this section there shall be a tribunal—

(a) which shall be known as the Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal (in this Part referred to as "the Tribunal"); and

(b) in relation to which the provisions of Schedule 1 to this Act shall apply."—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Amendment made: (a) in line 1, after 'under', insert 'subsection (2) of'. *[Mr. Millan.]*

Clause, as amended, read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 11

REFUSAL OR WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT REFERENCE TO TRIBUNAL

"Where no requirement is made under section *[Reference to Tribunal]* (1) above in respect of a proposed refusal or withdrawal, the relevant authority may, at the expiration of the period within which such a requirement can be made, give written notice of the refusal or withdrawal to the person concerned in accordance with the proposal in the notice given by it under section *[Notices]* (2) above." *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 12

INTERPRETATION OF PART I

"In this Part

"prescribed" means prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State;

"the relevant authority" means—

(a) in relation to a case of any description specified in directions given by the Secretary of State, the body or person so specified in relation to cases of that description; and

(b) in relation to a case not falling within paragraph *(a)* above, the Secretary of State;

"the Tribunal" means the Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal." *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 9 and 10.

Mr. Fletcher: The purpose of new clause 12 is to interpret part I of the Bill, and amendment 9 deletes clause 5 from the Bill.

Amendment No. 10 to clause 6 is to give power to make regulations concerning the criteria for assessing whether a person is "fit and proper"; to prohibit acting in conflict of interest and to provide for the supervision of authorised practitioners, and other necessary matters.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 18

RESTRICTION ON USE OF COMPANY NAMES

"(1) This section applies to a person where a company ("the relevant company") has gone into insolvent liquidation and he was a director or shadow director of the company at any time in the period of twelve months ending with the day before it went into liquidation; and for the purposes of this section a name is a prohibited name in relation to such a person if—

(a) it is a name by which the relevant company was known at any time in the said period; or

(b) it is a name which is so similar to a name falling within paragraph *(a)* above as to suggest an association with the relevant company.

(2) Except with the leave of the court, a person to whom this section applies shall not at any time in the period of five years beginning with the day on which the relevant company went into liquidation—

(a) be a director of any other company that is known by a prohibited name; or

(b) in any way, whether directly or indirectly, be concerned or take part in the promotion, formation or management of any such company; or

(c) in any way, whether directly or indirectly, be concerned or take part in the carrying on of a business carried on (otherwise than by a company) under a prohibited name.

(3) If a person acts in contravention of this section, he shall in respect of each offence, be liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to both;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine or to both.

(4) In subsection (2) above "the court" means any court having jurisdiction to wind up companies; and on an application for leave under that subsection, the Secretary of State or the official receiver may appear and call the attention of the court to any matters which seem to him to be relevant.

(5) References in this section, in relation to any time, to a name by which a company is known are references to the name of the company at that time or to any name under which the company carries on business at that time.

(6) For the purposes of this section a company goes into insolvent liquidation if it goes into liquidation at a time when its assets are insufficient for the payment of its debts and other liabilities and the expenses of the winding up.

(7) In this section "company" includes a company which may be wound up under Part XXI of the 1985 Act.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.45 pm

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: (a), in line 36, at end add—

'(8) In this section "director" excludes any director who together with connected persons does not hold more than 5 per cent. of the equity shares of the company.'

Government amendments Nos. 15 to 17 and 103 and 234.

Mr. Fletcher: As the House is aware, the problems of the so-called phoenix syndrome, as a result of which innocent members of the public or suppliers are often misled by unscrupulous company directors, leading them to sustain often considerable financial loss, have become increasingly apparent during recent times. Many of the provisions of the Bill are directed at preventing such abuse in the future.

We indicated, however, in Committee that the restriction on the subsequent use of a company's name as presently provided by clause 86 of the Bill was perhaps not the best way to approach the problem of abuse relating to the use of names of companies in liquidation, which is one of the manifestations of the phoenix syndrome. The company name itself is often a valuable asset which the liquidator can dispose of to the benefit of the creditors of the insolvent company.

The proposed new clause, rather than preventing the continuing use of a company name, shifts the emphasis to those who have been directors, or shadow directors, of the company in insolvent liquidation in the 12 months before the liquidation. Such directors must not, unless they have the leave of the court, for a period of five years from the commencement of the liquidation, be involved in any other company which uses the same, or a very similar, name, including any trading style used by the liquidated company. Contravention of such provisions will be an offence and may also lead to personal liability for the new company's debts.

Genuine cases of former directors wishing to buy out the business of a company in liquidation will, we feel, be sufficiently rare to justify their having to apply to the court for leave to use the same or a similar name in carrying on the new business. Liquidation will not come about immediately without any warning. There will always be a petition for winding up or a meeting called to pass an appropriate resolution if a company is to be wound up voluntarily, and the persons concerned will have time to apply to the court for leave to continue to be involved in companies with similar names to that of the company in liquidation, for instance, where a group of companies is involved.

Amendment (a), tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), seeks to exempt certain directors from the provisions of new clause 18. We feel that such an exemption would lead to unnecessary complications, particularly as there is, within the new clause, provision whereby such persons can apply to the court for leave to continue to act as a director of a relevant company. It might also provide scope for abuse through the use of nominees or the manipulation of shareholdings at a late stage prior to liquidation. An application to the court in genuine circumstances would prove no more onerous than an application for some form of clearance certificate from the Secretary of State suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes in Committee in relation to clause 86 which this new clause replaces. I therefore ask my hon. Friends to withdraw their amendment.

Mr. Gould: This is a welcome fulfilment of a promise which the Minister gave in Committee. It is a better and more accurate solution to an obvious problem than is clause 86. The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) might be able to persuade me otherwise, but I am inclined to accept the Minister's reasoning.

Mr. Hanley: I tabled the amendment late one night earlier this week in response to yet more new clauses. Considerable research has been done on ministerial statements promising amendments. I counted 27 such occasions and nine new clauses are now suggested.

Many of the amendments are in response to the professions. Those practising in insolvency are grateful for the way in which the Minister has responded to their advice. The problem is that the Minister might continue to respond until a Bill to amend this Bill is introduced next Session.

Although new clause 18 is better than it was before, no hon. Member in his right mind would defend anyone who tried to set up another organisation using a name that was like another to defraud, innocent people. As I said in Committee, often the name of the organisation is the most valuable asset that a liquidator has. There is another asset — the organisation's managers. Companies that have failed — perhaps through inexperience or, even worse, the deceit of certain directors—might be able to flourish with new capital and new management. It would be a disaster if certain people such as production, design and marketing directors, who are called "directors" but who are really senior managers, were allowed, without having to go to court, to be transferred with the name to another organisation.

I fully accept that the new clause provides that one should go to court. We are trying not only to protect the innocent but to save the businesses that can be saved. We are not trying to take the weakest companies to the wall if they can succeed with the help of an intravenous financial drip — for example, new management initiatives. If a valuable commodity such as the name of the business and its senior employees cannot be transferred without too many restrictions — especially the severe restriction of having to go to court—the Bill may not be doing the job that we had hoped.

I shall not press amendment (a). I have had an opportunity to express my concern and that of many insolvency professionals that the new clause will restrict the power of a liquidator to sell the name of a company with senior management who were innocent of any wrongdoing before the liquidation. Senior managers, who

[Mr. Hanley]

are sometimes called production or design directors, should be able to transfer freely as long as the liquidator feels that they are bona fide.

I am inexperienced in this matter, so I must explain that I did not declare my interest as a certified accountant earlier in this debate, because I had done so at the beginning of the Committee stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 21

AGENCY AND LIABILITY OF RECEIVER FOR CONTRACTS

'(1) Section 473 of the 1985 Act (agency and liability of receiver for contracts) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (2) after the words "provides" there shall be inserted the words ", and on any contract of employment adopted by him in the carrying out of those functions".

(3) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(4A) For the purposes of subsection (2), a receiver is not to be taken to have adopted a contract of employment by reason of anything done or omitted to be done within 14 days after his appointment.

(4B) This section does not limit any right to indemnity which the receiver would have apart from it, nor limit his liability on contracts entered or adopted without authority, nor confer any right to indemnity in respect of that liability.".'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment (a), line 7, leave out 'or omitted to be done',

Government new clause 20—*Disposal of interest in property*—

Government amendments 60, 61, 264, 265, 64 to 77, 79, 80, 114, 174, 202 and 208 to 210.

Mr. Fletcher: New clauses 20 and 21 and the 26 amendments to the Scottish receivership provisions in chapter V of part II are principally designed to bring them into line with changes made to those provisions relating to England and Wales, which were made in Committee. They accord with amendments to the England and Wales provisions which the House will be invited to make later.

Mr. Hanley: Amendment (a) stands in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter). This is an important point, as new clause 21 introduces a principle that I find difficult to countenance. New subsection (4A) states:

"For the purposes of subsection (2), a receiver is not to be taken to have adopted a contract of employment by reason of anything done or omitted to be done within 14 days after his employment."

This introduces a fairly new principle into this type of law —by doing nothing, the receiver is in effect allowing something to be ratified. If a receiver does not step in and say within 14 days to an employee, "This contract of employment is invalid", three, four or five months later he may be in difficulty. He may be confronted by a person who says, "I have an agreement with this company. I am the employee of a subcontractor to the company. I have been working with the company." The receiver may not have known of the conditions of employment that would have enabled that employee to be rejected within 14 days. Does this mean that a receiver has to accept the contract of employment of anyone who comes to his attention after the 14-day period?

In a business that has a worldwide payroll there may be people who do not come to the administrative receiver's attention within that 14-day period. This would bind the receiver and later in the Bill the administrative receiver to contracts of employment about which they were totally ignorant. I am concerned that the receiver will be bound by inaction. The 14-day period is far too short for large worldwide receiverships and liquidations. This could be extremely dangerous for the receiver, especially with respect to personal liability.

Mr. Fletcher: I am afraid that the amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is not acceptable. When I move amendment No. 29 I shall explain in more detail our proposals in relation to the liabilities of receivers generally in England, Wales and Scotland.

I hope that I can allay my hon. Friend's concern. He is afraid that the court will consider a receiver to have adopted a contract of employment where he fails to inform an employee that he is not adopting his contract after 14 days have elapsed—perhaps where the receiver is in ignorance of the contract or simply omits, by accident, to give notice of non-adoption because the employee has contributed no service to the company during the 14 days' grace provided for by new subsection (4A) of section 473 of the 1985 Act. That is not the intention. New subsection (4A) is designed to catch the case where a receiver knowingly allows an employee to contribute his services and says nothing to him for more than 14 days about payment for those services.

Current law appears to allow the receiver to say to the employee that his contract is with the company, that the company is insolvent and that he has no intention of paying him. This would clearly be wrong, as my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes pointed out. We allow the receiver a period of grace in which to decide whether to adopt contracts of employment. New subsection (4A) does that, and the grace period is a fortnight.

If the receiver knowingly allows an employee to contribute his services and says nothing to him for more than 14 days about his contract of employment, he should not be allowed to refuse to make payment for those services. Given the current state of the law, I am afraid that that would be the effect of my hon. Friend's amendment. I hope that he will withdraw it in the light of my remarks. If I have not entirely reassured him, perhaps he would be kind enough to allow me to move amendment No. 29 before pressing me further on this point.

Mr. Hanley: Will this principle of adoption by not doing anything be extended to other contracts outside employment? If so, it will have remarkable consequences.

Mr. Fletcher: No. We are dealing with a particular situation in current law.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 20

DISPOSAL OF INTEREST IN PROPERTY

.—(1) Section 477 of the 1985 Act (disposal of interest in property) shall be amended as follows—

(2) In subsection (2)—

(a) at the beginning there shall be inserted the words "Subject to subsection (2A) below,"; and

(b) the words from "But that authorisation" to the end of the subsection shall be omitted.

(3) After subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(2A) In the case of an application where a fixed security over the property or interest in question which ranks prior to the floating charge has not been met or provided for in full, the court shall not authorise the sale or disposal of the property or interest in question unless it is satisfied that the sale or disposal would be likely to provide a more advantageous realisation of the company's assets than would otherwise be effected.

(2B) It shall be a condition of an authorisation to which subsection (2A) above applies that—

(a) the net proceeds of the disposal; and

(b) where those proceeds are less than such amount as may be determined by the court to be the net amount which would be realised on a sale of the property in the open market by a willing seller, such sums as may be required to make good the deficiency,

shall be applied towards discharging the sums secured by the fixed security.

(2C) Where a condition imposed in pursuance of subsection (2B) above relates to two or more such fixed securities that condition shall require the net proceeds of the disposal and, where paragraph *(b)* of that subsection applies, the sums mentioned in that paragraph to be applied towards discharging the sums secured by those fixed securities in the order of their priorities.

(2D) A copy of an authorisation under subsection (2) above certified by the clerk of court shall, within 14 days of the granting of the authorisation, be sent by the receiver to the registrar of companies.

(2E) If the receiver without reasonable excuse fails to comply with subsection (2D) above, he is liable to a fine and, for continued contravention, to a daily default fine.".'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 13

RIGHTS OF OCCUPATION ETC. OF BANKRUPT'S SPOUSE

'(1) Where a spouse's rights of occupation under the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983 are a charge on the estate or interest of the other spouse or of trustees for the other spouse and the other spouse is adjudged bankrupt—

(a) the charge shall continue to subsist notwithstanding the bankruptcy and, subject to the provisions of that Act, shall bind the trustee of the bankrupt's estate and persons deriving title under that trustee; and

(b) any application by that trustee for an order under section 1 of that Act shall be made to the court having jurisdiction in relation to the bankruptcy.

(2) Where a person and his spouse or former spouse are trustees for sale of a dwelling house and that person is adjudged bankrupt, any application by the trustee of the bankrupt's estate for an order under section 30 of the Law of Property Act 1925 (powers of court where trustees for sale refuse to exercise powers) shall be made to the court having jurisdiction in relation to the bankruptcy.

(3) On such an application as is mentioned in subsection (1) or (2) above the court shall make such order under the said section 1 or the said section 30 as it thinks just and reasonable having regard to the interests of the bankrupt's creditors, to the conduct of the spouse or former spouse so far as contributing to the bankruptcy, to the needs and financial resources of the spouse or former spouse, to the needs of any children and to all the circumstances of the case.

(4) Where such an application is made after the end of the period of one year beginning with the first vesting, under Chapter V of this Part, of the bankrupt's estate in a trustee, the court shall assume, unless the circumstances of the case are exceptional, that the interests of the bankrupt's creditors outweigh all other considerations.'—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

8 pm

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government new clause 14 — *Rights of occupation of bankrupt*—Government new clause 15— *Payments in respect of premises occupied by bankrupt* —and Government amendments Nos. 137, 138, 149, 161 and 247.

Mr. Fletcher: This group of amendments is the Government's response to representations made both in another place and in Committee in relation to the recommendations of the review committee on the treatment of residential property occupied by a bankrupt's family. The review committee drew attention in particular to the position of a bankrupt's spouse who had no legal interest in the home. The review committee recommended that greater regard be had to the interests of the bankrupt's family, who were often innocent victims of the bankruptcy. The committee also recommended that a trustee in bankruptcy should not be able to dispose of a bankrupt's interest in a relevant property without an order of the court.

The amendments that were tabled in another place on this subject were unacceptable to the Government, because, in giving too much weight to the interests of the family, they tilted the balance too far away from those of the bankrupt's creditors. We remain convinced that the interests of creditors must remain a high priority.

As the House is aware, we have consulted on the subject but, as I indicated in Committee, the consultation produced no consensus of opinion as to the path to be followed, although several useful comments were received, which we have taken into account in framing our proposals. It may assist the House if I explain briefly the effect of the principal amendments. First, however, I should like to stress a point made by the review committee in paragraph 1119 of its report. It is a point not dealt with specifically in the amendments, because it is a question not of legalities but of good practice. The review committee said:

"Trustees have usually acted with humanity both in the manner and in the timing of any sale of the family home . . . arrangements can often be made for the likely value to the creditors to be provided without a sale".

In very many cases the matter is settled by negotiation without disturbing the family and without involving the court, and there is absolutely no reason why that should not continue to be the case.

Turning to the amendments, new clause 13 sets out the principal proposals. Section 1 of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983 confers on a spouse without any beneficial estate or interest in a matrimonial home rights of occupation as against the other spouse. At present where the spouse with a beneficial estate becomes bankrupt the spouse without any such interest loses his or her rights of occupation as against the trustee in bankruptcy. Subsection (1) of the new clause reverses that position and the spouse who has no beneficial interest in the property is therefore placed in a similar position to a spouse with a beneficial interest. The position in the case of a spouse with such an interest is dealt with in subsection (2) of the clause and remains basically the same as now. That is to say, that the trustee

[Mr. Fletcher]

needs to obtain an order of the court under section 30 of the Law of Property Act 1925 before being able to sell the property concerned.

Subsection (3) of the clause allows the court to make whatever order it considers just and reasonable on an application by the trustee under either subsection (1) or subsection (2). The criteria to which the court is to have regard are based on those contained in section 1(3) of the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983. The matters mentioned in subsection (3) of the clause strike, we think, the balance sought by the review committee and have the advantage of being based on existing matrimonial legislation, with the necessary addition of the interests of the bankrupt's creditors.

Subsection (4) of the clause provides that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, on any application by the trustee once the period of one year from the date of the vesting of the bankrupt's property has expired, the interests of the bankrupt's creditors are to be paramount. The combined effect of subsections (3) and (4) is that the court is to regard the period of one year as the maximum breathing space to be allowed to the members of the family under normal circumstances, to enable them to adjust to their changed circumstances and either to seek alternative accommodation or arrange the buying out of the bankrupt's interest. The court may, of course, allow only a shorter period, or no period at all, if circumstances warrant it. However, we expect the combined effect of the amendments and the practice of negotiation normally adopted by trustees to result in most cases in a period of grace for the bankrupt's family of the type sought by the review committee.

New clause 14 applies to a limited extent the principles of new clause 13 in the case of a bankrupt who has actual custody of children. This is to cover the situation where the bankrupt has no spouse with occupational rights or, because of a divorce, no spouse at all, but nevertheless has children to bring up. In such a case the needs of the bankrupt's children will be taken into account by the court but not the needs of the bankrupt.

New clause 15 preserves the present position where a bankrupt is able, for whatever reason, to continue to occupy premises comprised in his estate and makes mortgage payments or pays other outgoings in relation to the property. If such payments give rise to the post-bankruptcy acquisition by the bankrupt of an interest in the property, such interest vests automatically in his trustee as after-acquired property under section 38 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914.

This package of amendments goes a long way towards meeting the objectives of the review committee in respect of what is termed the family home. At the same time it achieves an equitable balance between the rights and interests of the creditors and those of the bankrupt's family.

Mr. Gould: A measure of the difficulties that we face is the fact that we are now confronted with new clauses which, to do justice to them, merit some hours of debate. The importance and difficulty of the subject is so great that we ought not to allow these provisions to be passed without substantive debate.

We are also in the difficulty that the consultation process, through which the Government quite rightly went, ended so recently that hon. Members are little the wiser. The Government may have been privy to the representations and to the consequences of the consultations, but we were not. It would have been useful if we could have seen the representations in published form. We have seen a list of those who made representations, but we have very little idea of what they said or of the balance of opinion on many of the issues. We are therefore compelled to exercise our judgment on the basis of very little information.

It has been apparent from the outset that the obvious interests of the bankrupt's family, who will often be completely innocent parties, remaining in the family home have to be reconciled with the equally compelling interests of a different nature of the creditors who, if they cannot lay their hands on the primary asset, might find themselves in difficulties.

The effect of these provisions means that the whole question has been handed over to the courts. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State recognises that this is very much the pattern that has been adopted over matrimonial property disputes, where the maximum amount of discretion has been given to the courts. In that sense, the Under-Secretary of State is right to have pursued that course. It reflects fairly accurately the recommendations of the review committee. On that ground, too, it is more acceptable.

It is clear that the structure of the arrangement allows discretion to the court, but that after a period of grace of one year there is a presumption that the creditors' interests will then prevail. I am not sure that that is necessarily as liberal as one would have liked. I enter that caveat without wishing to press it further.

Secondly, the review committee referred not just to children but to ailing, elderly and dependent relatives, yet the provisions make no reference to that point.

There is probably an obvious answer to a drafting point which puzzles me. New clause 14(3)*(c)* refers to a person who

"married the bankrupt immediately before the commencement of the bankruptcy".

I am not quite sure about the significance of the word "immediately."

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 14

RIGHTS OF OCCUPATION OF BANKRUPT

'(1) This section applies where a person—

(a) who is entitled to occupy a dwelling house by virtue of a beneficial estate or interest; and

(b) with whom any children have their home,

is adjudged bankrupt.

(2) Whether or not the bankrupt's spouse (if any) has rights of occupation under the Matrimonial Homes Act 1983—

(a) the bankrupt shall have as against the trustee of his estate and persons deriving title under that trustee the same rights of occupation under that Act as a person who fell within subsection (3) below would have; and

(b) subject to the provisions of this section, that Act shall apply accordingly.

(3) This subsection applies to a person if—

(a) that person is the spouse of the bankrupt;

(b) that person is not entitled to occupy the dwelling house by virtue of a beneficial estate or interest;

(c) that person married the bankrupt immediately before the commencement of the bankruptcy; and

(d) the dwelling house is a matrimonial home of the bankrupt and that person.

(4) Any application by the trustee of the bankrupt's estate for an order under section 1 of the said Act of 1983 shall be made to the court having jurisdiction in relation to the bankruptcy.

(5) On such an application as is mentioned in subsection (4) above the court shall make such order under the said section 1 as it thinks just and reasonable having regard to the interests of the creditors, to the bankrupt's financial resources, to the needs of the children and to all the circumstances of the case other than the needs of the bankrupt.

(6) Where such an application is made after the end of the period of one year beginning with the first vesting, under Chapter V of this Part, of the bankrupt's estate in a trustee, the court shall assume, unless the circumstances of the case are exceptional, that the interests of the bankrupt's creditors outweigh all other considerations.'—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 15

PAYMENTS IN RESPECT OF PREMISES OCCUPIED BY BANKRUPT

'Where any premises comprised in a bankrupt's estate are occupied by him (whether by virtue of section *[Rights of occupation of bankrupt]* above or otherwise) on condition that he makes payments towards satisfying any liability arising under a mortgage of the premises or otherwise towards the outgoings of the premises, the bankrupt shall not, by virtue of those payments, acquire any interest in the premises.'—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 16

DISABILITIES ON REVOCATION OF ADMINISTRATION ORDER AGAINST INDIVIDUAL

'(1) Where a person fails to make any payment which he is required to make by virtue of an administration order under Part VI of the County Courts Act 1984, the court which is administering the estate of that person under that order may, if it thinks fit, revoke the administration order and make an order directing that this section shall apply to that person for such period, not exceeding two years, as may be specified in the order.

(2) A person to whom this section applies by virtue of an order under subsection (1) above shall not, except with the leave of the court which made that order, act as director or liquidator of, or directly or indirectly take part or be concerned in the promotion, formation or management of, a company (within the meaning of section 1 above).

(3) A person to whom this section so applies shall not—

(a) either alone or jointly with another person, obtain credit to the extent of the amount prescribed for the purposes of section 179(1)*(a)* above or more; or

(b) enter into any transaction in the course of or for the purposes of any business in which he is directly or indirectly engaged,

without disclosing the fact that this section applies to him to the person from whom he obtains the credit or, as the case may be, with whom the transaction is entered into.

(4) The reference in subsection (3) above to a person obtaining credit includes a reference to—

(a) a case where goods are bailed or hired to him under a hire-purchase agreement or agreed to be sold to him under a conditional sale agreement; and

(b) a case where he is paid in advance (whether in money or otherwise) for the supply of goods or services.

(5) A person who contravenes this section shall be guilty of an offence and liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or to both;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine or to both.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendment No. 176.

Mr. Fletcher: The Insolvency Bill has repealed most sections of the Insolvency Act 1976, including section 11, which enables the court to make a receiving order where a debtor has failed to make the payments due under a county court administration order. For a number of practical reasons, that section has never been brought into force.

A large number of administration orders are revoked each year. If the section were used to its fullest extent, the Official Receiver would have to deal with numerous extra small cases, which probably did not warrant the investigation. I appreciate that the courts should be able to apply some form of sanction where a debtor is subject to a county court administration order and then does not comply with its terms. Such a debtor has similar privileges to those of a bankrupt, in that the order prevents creditors from pursuing remedies in respect of debts covered by the order.

While preserving the right of creditors, or the debtor himself, to apply for formal bankruptcy, the new clause will allow the court to impose some of the restrictions of bankruptcy without necessitating full bankruptcy proceedings. Of course, the restrictions may be revoked only when the person fails to make the payments under the order. As in the majority of cases the person will have no assets of value and only minimal debts, that does seem to be an appropriate way of dealing with persons who are subject to the administration order procedure.

The imposition of such restrictions will not preclude creditors from taking normal recovery steps, including bankruptcy proceedings, but they will no doubt have regard to the practicalities of recovering anything from a person who has few or no assets.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 17

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN COURTS EXERCISING JURISDICTION IN RELATION TO INSOLVENCY LAW

'(1) An order made by a court in any part of the United Kingdom in the exercise of jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law shall be enforced in any other part of the United Kingdom as if it were made by a court exercising the corresponding jurisdiction in that other part.

(2) Without prejudice to subsections (3) and (4) below, nothing in subsection (1) above shall require a court in any part of the United Kingdom to enforce, in relation to property situated in that part, any order made by a court in any other part of the United Kingdom.

(3) The courts having jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law in any part of the United Kingdom shall assist the courts having the corresponding jurisdiction in any other part of the United Kingdom or any relevant country or territory.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (3) above a request made to a court in any part of the United Kingdom by a court in any other part of the United Kingdom or in a relevant country or territory shall be authority for the court to which the request is made to apply, in relation to any matters specified in the request, the insolvency law which is applicable by either court in relation to comparable matters falling within its jurisdiction: and in exercising its discretion under this subsection, a court shall have regard in particular to the rules of private international law.

(5) Section 38 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (execution of warrant of arrest throughout the United Kingdom) shall apply to

[Mr. Fletcher]

a warrant which, in exercise of any jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law, is issued in any part of the United Kingdom for the arrest of a person as it applies to a warrant issued in that part of the United Kingdom for the arrest of a person charged with an offence.

(6) In this section "insolvency law" means—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, provision extending to England and Wales and made by or under this Act or Parts XIX to XXI of the 1985 Act;

(b) in relation to Scotland, provision extending to Scotland and made by or under this Act, Parts XVIII to XXI of the 1985 Act or the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985;

(c) in relation to Northern Ireland, provision made by or under the Bankruptcy Acts (Northern Ireland) 1857 to 1980, Part V, VI or IX of the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 or Part IV of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1978;

(d) in relation to any relevant country or territory, so much of the law of that country or territory as corresponds to provisions falling within any of the foregoing paragraphs.

(7) In this section "relevant country or territory" means—

(a) any of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man; or

(b) any country or territory designated for the purposes of this section by the Secretary of State by order made by statutory instrument.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 160, 168, 175, 177, 179, 180, 230A, 245 and 250 to 253.

Mr. Fletcher: In Committee, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave notice that clause 194 was to be replaced by a new inter-jurisdictional clause which gave effect to the recommendations of the review committee in chapter 49 of its report. The amendments are consequential on the new clause.

As was explained on that occasion, by virtue of the new clause, courts within the United Kingdom will be able to enforce orders made by the courts of other United Kingdom jurisdictions in the exercise of jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law. The clause creates a complete intra-United Kingdom system of reciprocal enforcement in respect of bankruptcy, winding-up, receivership and the new administration order procedure.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 19

RECOGNISED BANKS ETC.

'(1) The Secretary of State may, by order made with the concurrence of the Treasury and after consultation with the Bank of England, provide that such provisions of Part II of this Act and Parts XVIII to XXI of the 1985 Act as may be specified in the order shall apply in relation to—

(a) recognised banks and licensed institutions within the meaning of the Banking Act 1979; and

(b) institutions to which sections 16 and 18 of that Act apply as if they were licensed institutions,

with such modifications as may be so specified.

(2) An order under this section may make different provision for different cases and may contain such incidental, supplemental and transitional provisions as may appear to the Secretary of State necessary or expedient.

(3) An order under this section shall be made by statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 18, 19 and 228.

Mr. Fletcher: New clause 19 will empower the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Treasury and after consultation with the Bank of England, to introduce by order a modified version of the administrative procedure to apply to recognised banks, licensed and other institutions covered by the Banking Act 1979. Pending the making of that order, amendments Nos. 18, 19 and 228 disapply the provisions of part II, chapter III, from recognised banks and licensed institutions.

The evolution of the new procedure, following consultations with practitioners on the detailed provisions, has meant that it has not been possible to devise appropriate modifications to make it suitable for application to Banking Act institutions in time for their inclusion in the Bill. Clearly, such modification is necessary in recognition of the Bank of England's statutory status in relation to the supervision of recognised banks and licensed institutions.

The provisions of the winding-up code already recognise this statutory status. It is intended that an order will be made under new clause 19, which will modify part II, chapter III, in a way which recognises the Bank of England's supervisory responsibilities. The provisions of the winding-up code will be the principal guide in devising the modified procedure, but detailed consultations with relevant Departments will take place.

8.15 pm

Mr. Gould: I congratulate the Minister on speaking for several minutes about the Bank of England's supervisory functions, about recognised banks and about banks failing, and for getting right to the heart of the very area which has been occupied by Johnson Matthey Bankers. Can he assure us that the provisions were not tabled in response to that situation?

Mr. Fletcher: I am not surprised at the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I can give him the assurance that he seeks.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 22

AMENDMENTS OF RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES ACT 1976

'(1) No restriction in respect of any of the matters specified in subsection (2) below shall, after the coming into force of this section, be regarded as a restriction by virtue of which the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976 applies to any agreement (whenever made)

(2) The said matters are—

(a) the charges to be made, quoted or paid for insolvency services supplied, offered or obtained;

(b) the terms or conditions on or subject to which insolvency services are to be supplied or obtained;

(c) the extent (if any) to which, or the scale (if any) on which, insolvency services are to be made available, supplied or obtained;

(d) the form or manner in which insolvency services are to be made available, supplied or obtained;

(e) the persons or classes of persons for whom or from whom, or the areas or places in or from which, insolvency services are to be made available or supplied or are to be obtained.

(3) In this section "insolvency services" means the services of persons acting as insolvency practitioners or carrying out under the law of Northern Ireland functions corresponding to those mentioned in section 1(2) or (3) above, in their capacity as such; and expressions which are also used in the said Act of 1976 have the same meanings as in that Act.

(4) In Schedule 1 to the said Act of 1976 (services excluded from designated services), after paragraph 9 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"9A. Insolvency services within the meaning of section *(Amendment of Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976)* of the Insolvency Act 1985.".'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 267.

Mr. Fletcher: The purpose of the new clause is to exempt the provision of insolvency services from the application of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976 and to extend that exemption to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gould: I cannot resist making a brief comment. I am sure that the Minister will recognise that this is one element in a by now very confusing pattern established by the Government in their attitude towards professional bodies. On the one hand, we have deregulation for opticians, solicitors and many other professions; on the other hand, we have the retrenchment of restrictive practices for the stock exchange and in this case for insolvency practitioners. One of these days, will the Minister turn his mind to a coherent competition policy?

Mr. Fletcher: One bit at a time, please.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

DATA AND ESTIMATES

'( )—(1) The directors of every public company shall secure and collate not less than once in each accounting reference period such data about the company's affairs and transactions and those of its subsidiaries and prepare such estimates of the future course of the business as are necessary to enable a reasonable assessment to be made of the future ability of the company to carry on business as a going concern and to pay its debts as they fall due.

(2) The data and estimates prepared in pursuance of subsection (1) above shall be provided as soon as reasonably practicable to all the directors of the company, to the company secretary and to the auditors.

(3) In the auditors' report the auditors shall state if it is their opinion (having due regard to the nature of the company's undertakings) that the requirements of subsection (1) of this section have not been complied with.

(4) "accounting reference period" has the meaning given in section 2 of the Companies Act 1976; and

"auditor's report" has the meaning defined in section 14 of the Companies Act 1967.'.—*[Sir B. Rhys Williams.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The clause stands in my name and in the names of right hon. and hon. Members on each side of the House.

The Bill is entitled "Insolvency" but it also deals with important aspects of company management, and in particular the way in which problem companies are managed by the directors, and their fitness to continue in that capacity in the light of their performance when their companies are in difficulties. It also introduces a new type of manager, as I read it, in the form of the administrator, who appears in clause 21. Clause 21 says that

"an administration order shall not be made in relation to a company . . . after the company has gone into liquidation".

The Bill therefore is dealing with the procedure which is open to parties concerned with the management before it has reached the point of no return. It seems to be producing a new type of company Siegfried who has to tackle the problem of the companies in difficulties at the stages where they might still be saved by the introduction of some new supervisory element, that is to say, before they have reached the stage at which they can no longer carry on business as a going concern and pay their debts as they fall due.

We must ask ourselves whether that is the best system that we can think of, bearing in mind the number of companies that seem to slide unexpectedly into acute financial difficulties. Many companies seem to reach the brink of disaster before anybody has tried to get something done. All too often, the creditors, the shareholders and even the directors do not know how deeply they are in trouble before reaching the point of no return.

The Bill, especially in clauses 7 to 9, refers to the punishment of directors who fail to carry out their functions in difficult circumstances. Anxieties about those parts of the Bill have been expressed in another place and in Committee. When difficulties arise, it is commonplace for people to ask why nobody knew the company was approaching insolvency, why there was no warning and, in particular, what the auditors were doing.

The long-standing problem of British company law is the weakness of the elements that are expected to act in a supervisory capacity on behalf of the shareholders. It is not sufficient to blame the directors in the present set-up as the only parties who should carry the blame. In the 19th century, Germany evolved the practice of appointing a supervisory board. In Britain, however, we adopted the practice of appointing auditors with specific but limited responsibilites relating to the accounts for former years.

The work of the auditors has extended into other areas related to the financial affairs of companies and, in some ways, their status has become more important. In one way, however, the position of the auditors has been weakened. I may be one of the few hon. Members here who is not a qualifed auditor and I might therefore be speaking out of turn, but I believe that what I have to say is quite widely agreed in the profession. Auditors have become more dependent on the board and oriented towards the service of management. Their duty to provide a service for shareholders in a supervisory role has correspondingly become more difficult to perform.

When things go wrong we blame the auditors—we have all read recently of a company which has been mentioned here in the past half hour—but we are possibly asking too much of them because we do not give them the status that they ought to have in helping to prevent companies from sliding into insolvency. When dealing with problem companies auditors do not have a simple duty in company law to issue a warning note to the shareholders. It is difficult, unhelpful or even improper for them to qualify the accounts with an adverse comment—if the balance sheet and profit and loss account are a correct record of how things were when the accounts were made up. The auditors do not have a clear statutory

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responsibility to issue a warning to shareholders and to make known their doubts about the course the business may take in the future.

Some elements of the profession would not wish that situation to be changed; they feel that they would then be taken into an area of prophesy and out of the strictly arithmetical and professional background which they are trained to deal with. The difficulties in many of our public companies that have come to light recently show a deficiency in our company law which in effect is creating insolvency, because the parties that ought to be acting to prevent it are not doing so in time.

Mr. Hanley: Auditors have the power to qualify an audit report if the auditor believes that the company is not a going concern. There is a requirement on directors to state in their report the likely developments in the business of the company and its subsidiaries and, under recent company law, the auditor must consider whether that information is fair. There are therefore some provisions by which an auditor has to consider the future in a modern audit.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I agree with my hon. Friend, but there is a great deal of doubt in the profession about how those functions must be carried out. When a company goes to the market for fresh funds and has to issue a prospectus, the auditors have a well defined responsibility. When a company fails to analyse its own data, nobody is confident about what is happening. Auditors cannot act in a clairvoyant manner because the data on which they might base professional and responsible advice to shareholders has not been prepared or, if it has, it might not be reliable because, in different branches of the business, managers approach the making of estimates or the collecting of data concerning performance, costing, profits and so on, quite differently. They sometimes do that in a way which suits their comparative performance.

When the data is unreliable or the estimates of the costs of the business are based on inadequate knowledge of markets and technical factors, there is an acute difficulty for the auditors. If they sense that the company is coming under the scrutiny of shareholders or institutional investors who are anxious about the way it is going and then come out brazenly with criticisms that are made public, they simply serve to compound the difficulties of a company which might be basically sound and add to the problems which could be corrected if management knew what to do.

All too often, management does not have the necessary professional guidance from people who know what happens in other businesses. It should be noted that 90 per cent. — perhaps a higher proportion — of our public companies are already doing what I am asking. The proportion might even be 99 per cent; but some companies are not doing what I suggest. The managements of those companies might be ignorant of the fact that they are not handling the preparation of data and estimates in a way which many other businesses would regard as commonplace.

I have proposed the provisions of new clause 4 many times before and the text bears the signs of my having received very well-informed professional advice when I first drew it up. I have chosen to refer only to public companies, partly because I do not want to make new burdens for private concerns and partly because small businesses are naturally able to make their own estimates of where they are going in a way which is quite different from the practice of large companies. In regard to the preparation of data and estimates, small businesses should follow practices similar to those which I recommend for public companies, but it is not necessary to carry that idea into company law.

The great majority of public companies, and all well-managed concerns, collate their records of company performance and make projections of the future course of the business as an elementary precaution and as an automatic aspect of good management. They regard it as a matter of course and an essential element in the control of the business. Because some companies do not do that, however, we have shock insolvencies. We should not be prepared to allow that situation to continue when it can so easily be remedied with existing management and professional resources.

Companies may prepare their forecasts punctually and competently or they may rely upon the hunches of senior management. That can sometimes be a good way to run a business, but it can sometimes be a disastrous way to run a business. I am sure that anyone who has experience of industry or commerce could think of examples of companies that come under those categories.

8.30 pm

We sometimes find that a company is dominated by one powerful individual. A company created by an entrepreneur which has grown to the point where it finds it necessary to go public and which is then managed by the founder with a circle of relatively powerless or ill-informed directors and non-executive directors who do not have the knowledge necessary successfully to challenge the founder's decisions is a strong candidate for sudden insolvency. That is a well-known type of company in the City. They are sometimes profitable but sometimes disastrous.

With that in mind I have stipulated in new clause 4 that the data and estimates required under the clause should be circulated to all the directors, the company secretary and the auditors. I can think of many examples, as I am sure hon. Members can, where there is a clique of directors or members of top management who are fairly well in the know; and there is also an outer circle of people who are supposed to bear the responsibility for management but who are not kept fully informed of what is going on. That is another type of company that is a candidate for sudden insolvency.

If we are to have the doctrine of directors' collective responsibility, we must ensure that all directors are kept fully in the picture about the company's ability to pay its debts and carry on as a going concern. There will be some company secrets. I do not insist that a matter which is so private that if it were disclosed outside the firm it would damage the business should be circulated outside the company. I do not suggest that the data and estimates should be made known to the shareholders or to the public but only to those in the company who have to bear the responsibility for running it and to the auditors. All companies must gain if the directors know what is happening.

Who can decide what the company should be doing about the preparation of estimates and forecasts? Clearly, the professional accountants retained by the shareholders

to supervise the way in which the company tackles its financial responsibility should do that. How can we give the auditors the power and the duty to perform that function discreetly but effectively without damaging the business? I have given that matter considerable thought, as hon. Members may be aware. What I suggest in new clause 4 is the best proposal that I can bring forward for my hon. Friend's consideration. I have been making the same suggestion for a number of years, and I should be pleased now to hear what the Department thinks of it. If it does not like my suggestion, we may hear what it recommends to fill that gap.

I suggest that the auditors must warn the shareholders where it is clear that the company's performance is inadequate having regard to the nature of the business. No two businesses are alike. Forecasts that should be made in one class of business may be superflous in another. The collection of records may be unnecessary in one type of business whereas they ought to be kept as a matter of routine in another.

If the new clause is introduced into company law, as I hope that it will be, we shall not see a rash of qualifications of accounts containing negative warnings to the shareholders. The auditors would be able to say to top management, "Unless you improve the way in which you handle your estimates and make your forecasts, we shall be obliged to warn the shareholders." At that stage, every prudent business will say to the auditors, "Drawing on your experience of what other businesses do, what should we be doing? Will you help us to do it?" That is the best cure that can be recommended for the company that is in financial difficulties.

Auditors must have this extra status. They would have additional status if the clause conferred on them not just the right but the duty to warn the shareholders when the estimates and forecasts are not being competently prepared. The auditors would advise the management that it was approaching the point where the shareholders would have to receive the statutory warning. That would be a far more effective corrective in the majority of cases than the appointment of an administrator with uncertain responsibilities and powers.

Mr. Fletcher: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) for tabling this new clause. I am aware of the serious interest that he has taken in the matter for a number of years. I hope that he will accept that the Bill's purposes go some way towards meeting his objectives. I am sure we can agree on what we should like to achieve, although our approach may be rather different. Important as the legislation is, what my hon. Friend suggests might be more appropriate in a companies Bill. I know that that is what he has tried to achieve over the years.

New clause 4(1) requires some form of management accounts. That is intended not just to assist shareholders but to help to protect creditors from suffering unnecessary loss because of directors' mismanagement. My hon. Friend mentioned the doctrine of directors' collective responsibility. I do not believe that there is any such thing in company law; the director is a director is a director. He may suggest that he was on holiday when something went wrong but, nevertheless, he must find his own reasons for not shouldering the responsibility that might apply to him in the course of his duties.

The clause requires auditors to state that the requirements of the subsection have been complied with — that the data have been collated to enable a "reasonable assessment" to be made of the company's prospects. I believe that my hon. Friend recognises that that creates a difficulty. How can the auditor determine what information is needed to enable the directors, individually, to form a reasonable assessment of what might happen in the future? The clause does not require that information to be made public, correctly because, as my hon. Friend said, it might contain information about the company's affairs which would almost certainly be damaging if it were made known generally and reached a competitor's hands. Directors of all companies, not just public companies, should monitor their company's finances regularly, not just once a year, as would be the case under the clause.

We also believe that it should be up to each director to decide, in the light of his expertise, how best to do that monitoring to protect himself and to carry out his responsibility as a director by safeguarding the shareholders' funds. The view of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales about management accounts was given in a memorandum issued by its parliamentary and law committee. That view was:

"that the question of definition of such accounts is one which would be open to endless debate as is the question of whether the accounts revealed with sufficient accuracy the state of its trading operation and financial position."

That is our view of statutory management accounts, although naturally we recognise their value in assisting directors to manage their companies' affairs.

I suspect that, in most public companies, such information is already provided to the directors to enable them to prepare their report to the shareholders. Indeed, my hon. Friend said that as many as 99 per cent. of public companies already do this. Schedule 7(6) of the Companies Act 1985 requires the directors' report to contain particulars of important events affecting the company, or any of its subsidiaries, which have occurred since the end of the financial year, and an explanation of likely future developments in that company's business or its subsidiaries. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who also said that auditors have a duty to qualify the accounts of companies whose affairs they suspect are not in order.

The Bill will create new dimensions to directors' responsibilities. It seeks to achieve the objective that my hon. Friend mentioned at the beginning of his remarks: that directors should act at the earliest possible moment if they believe that their company is getting into difficulties. I should tell my hon. Friend that the Bill will achieve that without going down the path that his new clause recommends.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I do not agree with what my hon. Friend said, but I recognise that the new clause forms part of a body of reforms that is needed in company law. It would have been appropriate to have included it in the Bill, and the Bill suffers because my hon. Friend will not be sufficiently specific about the way in which problem companies should be tackled. At present the Bill would go for the directors after their problems have overcome them: it does not give them the help that they deserve at the time when they most need it. However, in

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view of my hon. Friend's comments, which I shall want to study, I do not wish to press the matter further now. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 23

RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPANY'S WRONGFUL TRADING

'(1) Subject to subsection (3) below, if, in the course of the winding up of a company which has gone into insolvent liquidation, it appears that subsection (2) below applies to a director, the court, on the application of the liquidator or the official receiver, may declare that that director is to be liable to make such contribution (if any) as the court thinks proper to the company's assets for distribution pari passu to such of the company's unsecured creditors as do not fall within the provisions of paragraphs 1 to 3 of Schedule 4 to this Act.

(2) This subsection applies to a director who—

(a) was a director of the company at a time when it was unable to satisfy its debts and other liabilities as they fell due; and

(b) during that time knew or ought to have concluded that there was no reasonable prospect that the company would be able to satisfy all its debts and other liabilities in full; and

(c) during that time knew or ought to have known that the company was continuing to carry on its business to the detriment of any of its creditors.

(3) The court shall not make a declaration under subsection (1) in respect of any person if it is satisfied that he took every step reasonably available to him in the circumstances with a view to minimising any potential detriment to the company's creditors.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (2) and (3) above, the facts which a director of a company ought to know or ascertain, the conclusions he ought to reach, the diligence he ought to display and the steps which he ought to take are those which would be known, ascertained, reached, displayed or taken, by a reasonably diligent person having both—

(a) the general knowledge, skill and experience that may reasonably be expected of a person carrying out the same functions as are carried out by that director in relation to the company; and

(b) the general knowledge, skill and experience that that director has.

(5) The reference in subsection (4) above to the functions carried out in relation to a company by a director includes a reference to any functions which he does not carry out, or has not carried out but which have been entrusted to him.

(6) Subsections (3) to (6) of section 630 of the 1985 Act (responsibility for company's fraudulent trading) shall have effect in relation to a declaration under subsection (1) above as they have effect in relation to a declaration under subsection (2) of that section, and this section is without prejudice to that section.

(7) For the purposes of this section a company goes into insolvent liquidation if it goes into liquidation at a time when its assets are insufficient for the payment of its debts and other liabilities and the expenses of the winding up.'. — *[Mr. Gould.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Gould: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following:

New clause 25—*Wrongful trading*——

'(1) Subject to subsection (3) below, if, in the course of the winding up of a company which has gone into insolvent liquidation, it appears that subsection (2) below applies to a director, the court, on the application of the liquidator, or the official receiver, may declare that that director is to be liable to make such contribution (if any) as the court thinks proper, to the company's assets for distribution pari passu to such of the company's unsecured creditors as do not fall within the provisions of paragraphs 1 to 3 of Schedule 3 to this Act.

(2) This subsection applies to a director who:—

(a) was a director of the company at a time when it was unable to satisfy its debts and other liabilities as they fell due; and

(b) during that time knew or ought to have concluded that there was no reasonable prospect that the company would be able to satisfy all its debts and other liabilities in full; and

(c) (i) during that time, negligently permitted the carrying on by the company of its business to the further detriment of creditors; or

(d) (ii) during that time knew or ought to have known that the company was continuing to carry on its business to the detriment of any of its creditors.

(3) The court shall not make a declaration under subsection (1) in respect of any person if it is satisfied that he took every step reasonably available to him in the circumstances with a view to minimising any potential detriment to the company's creditors.

(4) For the purposes of subsections (2) and (3) above, the facts which a director of a company ought to know or ascertain, the conclusions he ought to reach, the diligence he ought to display and the steps which he ought to take are those which would be known, ascertained, reached, displayed or taken, by a reasonably diligent person having both—

(a) the general knowledge, skill and experience that may reasonably be expected of a person carrying out the same functions as are carried out by that director in relation to the company; and

(b) the general knowledge, skill and experience that that director has.

(5) The reference in subsection (4) above to the functions carried out in relation to a company by a director includes a reference to any functions which he does not carry out, or has not carried out, but which have been entrusted to him.

(6) Subsections (3) to (6) of section 630 of the 1985 Act (responsibility for company's fraudulent trading) shall have effect in relation to a declaration under subsection (1) above as they have effect in relation to a declaration under subsection (2) of that section, and this section is without prejudice to that section.

(7) For the purposes of this section of a company goes into insolvent liquidation if it goes into liquidation at a time when its assets are insufficient for the payment of its debts and other liabilities and the expenses of the winding up.'.

Amendment No. 287, in clause 10, page 8, line 24, leave out 'every step' and insert 'such steps'.

Mr. Gould: This new clause brings us to one of the most important and widely contested issues in the Bill, and certainly one on which the Committee spent much time. The present clause 10 introduces an extremely valuable concept, and there is widespread support for the Government's attempt to establish the new notion of wrongful trading. However, the new clause is an alternative way to achieve the objective which the Government have set. It is supported by the CBI, the National Consumer Council, the Institute of Directors—although it makes a few minor amendments to the clause, which are expressed in new clause 25—the suppliers of venture capital and by many hon. Members on both sides of the House. A new clause with such unusual unanimity of support cannot be all bad.

From what is known of the Minister's position, and from correspondence between the Secretary of State and some of the bodies that support this measure, it seems clear that the Government share the objectives of the new clause. There is little difference in principle among the parties that have reached a conclusion on the issue. Where we depart from each other, and where most of us depart from the Government, is on the means by which they have chosen to achieve their objective—the drafting of clause

10. It is curious, to say the least, and it is less than clear. In effect, it would bring every director of every company that goes into insolvent liquidation into a big net. However, in most cases, it does so too late, given that we are trying to strike at a course of conduct over a period of time. Subsection (2) brings everyone into the net at the last possible moment.

8.45 pm

Subsection (3) provides the means by which people can escape the net. The method offered to them is also extremely curious and uncertain. It is almost certain that most people will escape the net. I am not sure whether that is the Government's intention, but the CBI and the Institute of Directors are worried that, although people might get out in the end, they will not be sure as to what they must do and show to escape liability. We have the worst of all possible worlds. Everyone will be caught, but too late; the means are provided by which almost everyone will escape, but in conditions of maximum confusion and uncertainty. That is a fairly dreadful list of achievements for a clause, which I accept is well-intentioned. We all agree on what we wish to achieve.

The problem is that the clause departs from the straightforward, easily comprehensible, recommendations of the review committee, which identified wrongful trading and said that we must do something about it. The Committee identified wrongful trading in a way that should commend itself to any reasonably intelligent observer approaching this matter for the first time. He would say, "Let us try to identify the elements of this new course of conduct called wrongful trading." The first thing that one must do in order to be caught by the provision is to trade—to carry on business. To be more precise, the review committee stated that trading meant taking on new liabilities and undertaking new indebtedness to a new group of people. But not everyone who trades will fall within the provisions of what should be clause 10. We are aiming only at those who trade wrongfully — in circumstances where they know, or should have known when they took on those new liabilities, that they had no reasonable prospect of meeting them.

I despair sometimes, because we have put this point repeatedly, and hon. Members who served on the Committee will know that, straightforward though it may seem, we have still not managed to persuade the Minister that this is the obvious and rational way to approach the problem.

My hon. Friends and I do not wish to support the addition of a third element — the defence of escaping liability, even if one falls within the definitions of having traded and having done so wrongfully, if one has taken every reasonable step to reduce the disadvantage to one's creditors. However, for the sake of consensus, I and my hon. Friends will support that defence, although it is otiose. We adhere strongly to the basic definition that wrongful trading means trading in the knowledge that one cannot meet one's liabilities.

Unless the Minister will accept a clause drafted along those lines, he will fail in his objective of striking at wrongful trading, and he will cause the maximum confusion and anxiety in the business community, to very little purpose.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I should declare an interest, not as an accountant, but as a business man who was told that the way to find a good accountant was to ask all the accountants that one knows how many two and two make, and to hire the one who said, "How many do you have in mind?" I represent the thousands of small businessmen who are worried about the effect of the Bill's operation. They are especially worried by what was clause 9 and is now clause 10.

Like the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and, as he rightly said, every other member of the Comittee, I welcome the admirable purpose of the clause, which is to define the concept of wrongful trading and establish it as a rationale for the withdrawal of limited liability. Nobody disputes that, but the danger has always been that we will throw the baby out with the bath water. In an effort to ensure that those who should not be allowed the protection of limited liability are not, we may, on occasions, find ourselves reacting to innocent directors. Such directors may have no more than made mistakes, or have been in a market that collapsed or have had a major supplier or customer who defaulted, or got into trouble in some way with the result that his business has been put into liquidation and he has been caught by the wrongful trading provisions.

With that in mind, clause 10 is too harsh. It is too difficult for the clause as it stands to distinguish between the legitimate directors and those whom we would all want to see banned. Every director, as the hon. Member for Dagenham pointed out, is caught by subsection (2)*(a)*, *(b)*, and *(c)*. I cannot conceive of any circumstances in which any company goes under where the directors could not be said at some point to have been caught by this subsection. That is wrong because it cannot be the purpose of the clause, which is trying to distinguish culpability from non-culpability.

It follows from that that I take a different view from that of the hon. Member for Dagenham on whether subsection (3) provides an escape route through which most directors will be able to travel. The existence of the words "every step" provides a barrier that a liquidator could ensure was equally insurmountable to every director because "every step" is unfortunately a phrase that, in retrospect particularly, is capable of almost any definition. What is meant by "every step"? How can every director, however culpable or innocent, be sure that every step will have been taken?

Four principal bodies have come together on this. The CBI and the Institute of Directors represent the interests of business and individual directors. The British Venture Capital Association represents those who are seeking to use their skill, often in risk situations, to make companies work more efficiently. The fourth body is the National Consumer Council, whose objective is primarily to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected. That alliance is startling in its impact and shows the extent to which there are problems with this clause.

The British Venture Capital Association has said:

"If the Bill's wrongful trading clause is implemented as drafted, no sensible professional manager will run the additional risks of personal liability proposed, despite the attractions of share options (which are there to compensate for the loss of job security/pension rights, perks and automatic salary increases which large employers provide).

The same disincentive will apply to company doctors or professional turnaround experts being prepared to go into existing businesses in trouble (which can be rescued, provided the honest/competent manager is not threatened, as at present, by clause 10)."

The effect of this will be that fewer small companies will be started by professional managers spinning off from

[Mr. Steve Norris]

larger companies. Of those that start, fewer will be able to survive the natural cliffhangers that automatically affect any business. This will happen because their boards will decide on premature voluntary liquidation to ensure that they are not caught by the provisions of clause 10. What is more, where a small business is in temporary difficulties but has a real future if it can get the right sort of company doctor in, the business will simply not survive if the company doctor has to take account of the fact that if he fails—there must always be a high risk of that—he will be caught by clause 10.

The British Venture Capital Association says that clause 10

"will seriously damage the health of the UK's small business sector, at a time when a fragile new dawn is appearing for all those committed to an entrepreneurial Britain".

It follows from that that we must look again at the way that clause 10 is drafted.

I am obliged to differ from the solution arrived at by the hon. Member for Dagenham. I do so because the constructive knowledge test that is the essence of new clause 23 is, of itself, capable of creating the same difficulty of retrospective constructive interpretation, as is implicit in the existing form of words. We have to go on a stage further to the ascertainment of conduct showing a connivance at or continuation of a business when it is clear to the directors that they should be taking another course.

New clause 25 appears not in the form that I have set out for the clerk. It should not include subsection (2)*(d)* (ii). I am afraid that the original drafting of both options appear, and it is not my intention that they should do so. My intention was to insert (2)*(c)*(i) which has the concept within it of

"negligently permitted the carrying on by the company of its business to the further detriment of creditors".

That is what we all want to achieve.

We want to get at the man who was not only a director at the material time but whose company went insolvent and who knew that there was no hope for it. That provision would capture everybody without exception. More particularly, it covers the director who then went on and consciously made the position worse. He is the man who, either through neglect or malfeasance, has forfeited the right to limited liability, and probably the right to be the director of a company in future.

With that in mind, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not regard consideration of clause 10 as closed but will take account of the unanimity of concern expressed not only on both sides of the House but by the organisations that have raised objections to the clause. I hope that he will take whatever opportunity is open to him to have another look at the matter.

Mr. Bermingham: If the Minister wants a section of the Bill to achieve our aim, that is to catch the crook and negligent director and to make them personally responsible for the loss suffered by others, he should begin to listen to those who will operate the legislation—the Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry, the National Consumer Council and lawyers. They are saying precisely what we have said in Committee. Clause 10, or clause 9 as it was, is badly drawn and achieves nothing. It presents a deterrent without teeth. It has had its teeth pulled.

We are now dealing with new clauses 23 and 25, and I concede that the concept contained in new clause 25 is valuable. The section needs to catch negligent directors. All hon. Members have heard of companies which go steadily downhill, and whose directors know that that is happening, and either through sheer incompetence and laziness or sheer negligence allow both the position to deteriorate as each day goes by and the creditors to suffer increasingly.

9 pm

Why should people who put others in a position of loss hide behind a screen which denies them personal liability when that loss is entirely their fault? If I drive my car negligently and run over an hon. Member, I am sued because it is my fault. I cannot possibly say, "It was the car that ran him over, not me", and the same is true for negligent directors. They control the business and its direction. If they know that the business is in trouble, they are under a moral duty—we all agreed about that in Committee—to do something about it. Their duty may be to cease trading, to seek help or a further injection of capital, or to restructure the business, but they are not entitled to allow the matter to drift away to the detriment of others.

If the Minister agrees with the philosophy that lies behind the arguments put forward in Committee, in the business world at large and every other section of the community, he must explain why every variation on clause 9, now clause 10, has been peremptorily rejected. Why will he reject the new clauses and use the weight of the Government's majority, or the payroll vote, as it is a Thursday, to force through this piece of nonsense? If, as the Minister said time and time again in Committee, he wants the clause to work, will he explain why he has rejected every one of the numerous ways of achieving that end suggested by people who understand these matters?

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The new clause gives me the opportunity to refer to a constituency matter that has been exercising me and many others for the past seven months. The clause fits the bill. The last person to be considered in insolvency cases usually appears to be the consumer.

The case relates to a desirable building site in Hoyland Swaine in my constituency, on which the builder is erecting some good houses, in most cases successfully. However, it appears that times became difficult for Manston Builders. It would have been better if the firm had decided that it was in trouble and had been honest, but it was not. It carried on building and selling homes or signing people up for homes before those homes were completed. It did that, although it obviously knew that it was in financial difficulties. Local people knew that it was running into financial difficulties when the suppliers of building materials moved in and retrieved their materials. But even then, the firm allowed people to sign up for homes and to pay deposits of up to £3,000.

I should like to quote an example. Mrs Janet Barber and her husband are extremely hard-working and genuine people. They signed for a bungalow, which is in a beautiful area in my constituency. When the house was seven eighths built, and the builder had informed them that they would be able to move in in a few weeks, they found that the builder had had to move out and had left them with an uncompleted dwelling. The Barbers had gone into debt in buying soft furnishings, carpets and furniture, which

they had had to put into store. They had been promised that in a few weeks they would be able to move in, so they sold their home and moved into lodgings with their parents. When the crunch came, therefore, that couple had sold their home, bought the furnishings and paid the deposit in good faith. Seven months later, they are still in lodgings with their parents.

When the matter was put into the hands of the liquidators the problems started again. Irrespective of the representations that I and the agencies acting on the couple's behalf made to the liquidators, despite the promises continually made to me that it would be only a few weeks until the house was finished, and although not only the Barbers but other people offered the liquidators the price of the completed dwelling in cash, the liquidators did not accept any of those representations or proposals. They were using those half-finished homes as a carrot to attract someone to take the whole site. Under the present law, there is nothing wrong with that because the liquidators are acting for the creditors. However, what is to happen to the poor old consumer? What protection will he have in future? He does not have it now.

Three weeks ago when I rang the liquidators again, they said that a firm was now taking over the site, and the Barbers could not have their home, although on three occasions they had offered the price of the house minus the cost needed to complete it. The liquidators were happy with the price, and I know that because they told me. However, as soon as somebody came along and said that he would buy the whole site, the poor old consumer went to the bottom of the bin and did not matter.

There is need for legislation to deal with that matter. I accept that the creditors need to be looked after, but so does the consumer. That should never happen again. As late as today, I received a final letter from the liquidators saying yet again that a person was taking over the whole site, and that it would take a few weeks to complete. In the meantime, the Barbers and other families have decided that enough is enough. Despite a loss running at £3,000 to £4,000, they have decided that the time has come for them to take up another option. Who will compensate those people for the £4,000 that they have already spent, and can ill afford? The builder knew what was happening when they signed the agreement, but they did not. It was obvious at the time that the company was going towards bankruptcy. That should not have happened. I hope that the Minister will ensure that it does not happen again.

Mr. Fletcher: I sympathise with the case that the hon. Gentleman has made. I cannot ensure that it will not happen again, but the measures we are taking in the Bill provide an opportunity to pursue more vigorously and to more effect directors who act in the way the hon. Gentleman has described.

Clause 10 would allow the court, in the event of an application by the liquidator, to attach personal liability to directors who trade wrongfully. That, of course, would affect their pockets, because they would lose the protection of limited liability, and that is the purpose of the clause. The hon. Gentleman has chosen the correct clause in which to make the point about his constituent.

A number of hon. Members raised other points about the clause. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said that we had spent some time discussing this clause in Committee, and that is true. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said that we had dismissed in a peremptory manner all the recommendations and advice given to us by various bodies. I am bound to say to him that that does not apply to any of the recommendations made to us.

At least three hon. Members referred to a letter from the CBI and the IOD and the NCC. In relation to that, senior officials had a long discussion with all the parties together, but I am afraid that no agreement was reached.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) said there was unanimity of concern. In relation to those three bodies that is the case, but there was no unanimity about how the problem should be tackled. Indeed, on the amendments before the House, there is not complete agreement between my hon. Friend and Opposition Members on what might replace the clause we are discussing.

Mr. Gould: Is the Minister implying that he will accept amendments to the clause on which we could establish unanimity? If he is saying that, it would take us a long way.

Mr. Fletcher: I can safely say that is the case, because I doubt whether unanimity could be achieved among all the parties protesting rather vigorously about this matter.

The hon. Member for Dagenham said that everyone is agreed on the overall policy. I am sure that is so. Everyone is concerned about the abuse of limited liability and the fact that directors of companies which have, shall we say, traded wrongfully appear to be able to walk away from the resulting mess they have created in relation to other people's money and have no liability attached to them. The difficulty, of course, is how best to achieve the objective of making directors personally liable for wrongful trading.

It is suggested that one of the new clauses should be accepted in order to make the Bill more understandable to the layman, not least the director, so that his mind will be concentrated at an early stage on the financial problems of the company. There is no doubt that that would be helpful, because the more easily the clauses are understood by the layman the better for him. But our principal purpose must be to ensure that, when tested in the courts, there will be certainty of interpretation leading to effective application and the fulfilment of Government policy. The clause, as drafted, will properly fulfil that need and enable the courts to penalise those who abuse the privileges of limited liability.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that the real argument is whether the clause, as drafted, is effective? The Minister has legal opinion which says it is, and everybody else has legal opinion which says it is not. As a compromise, would the Minister accept a third independent legal opinion between now and the next stage in the Lords? If it proves that the Minister's advisers or his parliamentary draftsmen are wrong, will he bow gracefully to the advice of any independent leading counsel he may choose? It is as simple as that.

Mr. Fletcher: It is the duty of the House to decide whether a Bill should be accepted and how it should be passed into legislation. There have been opportunities in the other place to consider this matter. In the other place there are many eminent legal minds, and there the clause was not amended. Nor was it amended in Committee. Therefore, I cannot recommend the amendments now before the House.

9.15 pm

Subsection (1) of both new clauses would exclude creditors with preferential claims from sharing in the proceeds of a successful wrongful trading application. We have already gone a long way to meet demands to reduce Government preferences. But to accept the subsection would mean that there could be no wrongful trading application where only preferential debts were outstanding. The significance of that is that there are rogue directors, to whom many references have been made, and the paying off of non-preferentials to keep suppliers reasonably happy so that they can start up their businesses again next day — what is referred to as the phoenix syndrome — is one of the tricks of rogue directors, and they could apply it on the basis of the suggested subsection (6). In any event, we argued in Committee that the proceeds of wrongful trading should be for the generality of creditors, and the Government still hold to that view.

Paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* of subsection (2) of both clauses are the same and are in fact cumulative provisions. The starting point for the period of wrongful trading — subsection (2)*(a)*—requires first that default in payment of one or more due debts must occur. It would not therefore apply whilst the company maintained payments on due debts and avoided a cash flow problem by, for instance, taking deposits and prepayments from customers but failed to supply the goods. It would also enable a director to escape liability if he resigned his directorship immediately before the first cheque bounced and in anticipation of the company first encountering cash flow difficulties, even though the conditions of subsection (2)*(b)* applied at the time he knew that there was no reasonable prospect that the company would be able to satisfy all its debts and other liabilities in full. I acknowledge that the proposals made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East and by the hon. Member for Dagenham have some element of certainty, but at the cost of an unacceptable curtailment of liability where there has been conduct which has been wrong and damaging. It does not meet our policy needs, and I cannot accept it.

We believe that it is necessary to deal not only with the case when a company has actually found itself unable to meet its debts, but where the director knew that there was no reasonable prospect of the company avoiding insolvent liquidation; the company may or may not be technically insolvent at that time. In addition, our formula provides more flexibility for directors in that they can go on trading while technically insolvent if there is a reasonable prospect in their opinion that they can trade out of their difficulties or that an arrangement with creditors will solve the financial difficulties.

I wish to stress that under our proposals directors are allowed a reasonable opportunity to consider what steps are available to them to remedy their financial problems. They will not, as some people have claimed, risk having a wrongful trading declaration made against them if they fail to put the company into liquidation immediately a cheque bounces.

The proposition in subsection (2)*(c)* of new clause 23 and subsection (2)*(d)* of new clause 25 in our view appears to impose an unnecessary obligation on the liquidator to show that the director not only knew that the situation was hopeless but that it was getting worse because the company was continuing to trade.

Subsection (2)*(c)* of new clause 25 requires the liquidator to show, as an alternative, not only that the director had permitted the company to carry on its business to the further detriment of creditors but had negligently done so. I submit that, in trying to make the clause clearer, my hon. Friend has made it more complex.

The obverse of negligence is diligence. That test is clearly set out in subsection (4). I am surprised that the hon. Member for Dagenham did not refer to subsection (4). He pointed to subsections (2) and (3), and I was waiting for him to bring in the very important subsection (4). Subsection (4) of the new clause is, apart from some additional words, an exact copy of subsection (4) of existing clause 10.

Mr. Gould: The Minister is, of course, right that subsection (4) establishes a test which is indistinguishable from that applied by the common law, but the test has to be applied to a course of conduct. The course of conduct is then defined in subsection (3), and it is that definition which is so difficult.

Mr. Fletcher: But the test is applied. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East was arguing for a negligence test, but I believe that clause 4 meets the point that he was making. The additional words in brackets in the new clause in my view add nothing to the meaning of the subsection.

The new clauses in subsection (3) add to existing subsection (3), after the words "every step" the words "reasonably available to him in the circumstances". In my view, those additional words are unnecessary. A director could not reasonably be expected to take steps which were not reasonably available to him.

Amendment No. 287, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East, seeks to substitute the words "such steps" for the words "every step" in subsection (3). When the matter was raised in Committee, I said that subsection (4) of clause 10 explained fully that what was meant by "every step" was the steps which a reasonably diligent person would have taken in the circumstances, and that no useful purpose would be served by replacing "every step" with "such steps." If I remember my hon. Friend's new clause correctly, he may well have accepted that point.

Concern was also expressed in Committee about the danger of the courts applying a negligence test and making unreasonable requirements of directors who had had to make difficult decisions on uncertain questions as a matter of business judgment, and in particular doing so with the benefit of hindsight. I am sure that the hon. Member for Dagenham is aware that the courts are accustomed to putting themselves in the shoes of decision makers at the time, faced with all the difficulties, the need for quick decisions and decisions which have to be made in the heat of the moment, whether the defendant is a company director, a surgeon or a drug company. In particular, all the authorities recognise that the company director has a proper role in the exercise of commercial judgment into which the court will not inquire. I believe that this is an important and helpful point which may need to be given more emphasis.

I cannot recommend the new clauses.

Mr. Norris: Will my hon. Friend tell the House whether in his view, accepting that the new clause makes it easier for us to get at the rogue director, it makes it no less attractive for honest directors, company doctors and valuable people operating with companies whose futures

are by no means certain but which have immense potential if they can be established, put right and made to grow? Is he satisfied that those directors will not be more wary in the light of the clause than they ought reasonably to be, given that the purpose of the clause is to strike at the fraudster, not at the honest man?

Mr. Fletcher: I do not believe that the new clause would make it easier to catch the rogue director. I think that the clause as drafted should not hold any fear for company doctors and people whose purpose in the company is quite clearly to try to assist it. That is the usual condition on which the company doctor is employed and the court, if somebody were to suggest to the contrary, is used to recognising that that purpose is indeed a profession.

I hope that clause 10 will make the generality of directors, particularly those who carry a number of directorships, more wary. They will have to consider whether they are capable of applying all care and diligence to every directorship in future. If that results in some individuals reducing the number of directorships that they hold, that will not be a bad thing.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 43, Noes 140.

Division No. 284] **[9.24 pm**

AYES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Faulds, Andrew
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Redmond, M.
Rooker, J. W.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Bellingham, Henry
Blackburn, John
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cope, John
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. John Major.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 24

SET-OFF OF DEBTS DUE TO AND BY THE CROWN

'(1) Where this section applies compensation shall not be available between debts due to or by the Crown under the provisions of any statute and debts due to or by the Crown in respect of contractual obligations.

(2) This section applies:—

(a) where a company is being wound up by the court or voluntarily; or

(b) in the case of a company to which a receiver or manager or administrative receiver has been appointed and is in office; or

(c) where a bankruptcy order has been made against an individual; or

(d) where a composition or scheme has been approved by a meeting summoned under section 95 of this Act and has taken effect.'.—*[Mr. Gould.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Gould: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is a slight variation on an amendment that we debated in Committee. It is designed, as that

[Mr. Gould]

earlier amendment was, to reduce the present gross advantage enjoyed by the Crown, in addition to all the other advantages that it enjoys as a creditor, in relation to the set-offs of amounts due to and by an insolvent individual or company.

The Crown enjoys two unfair advantages over other unsecured creditors. First, it may, to its advantage, set off debts due to it for taxes against debts due by it for commercial transactions. Such a set-off is not allowed where the Government might lose out. The arrangement is completely one-sided, and that is where the unfairness lies. Secondly, transactions with the Government are all-pervasive. A right of set-off which may be totally fair in the context of individual creditors becomes an unfair preference when used by each of the many arms of Government to extract their separate and different pounds of flesh. Both of these unfair preferences appear to be contrary to the policy of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. Both are contrary to the views expressed in the review committee.

The new clause would reduce the effect of these advantages by providing that set-off would be permissible only between obligations of a like nature — between statutory obligations on the one hand and contractual obligations on the other. It is therefore a relatively modest attack on Crown privilege and advantage in this respect, as it leaves many other rights of set-off untouched. It at least makes the distinction between the Crown's role as a revenue raiser and its role as a commercial agent. In that respect, the measure is fair. I hope that it will commend itself to the House that the Crown should be forced to deal with its debtors in separate ways.

Mr. Hanley: The Committee discussed this matter at some length, and this new clause encapsulates most of the arguments of those of us who believe that the Crown has many unfair advantages over ordinary creditors. The Bill aims to protect the ordinary creditor from the ravages of the unscrupulous director and, as we discussed in Committee in relation to preferential creditors, certain unfair powers of the state.

It is ironic that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who declared his interest as a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland should find himself hoist with his own petard, as this measure was suggested by his institute. The speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) followed the institute's advice. The hon. Gentleman has taken a close interest in its advice, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will take an equally close interest in the well-chosen words of the institute of which he has been a successful and famous member for many years. I hope that my hon. Friend will remain a member of the institute for many years, although, by moving against the amendments of his institute, he risks almost certain censure.

The right of set-off is an equitable right in English law. Any equitable right is a right that may be exercised by the courts only if it is fair. With respect to the Crown, that right is established in statute in certain areas. It would be completely unfair if the Crown were to be allowed a right that is not allowed to others. If a holding company has two wholly-owned subsidiaries, one of which owes money to a company that subsequently becomes insolvent while the other subsidiary is owed money by the company that has become insolvent, subsidiary A may not offset the debt against subsidiary B. The two subsidiaries are wholly owned by the same holding company, but in law the right of set-off is exerciseable only by one individual legal person.

In the locus of a holding company, however, the state might have two subsidiaries, one being value added tax and the other the Inland Revenue, or another branch that deals with pay-as-you-earn or national insurance contributions. If PAYE is owed money by an insolvent company but the VAT authorities owe money to the insolvent company, an automatic right of set-off is provided for in the Bill. In other words, what is available to the state is not available in exactly the same set of circumstances to companies. That is unfair and, as I said in Committee, this right of set-off should not exist in a Bill that is trying to protect ordinary creditors.

Mr. Millan: I support the arguments in favour of the new clause. The mischief arises from the fact that the Government are treated as a single entity. As a single entity, the Government are far more pervasive than any other single entity, even the grandest holding company. Apart from the mischief that that causes in equity, which the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) has graphically explained, there is also the practical question, which many who are experienced in insolvency practice have explained to me, that it is very difficult to get money out of a Government Department that may owe money to a debtor in a liquidation or a bankruptcy. It searches around all the other Government Departments to make sure that nothing is owed on the other side to which they could apply the set-off provisions. Apart, therefore, from equity, it means that in certain circumstances there is difficulty in winding up a particular bankruptcy or liquidation.

For all those reasons, I hope that the Government will be able to accept the new clause. It is a more modest form of the new clause that was moved in Committee. It does not altogether eliminate set-off, but it confines set-off either to statutory obligations on the one hand or to contractual obligations on the other. At the moment the set-off that is available to the Government can apply to all statutory and contractual obligations. A debt in one area can be set off against an obligation in another.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The Government have recently made a welcome change to the VAT regulations. It allows small firms not to be penalised in quite the same way as they were before. This is a welcome move towards recognising the fact that the damage done to a small firm when the Government insist upon taking priority over all other creditors far outweighs the merit of the amount of money that the state receives. The Government should take every opportunity to ensure that innocent sufferers from an insolvency are not put in some cases at a fatal disadvantage when the state insists upon taking its share.

9.45 pm

Mr. Fletcher: With regard to Crown preference, the Government have gone a long way to making sure that there is a better distribution of the assets in a liquidation.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said that the Crown is indivisible, and that is indeed the case. With all due respect to this important piece of legislation, I do not think that that is exactly the way that such a truth may be challenged.

The proposed new clause curtails the Crown's right to set-off in a way that the Government consider to be undesirable — indeed, to be absurdly unfair. The new clause would have the effect of placing the Crown in a significantly worse position than that of other creditors. Other creditors would be able to continue to set off contractual debts against statutory debts. To quote an example given in another place by the Lord Advocate, if a local authority as an education authority owes a bankrupt builder £5,000 for work done by him on a school, and the builder owes the local authority as a rating authority £5,000 in rates, the local authority can set off the debt owed by it against the rates owed to it. That, as the House will know, is something that can also be done by commercial businesses. I cannot see why the Crown should be placed in a worse position than other creditors in this respect. Therefore, I cannot commend the clause to the House.

Mr. Gould: I fear that the Minister was no more persuasive on this occasion than when he addressed himself to the same problem in Committee. In particular, it is a little difficult for him to claim credit on behalf of the Government for having reduced the ambit of Crown preference when that was forced upon him by the fact that there was a majority vote against his view. Unfortunately, as I cannot be sure that we have such a majority of votes available to us this evening, I fear that I must beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 26

PREPAYMENT CREDITORS

'(1) This section applies where an individual pays to a company a deposit of money or a pre-payment in relation to a contract for the supply of goods or services by the company for use or consumption other than in the course of business.

(2) Where this section applies the beneficial interest in the deposit or pre-payment shall remain with the individual until the later of—

(a) the performance of the contract of supply by the company;

(b) three months after the relevant date, as defined in relation to companies in Part II of Schedule 4 of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Norris.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Norris: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 284, in page 61, line 11, clause 81, at beginning insert

'In a winding up any deposit of money or pre-payment made before the relevant date (as defined in Schedule 4) in relation to the purchase, leasing, hire or rental of goods from the company or the provision of services by the company for use or consumption other than in the course of business shall, where the goods or service have not been provided to the person who has paid the deposit or made the pre-payment, be returned to that person as his property and shall not be available for the payment of any other debts of the company.'.

Mr. Norris: Earlier we heard about the problem that the constituents of an hon. Member were having with their house. He spoke of the distinction between creditors and consumers, which seems to epitomise the problem that the new clause is designed to cure. That may no doubt be a lay distinction worthy of being drawn, but in practice it is not a distinction that the Bill has ever drawn.

Creditors are very neatly separated into two types, particularly when dealing with the new clause. There are those who have extended credit for an account which they have submitted for payment for services rendered as a commercial undertaking. Presumably there is an element of profit in the transaction for the creditor, and the creditor has had the usual trade opportunities to decide whether he wants to extend the credit to the company. Indeed, if a person does not like what he sees, he will decide not to extend credit to the company.

In that context I remember the stories of some of the small men in the engineering industry who did not lose money when Rolls-Royce went under. It was largely because, in the years prior to the eventual demise of Rolls-Royce, they had simply found that however hard they tried they did not get paid, and they applied a common sense rule of business. If a firm is not going to get paid, there is no point in its supplying goods or services.

That is a process which a commercial creditor can go through, but I am concerned in the new clause with people who are not in that category. They are people who send money in response to an advertisement which solicits money for goods which they subsequently never receive because, with their money safely lodged in the company's hands, the company goes bankrupt and they are left with absolutely nothing. I have called such people deposit creditors, and it is to them that we should address our minds for a moment, if only because their concern, in terms of the volume of complaint and criticism that we hear of, is probably greater than any of the other concerns that we have been speaking of this evening.

I was reminded of that when, only two days ago, I read that a man behind a shower blind firm which is going into liquidation just three years after another company controlled by him failed is already back in business. The *Daily Telegraph* reported how a company called Rollaway Shower Blinds had an estimated deficiency to creditors of £426,949, about £63,000 of which was owed to 1,400 people who had answered advertisements in Sunday colour supplements. Some who had paid by credit card had been charged twice, which was no doubt very convenient for the company, but Mr. Alan Ward, managing director, said that the mistakes were caused by overstrained office administration.

We then discover that the crash followed a 1982 failure of a company called Matador Shower Sytems, of which the said Mr. Ward also happened to be a director. On that occasion, creditors lost £252,000 in the liquidation. The creditors meeting was told that Mr. Ward is now trading with a company called Rollway (UK) which, in the light of our previous discussion, is not to be confused with Rollaway, from The Green, Letchmore Heath, Herts, where Rollaway conveniently and coincidentally also happened to have been based.

It is widely recognised that such practice is intolerable. Through clause 7, concerning the disqualification of directors, and clause 10, on the reduction of limited liability, my hon. Friend the Minister has made provision to deal with that practice. I hope that, as a result of the Bill, it will be reduced. It is for the 1,400 people who have paid money for which they have received absolutely nothing that I am anxious. I understand that there is a business principle which, for convenience, is referred to as the Romalpa clause. It says that a company may add a rider to its invoices which says that the company retains title and goods until they have been paid for.

[Mr. Norris]

I have heard what I am trying to do described as a reverse Romalpa clause. We are saying that until a depositor who has sent a cheque to a company gets his goods, he should be treated as though he has retained title in that deposit. He should therefore be able to apply to a liquidator or a receiver and say, "I sent my money. I never had anything in return for it. The company has become insolvent and I should like my deposit back. I retain my claim to it because I have received nothing."

I appreciate that, in those circumstances, trade creditors who would otherwise have ranked pari passu with deposit creditors will be disadvantaged. I regret that, because I am more likely to be a trade creditor than a deposit creditor, but deposit creditors are qualitatively different from those whose invoices have been issued in the nature of trade. Moreover, the vast majority of people believe that they are entitled to be treated differently.

Amendment No. 284 tries to achieve the same end by slightly different means. Without the advantage of detailed advice, I am not able to say which of the two forms of words is to be preferred, but anybody who listens to the consumer programmes that are popular on televison and radio, anybody who reads the newspapers and anybody who has any concern for natural justice, for little people who cannot be expected to have batteries of accountants with a Dun and Bradstreet address facility to establish the status of companies, must want this small protection to be afforded.

I believe that this measure, together with the provisions contained in clauses 7 and 10, will ensure that the Bill achieves its main aim—a greater degree of equity as between those who stand to lose money in a liquidation and those who should be held to blame, if any, in such liquidations.

I commend the new clause to my hon. Friend the Minister. I hope that he will take on board seriously the strength of feeling that there is about this issue.

The other day, the producer of a consumer affairs programme on Channel 4 gave me a large file of correspondence from people who had responded to his invitation and had written on the subject. The diversity of complaints about different industries is frightening. I am aware that the travel and some other industries have indemnity schemes. No doubt such a scheme could be extended. We must have similar protection for all businesses to ensure that what I have described cannot happen in the future.

Mr. Gould: As the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) explained, new clause 26 is designed to achieve the same objective as amendment No. 284. Like him, I cannot distinguish between the efficacy of either of them. I am happy to endorse all that he said. We share an anxiety which is widely felt for — to use his felicitous description—the deposit creditor.

I am sure that the Minister will accept that there is no doubt about the range and scale of the problem. In Committee, the Minister accepted that it was a problem which should be dealt with. We are again faced with the familiar problem of how best to deal with it and whether it can be dealt with in the Bill.

The trade creditor is different. He offers credit in the normal course of business. He knows the risks. He has a clear understanding of what he is doing. He knows the benefits that he seeks to achieve. He has various means available to protect himself. He can make all the usual professional checks on the creditworthiness of the person to whom he is extending credit. He can, if he wishes, avail himself of the Romalpa clause, which is used increasingly as trading conditions become more difficult.

The deposit creditor has no such protection. He would be amazed to be told that in making the deposit for some goods or service he was contributing to the working capital of the firm which was meant to be supplying him. He has no means of checking creditworthiness. He does not understand that he is extending credit. He has never heard of the Romalpa clause. He needs protection. Various suggestions have been made as to how that can be achieved. The earliest one, which commanded some support, was the notion that the deposit creditor should be made a preferred creditor, and should be granted a statutory preference. I found that principle a little difficult to accept, because one of the Bill's objectives is to reduce the scope and number of preferred creditors.

The second suggestion was that a type of tracing principle, relying on the law of trust, should be applied. There is a hint of that in new clause 26 where it mentions "the beneficial interest in the deposit".

The third suggestion emerged in Committee. It is becoming known as a reverse Romalpa clause. The idea is that the deposit creditor should be given—without having to do anything—the type of protection that a trade creditor might insist upon in similar circumstances by inserting a Romalpa clause in the contracts through which he supplies goods or extends credit. The new clause and my amendment seek to do that. I believe that they provide a neat and elegant solution in principle. I admit that one could question whether that is properly achieved in either the new clause or the amendment, but I hope that the Minister will accept that we must deal with this matter, and that the Bill is the right place to do it. The solution that we offer must be at least acceptable, even if it is not the best solution.

Therefore, despite any drafting deficiencies, which the Minister's expert advisers can remedy, I hope that he will accept the principle of what the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and the Opposition suggest.

Mr. Millan: I wish to make only two points in support of what has already been said. First, many of the people in this unfortunate position have been misled, because advertisements in reputable newspapers——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the deferred Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings on Estimates 1985-86 (Class IV, Vote 4).*

Class IV, Vote 4

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £39,501,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1986 for expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry on export promotion, trade co-operation, regulation of trading practices and consumer protection, and other services including grants in aid and international subscriptions, and other grants.

MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question which he was directed to put, pursuant to paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of Estimates).*

ESTIMATES 1985-86

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £48,588,165,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for the service of the year ending on 31st March 1986, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 239, 240, 241, 426 and 427.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolutions, and upon the Resolutions [11 July] relating to Estimates 1985-86 by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Peter Rees, Mr. John Moore, Mr. Barney Hayhoe and Mr. Ian Stewart.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (APPROPRIATION) BILL

Mr. John Moore accordingly presented a Bill to apply a sum out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the year ending on 31 March 1986, to appropriate the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament, and to repeal certain Consolidated Fund and Appropriation Acts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 160.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Insolvency Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Neubert.]*

Insolvency Bill *[Lords]*

As amended, again considered.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Millan: Many deposit creditors are caught out because they have responded to advertisements in reputable newspapers or journals, and are under the mistaken impression that anything advertised in a reputable newspaper is bound to be genuine and that there is no risk. Unfortunately, that is not always true. many companies involved in this business which have a record of going bankrupt and starting again advertise in reputable newspapers.

Secondly, if we had such protection, some trade creditors would be much more careful about extending credit to the companies with which we are trying to deal. They would recognise the additional danger that those companies were trading on depositors' money which, in the event of the company going bankrupt, would not be available to them. Another advantage in such a provision is that it would impose an additional disability on some of the companies which operate in that way now. The new clause will benefit everyone, including trade creditors and deposit creditors.

Mr. Fletcher: In Committee, I said that I would give serious thought to the problem of consumer creditors and pre-payments; and this I have done. We found in Committee that the well-intentioned proposals by hon. Members on the creation of preferential and even pre-preferential status for such creditors and the imposition of special regulations on traders were impracticable. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) referred to the Channel 4 file, which I saw the other day. It was not any larger than some of the files on this matter that we have seen in the Department. I make it clear that we are aware of the size of the problem. The difficulty, as with many aspects of this subject, is how to deal with it.

My hon. Friend said something about a small measure of protection, but the measures of protection that I have considered are by no means small. They seem to be rather complex and require some kind of trust fund, or a system such as that suggested by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) in his new clause. However, it would appear that neither system would be foolproof. The very persons and types of business men and companies that we are most anxious to catch in this respect are the ones most likely to escape from any of the suggestions that I have heard before and that I have heard again today.

I say that with regret because I should very much like to find a system that would be effective in curtailing this problem. Obviously, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East said, the measures already in the Bill will be helpful. Hon. Members will know that the Insolvency Law Review Committee considered the problems, and in particular the proposal that statutory arrangements should be made to require companies that hold consumers' pre-payments and trust accounts. The review committee concluded that such creditors should not receive preferential treatment and that the trust account proposal is impracticable. That is the view that the Government still hold.

The House may know that pre-payment was the subject of a discussion paper published by the Director General of Fair Trading in October 1984. Although he disagreed with

[Mr. Fletcher]

both the Cork Committee and the Government about the giving of some preferential status to pre-payment creditors, he concluded that the best prospects for the protection of consumers without involving a complicated and far from foolproof system, lies with voluntary schemes designed to cover particular problem areas. I and, I am sure, other hon. Members will be interested in the outcome of the Office of Fair Trading's discussions on this subject. However, I am afraid that I cannot accept the new clauses, partly because I do not believe that they would have the effect for which they hope.

Mr. Hanley: In paragraph 1075 of the report on Insolvency Law and Practice, the review committee says:

"Accordingly, we do not propose any amendment in principle of the existing law in this field, but we consider that the new Insolvency Act should contain general provisions, applicable to companies and individuals alike".

Mr. Fletcher: That comment does not differ from my view. The Bill will allow opportunities for consumer creditors to be better placed in a liquidation than at present as well as providing for trade creditors. I have not seen any proposals for preferential or pre-preferential treatment that I consider workable.

Mr. Norris: Earlier, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) rejected the idea of a preference arrangement for deposit creditors because that muddied the waters more than it cleared them, which is a fair thing to say. In Committee, I was encouraged by the undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Minister to look again at this matter. I am sure that he appreciates that this is of great concern to a great many people. We should try to address ourselves to these issues. I readily admit that the wording suggested to me by those who have been kind enough to advise me may be less than perfect, and that the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Dagenham may be equally imperfect. However, I am saddened that my hon. Friend should reject the notion that anything can be done by a detailed critique of my amendment.

Mr. Gould: Does the hon. Gentleman share my disappointment that the Minister appears to recognise that there is a problem which needs a solution, does not find that our suggestions meet the bill, but produces no suggestions of his own?

Mr. Norris: It is possibly more appropriate that that comment comes from the hon. Gentleman than from me. I shall have to live beyond this night with the consequences of telling my hon. Friend the Minister how disappointed I am with his efforts. He told me that the large fat file which I shall shortly send him will accompany many large fat files which he already has. My hon. Friend will continue to receive such files and to have to respond on television, the radio and elsewhere to the outrage expressed by ordinary people who recognise this genuine problem, and who ask why, if he accepts that a problem exists and something can be done about it, he does not do something about it.

Even at this late stage, I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind the significance of this small provision in the 200-clause Bill to many people. However, I recognise the potential imperfection in my new clause, and I beg to seek leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

UNQUALIFIED PERSONS NOT TO ACT AS INSOLVENCY PRACTITIONERS

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 17 at end insert

'or as supervisor of a composition or scheme approved by it under Chapter II or Part II of this Act'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 2 to 4.

Mr. Fletcher: These are technical amendments aimed at providing both consistency with existing provisions and clarity of wording generally.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made:

No. 2, in page 2, line 4 leave out 'in Scotland'.

No. 3, in page 2, line 6 after 'under', insert 'a deed which is'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 15 leave out from beginning to 'to' in line 17 and insert 'References in this section to an individual include, except in so far as the context otherwise requires, references to a partnership and'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 2

QUALIFICATION OF INSOLVENCY PRACTITIONERS

Amendments made:

No. 5, in page 2, line 32 leave out from beginning to end of line 5 on page 3 and insert—

'(2) A person is not qualified to act as an insolvency practitioner at any time unless, at that time—

(a) he is authorised to act as an insolvency practitioner by virtue of section *[Authorisation of members of recognised professional bodies]* below; or

(b) he holds an authorisation granted under section *[Grant, refusal and withdrawal of authorisation]* below.

(3) A person is not qualified to act as an insolvency practitioner in relation to another person at any time unless—

(a) there is in force at that time security or, in Scotland, caution for the proper performance of his functions; and

(b) that security or caution meets the prescribed requirements with respect to his so acting in relation to that other person.

(4) A person is not qualified to act as an insolvency practitioner at any time if, at that time—

(a) he has been adjudged bankrupt or sequestration of his estate has been awarded and (in either case) he has not been discharged;'.

No. 6, in page 3, line 8 at end insert

'or

(c) he is a patient within the meaning of Part VII of the Mental Health Act 1983 or section 125(1) of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984.'.

No. 7, in page 3, line 9, leave out Clause 3.

No. 8, in page 3, line 19, leave out Clause 4.

No. 9, in page 4, line 17, leave out Clause 5.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 6

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Amendment made:

No. 10, in page 4, line 25, leave out from 'for' to 'shall' in line 29 and insert

'the purpose of giving effect to this Part.

(1A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above or to any provision of this Part by virtue of which regulations may be made with respect to any matter, regulations under this section may contain—

(a) provision as to the matters to be taken into account in determining whether a person is a fit and proper person to act as an insolvency practitioner;

(b) provision prohibiting a person from acting as an insolvency practitioner in prescribed cases, being cases in which a conflict of interest will or may arise;

(c) provision imposing requirements with respect to—

(i) the preparation and keeping by a person who acts as an insolvency practitioner of prescribed books, accounts and other records; and

(ii) the production of those books, accounts and records to prescribed persons;

(d) provision conferring power on prescribed persons—

(i) to require any person who acts or has acted as an insolvency practitioner to answer any inquiry in relation to a case in which he is so acting or has so acted; and

(ii) to apply to a court to examine such a person or any other person on oath concerning such a case;

(e) provision making non-compliance with any of the regulations a criminal offence; and

(f) such incidental, supplemental and transitional provisions as may appear to the Secretary of State necessary or expedient.

(2) Any power conferred by this Part to make regulations, rules or orders'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 7

DUTY OF COURT TO DISQUALIFY UNFIT DIRECTORS OF INSOLVENT COMPANIES

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 5, line 20, leave out subsection (3).

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 12, amendment No. 259, in page 5, leave out from line 33 to line 12 on page 6 and insert—

'(5) It shall be the duty—

(a) of the liquidator in the case of a company which is being wound up voluntarily; or

(b) of the official receiver in the case of a company which is being wound up in the court in England and Wales,

to provide a written report to the Secretary of State to indicate whether or not it appears that the conduct of each person who was a director of that company at any time during the two years before liquidation has made him unfit to be concerned in management of a company.',

and Government amendments Nos. 13, 14, 183, 184, 261, 262 and 199.

Mr. Fletcher: These amendments fulfil undertakings that I gave in Committee. Amendment No. 12 answers the concern expressed on behalf of directors, that they should not have the threat of being made subject to a disqualification order hanging over their heads indefinitely by preventing an application for a disqualification order being made more than two years after the company has become insoolvent — as defined by subsection (7) — unless the court gives leave for an application to be made out of time.

Amendment No. 199 to schedule 5 will enable rules to be prescribed regarding the reports required to be made about directors' conduct to the Secretary of State by the official receiver, the voluntary liquidator, the administrator or the administrative receiver. The rules will prescribe when he has to report, on which directors he has to report, and the form in which the report must be made. I hope that having explained the purpose of amendment No. 199 the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will not need to move amendment No. 259, which duplicates in part what amendment No. 199 will achieve.

I know the particular point that the hon. Gentleman will have in mind. It is that there should be an obligation on the liquidator and others to make the report. We are doing that in the rules because of the other considerations that are attached.

10.15 pm

In Committee concern was expressed by practitioners, and those speaking on behalf of creditors, particularly prepayment creditors, that the court should be required to have regard to the extent of a person's involvement in other insolvencies and also whether he was in any way responsible for the company's failure to meet its obligations to customers who had paid in advance for goods or services. That point was stressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). We have therefore added two items to the schedule of matters that the court must take into consideration when determining whether a person's conduct makes him unfit to be a director of a company.

Amendment No. 185, which introduces paragraph 5A to schedule 2, will require the court to take into consideration the extent of a person's responsibility for the cause of any company of which he was a director becoming insolvent. Paragraph 5B of schedule 2 will require the court to take into consideration the extent of the director's responsibility for any failure on the part of the company to supply any goods or services which had been paid for in advance.

Finally, amendments Nos. 184, 261 and 262 are necessary to allow the schedule of matters that the court has to take into consideration when determining the unfitness of directors to be divided into those matters which are applicable in all cases where an application is made under clause 7 or clause 8 of the Bill and, in part II, those matters which, because of their nature, are applicable only when the company has become insolvent. An opportunity has been taken at the same time to divide further paragraph *(b)* of part II of the schedule to highlight a director's responsibility to ensure that not only he but his fellow directors comply with the requirements of clause 77 in respect of meetings of creditors in a voluntary winding up.

Mr. Gould: The Minister will recall that in the Committee discussion, which was substantial, great importance was attached by many hon. Members to the obligation being placed on the liquidator or the official receiver to make a report in each case on the conduct of the directors. The Minister will recall also that he was persuaded by that argument. I listened carefully to what he said. For the sake of my peace of mind and that of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who perhaps did not hear him, I ask him to give an assurance and make it perfectly clear that by virtue of amendment No. 199 and therefore the addition of that provision to the schedule, rules will be made to provide for the obligation resting on the liquidator and the official receiver.

Mr. Fletcher: I cannot give that assurance, but I shall explain the matter a little more. It was my desire to make

[Mr. Fletcher]

the amendment on the face of the Bill rather than in the rules. As recently as yesterday afternoon, I spent a considerable amount of time on the matter.

Clause 7(5) requires the liquidator to report forthwith. When the liquidator has a positive report to make, we do not wish him to delay. We are not saying when he should do so, but we want it to be forthwith. When we consider two other aspects of timing and the fact that the liquidator has a duty to report in every case, it is better with regard to the form of the report and the timing to put that into the rules.

Let me explain briefly. There is a two-year limit on the amount of time that the liquidator has to make his report to the Secretary of State, so that the director of a company that has become insolvent will know that after two years, except by leave of the court, there is no likelihood of a disqualification order being made against him. At the same time, to minimise the number of times when the Secretary of State would be required to seek leave of the court, in the rules we are asking liquidators to give us their report in each case within 12 months. Those two timings, the laying down of the form in which we wish the reports to be made to the Secretary of State, and the provisions on the face of the Bill, with the need to report forthwith where there is a case for disqualification, require the amendment to make it clear that the provisions will be in the rules and not on the face of the Bill.

Mr. Norris: I am sure the Minister will be able to satisfy my concern in relation to this new apparent undertaking, just as he was able to satisfy the concern of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I took the matter of automatic reporting seriously. Without restating all the arguments made on Report, it is clear that automatic reporting does a lot more than merely fill up a lot of files at a Department of Trade and Industry. If that were its only purpose I would be the last to support it, but there is a significant purpose. Even a collection of mill reports in relation to one person might individually be of no substance, but collectively would be valuable information in relation to the other sections of the Bill. I regard automatic reporting as one of the key undertakings given by my right hon. Friend at Committee stage, and in going through these amendments I looked for it in vain. I am told by my hon. Friend that the form in which it appears in Government amendment No. 199 is as an addition to schedule 5. Schedule 5(21A) would then say,

"(including, in particular, requirements with respect to the making of periodic returns).".

I understand that the expression "including in particular" by definition implies that other returns may be made. But this is an important return and is certainly not a periodic return, but one made specifically in the circumstances outlined in the amendment proposed not only by Opposition Members but by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and by me. We want to make it quite clear in the Bill that a liquidator or an official receiver has

"to provide a written report to the Secretary of State to indicate whether or not it appears that the conduct of each person.".

and so on. That is a specific and important requirement and I am less than happy that it is deemed to be implicit in a section of an amendment to schedule 5 dealing with the making of periodic returns. If my hon. Friend can assure me that the point has been accepted in its entirety, I am sure that hon. Members on both sides will not wish to detain the House longer. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend would make that entirely clear, that this has nothing to do or cannot be confused with any other periodic returns that an liquidator or official receiver may be required to make.

Mr. Gould: As the author of the original amendment and of the subsequent laying down of this amendment, the point which worries me is that when I looked at Government amendment No. 199 I had not realised it referred back to section 7(5). What worries me is the use of the word periodic in Government amendment No. 199. Under the rules the cut back is from two years to one year. Is the Minister saying that within one year there must be a report from the liquidator? He shakes his head; therefore it must be that within two years that there must be a report from the liquidator. That does not solve the problem about which we sought and received an absolute undertaking in Committee. It now becomes a matter of honour. We had an undertaking and the system works on undertakings. The Minister spoke to me privately and I accepted what he said.

Mr. Fletcher: I am aware of the commitment made in Committee, and I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend said about the importance of this return. I have already confessed to the House that I am rather disappointed we are dealing with the matter in the rules, and I took some satisfying that we had to deal with it in that way and not on the face of the Bill. Government amendment No. 199 enables the Secretary of State to make detailed provisions about how insolvency practitioners should carry out their functions when reporting under clause 7(5). In particular we propose to set up a system for returns. At determined intervals practitioners will be required to submit a report on what they have done and what evidence of unfitness has been discovered about the directors of the company concerned during the period reported on. The Secretary of State will thus receive reports on all directors who have been involved in insolvency proceedings. The reports will form part of the data base which will gradually be built on all directors who have been involved in insolvency proceedings. That was one of the key matters that we considered in committee.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful for the Minister's intervention. As he said, in Committee it became a matter that was fundamental to the Committee, in the collective view of the Committee. It was the general consensus that a rogue or bad director needed to be located and identified as soon as possible so that the various other sanctions against rogue directors could be brought speedily to bear.

At the same time, it is equally right that directors who have no faults—who through adverse trading conditions, the collapse of the market or the collapse of a supplier — can find themselves directors of an insolvent company and should know as soon as possible that their explanation of why the company crashed has been accepted and that their names are clear. In humanitarian terms that is equally important—hence the insistence of hon. Members that brought the matter home in the amendment and in the undertaking.

If I understand the Minister correctly, amendment No. 199 now means that there will be periodic returns throughout the course of the liquidation, and in the questionnaires which the insolvency practitioners have to

complete, whether they have been liquidators or receivers, there will be this definitive question about the directors and in each of the returns submitted during the course of the liquidation within the two-year period the same question will be repeated. It must be remembered that it is sometimes not at the beginning of the liquidation that the fault on the part of a director is found. It may come towards the termination of the liquidation, and the evidence suddenly begins to emerge. If the Minister will reassure the House that these questions which will form the data base of the information available to the Department will be repeated in each return throughout the course of the liquidation, I am sure that many——

Mr. Norris: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern. But was it ever in his mind when he moved amendment No. 22 in Committee that we should be talking about periodic returns? Where does this business of periodic returns come in? We are saying that in the course of a liquidation a liquidator sends a report to the Department of Trade and Industry saying, "I have looked at this chap and he is OK," or "he is not." It was said in Committee—and column 68 of the *Official Report* confirms this—that we were thinking in the vast majority of cases of no more than a nil return. That was the expression used. There is no mention there of a necessity for periodic returns. That is the cause of the concern which the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) is expressing and which is shared by a number of Government supporters.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful for that intervention. The use of the word "periodic" has prompted a certain question in my mind. If these returns are coming in at various times, what happens if in the first return it is said, "Clear," in the second it is said, "Clear," and in the third it is said, "There is less than clarity in the behaviour of the directors"? Where does that put the directors?

10.30 pm

Mr. Fletcher: The use of the word "periodic" has not helped the debate. We are talking about any period up to two years, but I mentioned earlier the time factors in our minds. The word "forthwith" provides immediacy in the Bill and when liquidators are filling in general returns and not making a charge of unfitness, they will be advised by the rules to let us have a report "as soon as possible".

The reason why I mentioned a period of 12 months is that if any action is to be taken on a report there will be a two-year limit on when the Secretary of State can make an application without leave of the court. Therefore, the 12-month and two-year periods should both be prescribed in the rules. However, there should be only one report on the directors in each liquidation, and not a series of reports.

Mr. Bermingham: I suggest that the removal of the word "periodic" might clarify the situation. The rules could show that at a specific date the liquidator has to return a form covering this matter. All of us will then know that what we sought in Committee has been achieved. The word "periodic" is confusing, and if it stays in the Bill all sorts of things will happen and we shall not get the clarity that we seek in ensuring that there will be a return about the conduct of a director in every case.

Mr. Gould: The debate has added to my anxieties. Amendment No. 199 specifies rules that could be made in respect of two types of return—a return under clause 7(5), which is clearly not the sort of return that we are talking about, because it relates to specific circumstances, and a periodic return, which is open to all the objections that hon. Members have spelt out. It is not clear to me what a periodic return is and why we should not simply talk about a return specific to each insolvency.

In any case, I am far from convinced that the Minister was right to be satisfied that there was no better way of handling the issue. I cannot see why it was not possible to provide that, having specified in clause 7(5) certain circumstances in which the liquidator must make a report forthwith, words such as "and in each other case shall make a report within two years on whether the directors involved conducted themselves properly" could not have been added. That would have included in the Bill the principle that we all regard as important and that should be given as much prominence as possible.

Mr. Hanley: Does the hon. Gentleman remember the contribution in Committee of my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) whose experience in insolvency matters was unrivalled? At our second sitting, my hon. Friend said that this issue was one of the most important practical matters to have been brought before the Committee up to that stage. My hon. Friend said that, although 95 to 98 per cent. of reports might have nothing to add, that was the basis of information that, after a repetition of "nothing to add" forms, might provide evidence of a suspicion of wrong behaviour. I am sure that if my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth were present today he would make as passionate a speech as he made in Committee. Unfortunately, he is absent on parliamentary business.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is right. We all saw the importance of a mechanism by which a pattern of conduct could be identified and isolated.

The Minister would help the House if he expressed his understanding of our anxieties. I hope that the Minister will consider whether it is possible to put the provision in the Bill. I am confident that it is possible.

Mr. Fletcher: We agree that the liquidator shall report "forthwith". A report by the liquidator will be made in respect of every liquidation about the fitness of the directors. Part of our scheme is to keep on the database a record of those liquidators who make no returns. That is just a little help, but it might enable the Department over a period to say to a professional body that it is odd that Mr. X has been involved in 29 liquidations in the past 10 years but that no returns have been made. I know that the matter is not as simple as that, but since we plan a database that seems worthwhile.

I explain so that the House may understand that our intentions are more than honourable; they are practical. I spent some time considering whether it was possible to put this in the Bill, but for various reasons we decided to deal with the matter through the rules.

Mr. Norris: I am reassured by the spirited way in which my hon. Friend said that he intended to do what he said he would do, but I am concerned about the way in which he professes to have achieved that. I located amendment No. 259 in a long list, but I did not appreciate the true significance of amendment No. 199.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make another speech.

Mr. Norris: I stand corrected, but I want to ask the Minister a specific question. Clause 7(5) states that if the conditions are satisfied, the liquidator shall make a report. The point about clause 7 is that the liquidator shall have to take a qualitative decision. The Committee took exception to that and surely it must be corrected. Amendment No. 199 does not do that.

Mr. Fletcher: I am not sure that I understand my hon. Friend. Clause 7(5) makes it clear that the liquidator shall forthwith report when he believes that a disqualification application shall be made. That is clear. The amendment requires the liquidator to make a report in all cases.

Mr. Gould: If a liquidator refuses to make a report, how will the Minister persuade him that he has a statutory obligation to make a report? Perhaps that is what the word "periodic" means. If so, it is an ill-chosen word.

None of us has any objection to making additional provision in the rules about keeping a data record of liquidators' actions. That does not preclude the Minister from putting the basic principle in clause 7.

Mr. Millan: The use of the expression "periodic returns" is causing difficulty, especially as clause 7 refers to individual reports and not "periodic" returns. There is a limit to what we can do at this late stage of the legislation. It might help us if the Under-Secretary of State said that it would be possible to amend amendment No. 199 in the other place to take care of some of these matters. It would be helpful if he said "I shall look again at amendment No. 199. Perhaps we have not got it right. It is misleading or confusing". As I did not have the benefit of hearing the Committee's discussions, I think that that would help to clear matters up, to some extent at least.

Mr. Bermingham: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As I understand it, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) was intervening during the speech of the Under-Secretary of State. An hon. Member cannot intervene on an intervention. I thought that the Under-Secretary of State had not finished speaking.

Mr. Millan: The Under-Secretary of State has been up and down several times. I had not been on my feet until 30 seconds ago. I am not intervening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As I understand it, the Under-Secretary of State was making his speech and had not finished, and the right hon. Member for Govan was intervening.

Mr. Millan: That was not my understanding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I do not think that it was the understanding of the Under-Secretary of State either. If my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) will simply put his case to me, I shall resume my seat in a few seconds.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) agree that the simplest solution would be to take out the words "periodic return" and insert the word "report"?

Mr. Millan: It would be. I suggested that the Under-Secretary of State might consider whether amendment No. 199 could be amended in the other place so that the wording is made clearer. If the hon. Gentleman does so, that might resolve some of our difficulties.

Mr. Fletcher: I do not think that there is anything wrong with amendment No. 199, but I shall certainly look at it again. If it needs to be amended, we shall do so in the other place, having described what we want to achieve.

On the more substantial point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) via the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), concern has been expressed about the power of the Secretary of State to ensure that the liquidator carries out this duty. That is provided for in clause 7(6).

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 12, in page 5, line 32, at end insert—

'(4A) Except with the leave of the court, an application for the making under this section of a disqualification order against any person shall not be made after the end of the period of two years beginning with the day on which the company of which that person is or has been a director became insolvent.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Insolvency Bill *[Lords]*

Clause 9

MATTERS FOR DETERMINING UNFITNESS OF DIRECTORS

Amendments made: No. 13, in page 7, line 31, leave out

'to the matters mentioned in Schedule 2 to this Act' and insert —

'*(a)* to the matters mentioned in Part I of Schedule 2 to this Act; and

(b) where the company has become insolvent, to the matters mentioned in Part II of that Schedule.'

No. 14, in page 7, line 35, after first 'section' insert 'and Schedule 2 to this Act'. *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 12

PERSONAL LIABILITY OF PERSONS ACTING WHILE DISQUALIFIED

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 9, line 18, after 'order', insert

'of section *[Restriction on use of company names]* above'

No. 16, in page 9, line 26, after 'order', insert

', to be in contravention in relation to that company of section *[Restriction on use of company names]* above'.

No. 17, in page 10, line 9, after 'order', insert

', to be in contravention in relation to that company of section *[Restriction on use of company names]* above'. *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 21

POWER TO MAKE ORDER

Amendments made: No. 18, in page 16, line 33, leave out 'or'.

No. 19, in page 16, line 35, at end insert

'or

(c) where the company is a recognised bank or licensed institution within the meaning of the Banking Act 1979 or an institution to which sections 16 and 18 of that Act apply, as if it were a licensed institution'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Mr. Gould: I beg to move amendment No. 271, in page 17, line 6, at end insert—

'*(e)* to secure greater protection for the jobs of those employed by the company than would be effected on a winding up.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we shall take the following:

Amendment 272: in clause 34, page 25, line 41, after 'creditors', insert

'and trade union and other representatives of the company's employees'.

Amendment 273, in page 26, line 2, after 'creditors', insert

'and trade union and other representatives of the company's employees'.

Amendment 274, in clause 35, page 26, line 15, leave out 'of creditors'.

Amendment 275, in clause 36, page 27, line 9, after 'creditors', insert

'and trade union and other representatives of the company's employees'.

Amendment 276, in page 27, line 13, after 'creditors', insert

'and trade union and other representatives of the company's employees'.

Amendment 277, in page 27, line 24, leave out 'of creditors'.

Amendment 278, in clause 37, in page 27, line 35, leave out 'of creditors'.

Amendment 279, in clause 38, page 28, line 4, after 'creditors', insert 'or employee'.

Amendment 280, in page 28, line 9, after 'creditors', insert 'or employees'.

Amendment 281, in page 28, line 10, after 'creditors', insert 'or employees'.

Amendment 282, in page 28, line 36, after 'creditors', insert 'or employees'.

Mr. Gould: We considered this group of amendments in Committee, and the Under-Secretary of State expressed some warmth about them. He undertook to consider them in a general sense. Predictably, he has not been able to accept the amendments, which were designed to impose upon the adminstrator the duty to pay some attention to the employment prospects of the work force in the company for which he was acting as liquidator. It imposed on him the duty to consult the work force at a number of stages during the carrying out of his functions as administrator.

The fact that the Under-Secretary of State has not been able to accept the thrust of the amendments that we are left in the familiar position where the potential failure of a company is seen almost exclusively — in my view, wrongly — as a balance to be struck between the interests of the directors and the creditors. The employees, whose livelihood are most likely to be directly at stake, are regarded as a side issue and not a central matter to be taken into account by those responsible for the company's future. Their jobs are regarded as of very little value compared with the debts owed to creditors and the future of the company. The paradox is that the administration procedure is designed to maximise the chances of survival of the company. In that undertaking there can be no more important body of people than the work force. Its co-operation is essential. It needs to be taken into the confidence of the administrator at the earliest possible moment and to be kept in his confidence throughout.

The Opposition regret that, although he expressed general sympathy, the Under-Secretary of State found it impossible to express it directly in the Bill. I do not intend to press this amendment to a Division, but many people outside the House will take this failure to recognise the importance of the work force as another indication that in the end the Government do not concern themselves to much with the jobs of ordinary people and that they are quite content to leave this area of the law as a battleground between the directors of companies and those who in many cases are trade creditors, sight being lost of the interests of the work force.

10.45 pm

Mr. Fletcher: I sympathise with the spirit of the amendments. I made that clear in Committee,. I can envisage obvious political attractions in flagging up the requirement that the administrator should consult the work force. However, having considered this matter in the cold light of the Department as distinct from the warmth of the Committee it does not appear to be very helpful. Amendment No. 271 could be harmful. It could introduce a potential conflict between the purposes for which adminstrators are to be appointed.

There are two fundamental issues. First, the new administration procedure is intended to promote the

[Mr. Fletcher]

survival of companies as going concerns. Secondly, it is intended to secure the preservation of jobs. The purpose of amendment No. 271 is therefore implicit in all of the existing purposes for which administrators may be appointed. As for the remaining 11 amendments, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) knows that my view is that no administration will be successful unless the administrator enjoys the support of the employees. To achieve this support he must consult them and keep them informed. There may be cases where the employees of a company will be creditors; they will then have the rights of creditors in terms of formal consultations with the administrator.

The central point that I wish to underline is that the success of the procedure is the best safeguard for employees' jobs and that, attractive though the amendments of the hon. Member for Dagenham are, they would not improve that safeguard. I cannot therefore agree to the inclusion of something which, although it might appear to be attractive politically, would not serve a real purpose or have any real effect.

Mr. Bermingham: Once again the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has proved that we were right. He warned us in Committee that we should not be too nice to him because it would harm his political career. Every time that we did our best to educate him he went back to his Department, of which we were highly critical. It poured cold water on this education and destroyed everything. The only thing to do is to move the Under-Secretary of State and to ignore the Department.

We are saying in the amendment that if there is any chance of saving a business the people we need to help us most are the employees; so why not put it on the face of the Bill? In Committee the Under-Secretary of State said that in theory it was a good and attractive idea and that he liked it. But what do we find when he returns to the Floor of the House? We find that the gremlins in the Department have got at him again. There seems to be an overwhelming objection on its part to anything sensible, humane and decent being put on the face of the Bill.

I said earlier that it is over 100 years since we had a Bill on insolvency. Joseph Chamberlain introduced the last one. It will be another 100 years before we have the next one. I fear that the gremlins in the Department in 100 years' time will again wreck the face of the Bill. We should be showing that it is the purpose of the insolvency law to save employment where we can, and that we think that the work force is important. That is not too much to ask.

The Minister says that it would be cosmetic and pretty. I say that it would be positive and attractive to the work force. It would show that this House believes that the people who work in industry are important, that their rights matter, that they will be protected, and that they will be given the courtesy of consultation. To achieve that, the Minister has only to bow gracefully to us—because he is at present some distance from the gremlins—in the warmth of this Chamber and accept the amendment. Then we can all go home thinking that he has done a fine job and finally overcome his own gremlins.

Mr. Gould: In the conviction that the arguments, if not the votes or the gremlins, are on our side, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 22

APPLICATION FOR ORDER

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move amendment No. 20, in page 17, line 28, leave out 'charge or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 23, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 35, 263, 37, 39 to 41, 50 to 56, 78, 102, 109, 115 to 117, 162, 163 and 167.

Mr. Fletcher: The 29 amendments in the group are drafting amendments which are designed to establish a single definition of what is meant by the term "security" in the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move amendment No. 21, in page 17, line 31, leave out 'or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 22, 27, 28, 31, 34, 38, 42 to 44, 46, 47, 111 and 112.

Mr. Fletcher: The purpose of this group of 14 amendments is to adapt the provisions of the Bill relating to the administrative procedure so that wherever possible they are capable of operating in relation to Scotland without separate and distinct provisions having to be made.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 22, in page 17, line 32, after 'below', insert—

'or would be challengeable under section 615A or 615B of the 1985 Act or under any rule of law in Scotland.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 23

EFFECT OF APPLICATION

Amendments made: No. 23, in page 18, line 6, leave out 'charge on or'.

No. 24, in page 18, line 37, leave out 'shall be construed as references to diligence' and insert

'being commenced or continued shall include references to diligence being carried out or having effect and references to distress being levied shall be construed as references to poinding being carried out.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 24

NOTIFICATION OF ORDER

Amendments made: No. 25, in page 19, line 10, after 'no', insert 'other'.

No. 26, in page 19, line 10, leave out 'charge on or'.

No. 27, in page 19, line 31, leave out 'a charge on' and insert

'charged on and paid out of'.

No. 28, in page 19, line 32, leave out ' and shall have priority over any charges or' and insert

'in priority to any'.

No. 29, in page 19, line 33, leave out 'to which section 28(1) below then applies' and insert

'held by the person by or on whose behalf he was appointed'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 28

POWER TO DEAL WITH CHARGED PROPERTY ETC.

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 21, line 3, leave 'charge or'.

No. 31, in page 21, leave out lines 5 to 8 and insert 'security'.

No. 32, in page 21, line 12, leave out 'charge or'

No. 33, in page 21, line 19, leave out 'charge or'

No. 34, in page 21, line 23, leave out

'charge or security held by a person who'

and insert

'security held by a person who (whether by virtue of the security or otherwise) appointed or'

No. 35, in page 21, line 26, leave out

'charge or security to which a charge or'

and insert 'security to which a'.

No. 263, in page 21, line 28, leave out 'charge or security on' and insert

'security which, as created, was a security over'

No. 37, in page 21, line 29, leave out 'charge or'.

No. 38, in page 21, line 30, at end insert—

'(3A) Where any property is disposed of under subsection (1) above, the security shall have effect in relation to any property of the company which represents the property disposed of as if

(a) the security had been created by the company as a floating charge over the property, and

(b) any condition precedent to the exercise of the right to appoint a receiver of the property by virtue of the security were satisfied.'

No. 39, in page 21, line 40, leave out 'charge or'.

No. 40, in page 21, line 43, leave out 'charges or'.

No. 41, in page 22, line 2, leave out 'charges or'.

No. 42, in page 22, line 10, at end insert—

'(7A) Where any property is disposed of under this section in its application to Scotland, the administrator shall grant to the disponee an appropriate document of transfer or conveyance of the property, and—

(a) that document, or

(b) where any recording, intimation or registration of that document is a legal requirement for completion of title to the property, that recording, intimation or registration,

has the effect of disencumbering the property of or, as the case may be, freeing the property from the security.' — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 31

VACATION OF OFFICE AND RELEASE

Amendments made: No. 43, in page 23, line 26, leave out 'a charge on' and insert

'charged on and paid out of'.

No. 44, in page 23, line 28, leave out

'and shall have priority over any charge or'

and insert 'in priority to any'.

No. 45, in page 23, line 31, leave out from 'incurred' to 'functions' in line 32 and insert

'while he was administrator under contracts entered into or contracts of employment adopted by him or a predecessor of his in the carrying out of his or the predecessor's'.

No. 46, in page 23, line 33, leave out 'a charge on' and insert

'charged on and paid out of'.

No. 47, in page 23, line 34, leave out

'and shall have priority over'

and insert 'in priority to'.

No. 48, in page 23, line 35, at end insert

'; and for the purposes of paragraph *(b)* above the administrator is not to be taken to have adopted a contract of employment by reason of anything done or omitted to be done within fourteen days after his appointment.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 39

PRELIMINARY

Amendment made: No. 49, in page 29, line 18, leave out from first 'a' to 'or' in line 19 and insert

'charge which, as created, was a floating charge, or by such a charge and one or more other securities' — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 43

POWER TO DISPOSE OF CHARGED PROPERTY ETC.

Amendments made: No. 50, in page 30, line 28, leave out 'charge or'.

No. 51, in page 30, line 33, leave out 'charge or'.

No. 52, in page 30, line 35, leave out 'charge or'.

No. 53, in page 30, line 37, leave out

'charge or security to which a charge or'

and insert 'security to which a'.

No. 54, in page 31, line 4, leave out 'charge or'.

No. 55, in page 31, line 6, leave out 'charges or'.

No. 56, in page 31, line 10, leave out 'charges or'.

[Mr. Fletcher.]

Clause 44

AGENCY AND LIABILITY FOR CONTRACTS

Amendments made: No. 57, in page 31, line 28, leave out from beginning to

'and' in line 30 and insert 'by him in the carrying out of his functions (except in so far as the contract otherwise provides) and on any contract of employment adopted by him in the carrying out of those functions.'.

No. 58, in page 31, line 32, at end insert

'; and for the purposes of paragraph *(b)* above the administrative receiver is not to be taken to have adopted a contract of employment by reason of anything done or omitted to be done within fourteen days after his appointment.'.

No. 59, in page 31, line 33, leave out subsections (2) and (3) and insert—

'(2) This section does not limit any right to indemnity which the administrative receiver would have apart from it, nor limit his liability on contracts entered or adopted without authority, nor confer any right to indemnity in respect of that liability.'. —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 45

VACATION OF OFFICE

Amendments made: No. 60, in page 32, line 13, leave out 'a charge on' and insert 'charged on and paid out of'.

No. 61, in page 32, line 14, leave out 'and shall have priority over any charge or' and insert 'in priority to any'.

No. 62, in page 32, line 15, leave out

'to which section 43(2) above then applies'

and insert

'held by the person by or on whose behalf he was appointed'. —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 51

POWERS OF RECEIVER

Amendments made: No. 264, in page 36, line 32, at end insert—

'*(aa)* in paragraph *(c)* of subsection (1), after the word "to" there shall be inserted the words "raise or".'

No. 265, in page 36, line 33, leave out 'subsection (1)' and insert 'that subsection'.

No. 64, in page 37, line 18, at end insert—

[Mr. Fletcher]

'*(ee)* after paragraph *(r)* there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"*(rr)* power to change the situation of the company's registered office; ";'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 52

VACATION OF APPOINTMENT BY RECEIVER

Amendments made:

No. 65, in page 37, line 24, leave out from beginning to 'for' in line 25 and insert—

'52(1) Section 478 of the 1985 Act (vacation of appointment by receiver) shall be amended as follows.

(2)'.

No. 66, in page 37, line 34, at end insert—

'(3) For subsection (4) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(4) Where at any time a receiver vacates office—

(a) his remuneration and any expenses properly incurred by him; and

(b) any indemnity to which he is entitled out of the property of the company, shall be paid out of the property of the company which is subject to the floating charge and shall have priority as provided for in section 476(1).".

(4) In subsection (5) for the words "7 days" there shall be substituted the words "14 days".'. *[Mr. Fletcher]*

Clause 53

POWERS OF COURT

Amendment made: No. 67, in page 38, line 3, after 'invalid', insert

'(whether by virtue of the invalidity of the instrument or otherwise)'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

CLause 54

INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN BY AND TO RECEIVER

Amendments made: No. 68, in page 38, line 12, leave out '14' and insert '28'.

No. 69, in page 38, leave out lines 16 to 23.

No. 70, in page 38, line 24, leave out 'does' and insert 'and section 482 do'.

No. 71, in page 38, line 28, leave out 'it applies' and insert 'they apply'.

No. 72, in page 38, line 29, leave out 'it has' and insert 'they have'.

No. 73, in page 38, line 30, after 'section', insert 'and section 482'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 55

COMPANY'S STATEMENT OF AFFAIRS

Amendment made: No. 74, in page 39, line 3, leave out from beginning to end of line 4 on page 40 and insert—

'482.—(1) Where a receiver of a company is appointed, the receiver shall forthwith require some or all of the persons mentioned in subsection (3) below to make out and submit to him a statement in the prescribed form as to the affairs of the company.

(2) A statement submitted under this section shall be verified by affidavit by the persons required to submit it and shall show—

(a) particulars of the company's assets, debts and liabilities;

(b) the names and addresses of its creditors;

(c) the securities held by them respectively;

(d) the dates when the securities were respectively given; and

(e) such further or other information as may be prescribed.

(3) The persons referred to in subsection (1) above are—

(a) those who are or have been officers of the company;

(b) those who have taken part in the company's formation at any time within one year before the date of the appointment of the receiver;

(c) those who are in the company's employment, or have been in its employment within that year, and are in the receiver's opinion capable of giving the information required;

(d) those who are or have been within that year officers of or in the employment of a company which is, or within that year was, an officer of the company;

and in this subsection "employment" includes employment under a contract for services.

(4) Where any persons are required under this section to submit a statement of affairs to the receiver they shall do so (subject to subsection (5) below) before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the day after that on which the prescribed notice of the requirement is given to them by the receiver.

(5) The receiver, if he thinks fit, may—

(a) at any time release a person from an obligation imposed on him under subsection (1) or (2) above; or

(b) either when giving the notice mentioned in subsection (4) above or subsequently extend the period so mentioned,

and where the receiver has refused to exercise a power conferred by this subsection, the court, if it thinks fit, may exercise it.

(6) If a person without reasonable excuse fails to comply with any obligation imposed under this section, he shall be liable to a fine and, for continued contravention, to a daily default fine.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 56

REPORT BY RECEIVER

Amendments made: No. 75, in page 40, line 16, at end insert

'so far as he is aware of them'.

No 76, in page 41, line 24, leave out '481' and insert '482'.

No. 77, in page 41, line 25, at end insert—

'(5A) Nothing in this section shall be taken as requiring any such report to include any information the disclosure of which would seriously prejudice the carrying out by the receiver of his functions'.

No. 78, in page 41, line 31, leave out 'whose debt is secured on assets' and insert

'who holds in respect of his debt a security over property'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 57

COMMITTEE OF CREDITORS

Amendments made: No. 79, in page 41, line 41, leave out 'at any time' and insert

'on giving not less than 7 days notice'.

No. 80, in page 41, line 42, after first 'it', insert

'at any reasonable time'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 62

FUNCTIONS OF OFFICIAL RECEIVER IN RELATION TO OFFICE OF LIQUIDATOR

Amendment made: No. 81, in page 46, line 2, leave out 'one-half' and insert 'one-quarter'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 63

APPOINTMENT OF LIQUIDATOR IN SCOTLAND.

Amendment made: No. 82, in page 47, line 2, after 'person', insert

'(who may be the person who is the interim liquidator)'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 66

COMMITTEE OF CREDITORS ETC. IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Amendment made: No. 83, in page 48, line 12, at end insert

'; and the liquidator of a company who is not the official receiver shall summon such a meeting if he is requested, in accordance with the rules, to do so by one-tenth, in value, of the company's creditors.'.'—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 69

EARLY DISSOLUTION OF COMPANY IN SCOTLAND

Amendments made: No. 84, in page 51, line 9, leave out from 'dissolved' to end of line 10 and insert

'in accordance with this section.'

No. 85, in page 51, line 13, leave out from 'shall' to end and insert

'forthwith register it and, at the end of the period of three months beginning with the day of its registration, the company shall be dissolved.'.

No. 86, in page 51, line 13, at end insert—

'(3A) The court may, on an application by any person who appears to the court to have an interest, order that the date at which the dissolution of the company is to take effect shall be deferred for such period as the court thinks fit.

(3B) It is the duty of the person on whose application an order is made under subsection (3A) above, within seven days after the making of the order, to deliver to the registrar of companies such a copy of the order as is prescribed.'.

No. 87, in page 51, line 18, at end insert—

'(5) If a person without reasonable excuse fails to deliver a copy as required by subsection (3B) above, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one-fifth of the statutory maximum, and for continued contravention, to a daily default fine not exceeding one-fiftieth of the statutory maximum.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 71

REMOVAL OF LIQUIDATOR AND VACATION OF OFFICE.

Amendments made: No. 88, in page 52, line 16, leave out 'one-half' and insert 'one-quarter'.

No. 89, in page 52, line 28, leave out 'forthwith vacate office' and insert

'vacate office when the dissolution of the company takes effect in accordance with that section'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 72

RELEASE OF LIQUIDATOR

Amendment made: No. 90, in page 54, line 2, at end insert—

'(7) In the application of this section to a case where the order for winding up has been made by the court in Scotland, the references to a determination by the Secretary of State as to the time from which a person who has ceased to be liquidator shall have his release shall be construed as references to such a determination by the Accountant of Court.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 73

DISSOLUTION OF COMPANY

Amendments made: No. 91, in page 54, line 7, leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'subsections (2) and (3A)'.

No. 92, in page 54, line 17, at end insert—

'(3A) Subsection (2) above shall not apply in a case where the winding-up order was made by the court in Scotland, but in such a case the court may, on an application by any person appearing to the court to have an interest, order that the date at which the dissolution of the company is to take effect shall be deferred for such period as the court thinks fit.'.

No. 93, in page 54, line 19, leave out 'or'.

No. 94, in page 54, line 21, after 'determined', insert

'or on whose application an order is made under subsection (3A) above'

No. 95, in page 54, line 22, leave out 'or'.

No. 96, in page 54, line 22, after 'appeal', insert

'or the making of the order'.

No. 97, in page 54, line 23, leave out 'or determination' and insert 'determination or order'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 75

EFFECT OF INSOLVENCY ON MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP

Amendments made: No. 98, in page 56, line 12, leave out from 'the' to 'and' in line 13 and insert

'directors' declaration under section 577 of that Act had not been made'.

No. 99, in page 56, line 18, after 'accordingly,' insert

'the winding up shall become a creditors' voluntary winding up and'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 77

MEETING OF CREDITORS IN CREDITORS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP

Amendment made: No. 100, in page 58, line 3, after 'practitioner' insert

'in relation to the company'—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 79

RELEASE OF LIQUIDATOR IN VOLUNTARY WINDING UP

Amendment made: No. 101, in page 60, line 42, at end insert—

'(2A) In the application of subsection (2) above to the winding up of a company registered in Scotland, the references to a determination by the Secretary of State as to the time from which a person who has ceased to be liquidator shall have his release shall be construed as references to such a determination by the Accountant of Court'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 81

PREFERENTIAL DEBTS

Amendment made: No. 102, in page 61, line 23, leave out 'under (and, in Scotland' and insert 'secured by, or'. —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 86

NAME CHANGES

Amendment made: No. 103, in page 66, line 1, leave out clause 86.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 88

PRELIMINARY

Amendment made: No. 104, in page 67, line 32, at end insert—

'(3) Section 90 below shall apply where a composition or scheme approved by meetings summoned under section 16 above has taken effect as it applies where a company goes into liquidation as if references in that section to the officer holder were references to the supervisor of the composition or scheme.'. —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 90

SUPPLIES BY UTILITIES

Amendments made: No. 105, in page 69, line 2, leave out 'and'.

No. 106, in page 69, line 4, at end insert

'and

(e) the date on which the composition or scheme was approved by the meetings summoned under section 16 above.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 94

TRANSACTIONS AT AN UNDERVALUE AND PREFERENCES (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Amendments made: No. 107, in page 73, leave out lines 13 to 25 and insert—

'(8) Subject to subsection (8A) below, the time at which a company enters into a transaction at an undervalue or gives a preference is a relevant time for the purposes of this section if the transaction is entered into or the preference is given—

(a) in the case of a transaction at an undervalue or of a preference which is given to a person who is connected with the company, at a time in the period of two years ending with the commencement date; or

(b) in the case of a preference which is not such a transaction and is not so given, at a time in the period of six months ending with that date; or

(c) in either case, at a time between the presentation of a petition for the making of an administration order in relation to the company and the making of such an order on that petition.

(8A) Where a company enters into a transaction at an undervalue or gives a preference at a time mentioned in subsection 8*(a)* or *(b)* above, that time shall not be a relevant time for the purposes of this section unless the company—

(a) is unable to pay its debts within the meaning of section 518 of the 1985 Act at that time; or

(b) becomes unable to pay its debts within the meaning of that section in consequence of the transaction or preference;

but the requirements of this subsection shall be presumed to be satisfied, unless the contrary is shown, in relation to any transaction at an undervalue which is entered into by a company with a person who is connected with the company.'

No. 108, in page 73, line 37, leave out from beginning to end of line 3 on page 74.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 95

ORDERS UNDER S. 94

Amendment made: No. 109, in page 74, line 15, leave out 'charge or'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 97

AVOIDANCE OF CERTAIN FLOATING CHARGES

Amendments made: No. 110, in page 76, line 38, leave out from beginning to end of line 16 on page 77 and insert—

'(2) Subject to subsection (3) below, the time at which a floating charge is created by a company is a relevant time for the purposes of this section if the charge is created—

(a) in the case of a charge which is created in favour of a person who is connected with the company, at a time in the period of two years ending with the commencement date;

(b) in the case of a charge which is created in favour of any other person, at a time in the period of twelve months ending with that date; or

(c) in either case, at a time between the presentation of a petition for the making of an adminstration order in relation to the company and the making of such an order on that petition.

(3) Where a company creates a floating charge at a time mentioned in subsection (2)*(b)* above and the person in favour of whom the charge is created is not connected with the company, that time shall not be a relevant time for the purposes of this section unless the company—

(a) is unable to pay its debts within the meaning of section 518 of the 1985 Act at that time; or

(b) becomes unable to pay its debts within the meaning of that section in consequence of the transaction under which the charge is created.

(3A) For the purposes of subsection (2) above the commencement date is—

(a) in a case where this section applies by reason of the making of an administration order, the date of the presentation of the petition on which the order was made; and

(b) in a case where this section applies by reason of a company's going into liquidation the date of the commencement of the winding up.'.

No. 111, in page 77, line 24, leave out subsection (5). —*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 101

CONSTRUCTION OF PART II

Amendments made: No. 266, in page 79, line 15, leave out 'preceding'.

No. 112, in page 79, line 42, at end insert—

'in a case where the whole (or substantially the whole) of the company's property is attached by the floating charge'.

No. 113, in page 80, line 6, at end insert—

'"floating charge" means a charge which, as created, was a floating charge;'.

No. 114, in page 80, line 10, at end insert—

'"office copy" in relation to Scotland, means a copy certified by the clerk of court; '.

No. 115, in page 80, line 28, leave out

'whose debt is charged or secured on assets'

and insert

'who holds in respect of his debt a security over property'.

No. 116, in page 80, line 30, at end insert—

'"security" means—

(a) in relation to England and Wales, any mortgage, charge, lien or other security;

(b) in relation to Scotland, any security (whether heritable or moveable), any floating charge and any right of lien, retention or preference;'.

No. 117, in page 80, line 31, leave out subsection (4).

Clause 113

CREDITOR'S PETITION

Amendment proposed: No. 118, in page 91, line 15, leave out 'them' and insert 'the debts'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall consider Government amendments Nos. 119 to 121.

Mr. Bermingham: Amendment No. 121 would appear to make it impossible to present a bankruptcy petition as long as there is an outstanding application to set aside the statutory demand.

Should there not simply be a power to restrain the presentation of a petition when such an application is considered by the court to be genuine?

Mr. Fletcher: These amendments provide an extra condition before a creditor may present his petition against the debtor so that as well as having to exceed the bankruptcy level the petition may be presented only when the debt or debts are a liquidated sum, the debtor has no reasonable prospect of being able to pay the debt or debts and the court is not dealing with an application to set aside the demand. The last condition will ensure that when a debtor has applied to have a demand set aside—perhaps because the amount of the debt outstanding is being disputed—the creditor may not present a bankruptcy petition.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 119, in page 91, line 18, leave out second 'and '.

No. 120, in page 91, line 19, leave out 'them' and insert 'the debts'.

No. 121, in page 91, line 21, at end insert

'and *(d)* there is no outstanding application to set aside a demand served for the purposes of subsection (3)*(a)* or (4) below in respect of the debt or any of the debts.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 116

PROCEEDINGS ON DEBTOR'S PETITION

Amendments made: No. 122, in page 94, line 10, leave out 'and'.

No. 123, in page 94, line 15, at end insert

'and *(d)* that it would be appropriate to appoint a person to prepare a report under subsection (3) below'.

No. 124, in page 94, line 17, leave out '*(c)*' and insert '*(d)*'.

No. 125, in page 94, line 18, leave out 'may' and insert 'shall'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 121

POWER TO APPOINT INTERIM RECEIVER

Amendments made: No. 126, in page 98, line 3, leave out from 'not' to end of line 7 and insert

'release a bankrupt from any liability in respect of a fine or other penalty imposed for an offence or from any liability under a recognisance except, in the case of a penalty imposed for an offence under any enactment relating to the public revenue or of a recognisance, with the consent of the Treasury.'.

No. 127, in page 98, line 16, at end insert—

'(5A) Discharge from bankruptcy shall not release a bankrupt from such other bankruptcy depts, not being debts provable in his bankruptcy, as are prescribed.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 123

DEFINITION OF BANKRUPT'S ESTATE

11 pm

Mr. Gould: I beg to move amendment No. 283, in page 100, line 3, at end insert—

"*(c)* The bankrupt's only or main residence which is:

(i) a protected tenancy or restricted contract as defined in the Rent Act 1977;

(ii) a protected occupancy as defined in the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976; or

(iii) a secure tenancy as defined in the Housing Act 1980 unless it is a tenancy to which Part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 applies."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 140 to 147.

Mr. Gould: In Committee I mentioned the problem of the family home when the bankrupt—to take the most obvious example — was a council tenant. Under the existing law, the tenancy would vest in the trustee, but for no purpose. The only consequence of that would be that in many cases the bankrupt's family would lose its family home without a corresponding gain to the creditors.

The Minister kindly said that he understood my anxiety and undertook to try to do something about it, and he has tabled amendments Nos. 140 to 147, which are welcome so far as they go. I believe that the Minister has fulfilled his undertaking to try to find a solution to the problem. However, I wonder whether he could be prevailed upon to go a little further. The problem is that in each case the tenancies will still vest in the trustee, although in most cases the tenancy will be of no value.

The trustee or the official receiver may then disclaim the tenancy under clause 154. That will improve the tenant's position, but many tenants will not understand what is going on unless they receive clear notice of the disclaimer. In many cases they will not have proper advice. They may not be able or ready to act within the 14 days that they are given. There is a grave danger that, merely because many of the people about whom we are worried will not have access to proper advice and will be completely confused by being caught up in the proceedings, they will lose their homes for no good reason.

I ask the Minister whether he considered, and, if so, what was the outcome of his consideration, if it were possible to prevent the vesting of the tenancy in some defined circumstances. That would be a neater and more foolproof solution to the problem. That is what amendment No. 283 is designed to achieve.

I am advised that there may be a serious technical problem with the amendment, but if the Minister does not take that seriously I wonder whether he would accept in principle that it may be a better approach and may meet the point that we both want to achieve.

Mr. Fletcher: The difficulty is that if a blanket exemption were provided for all tenancies there would have to be a reserve power to enable trustees to claim tenancies which were of value to the estate.

As a third party—the landlord—would be involved, the claiming would have to be done through the court. That

[Mr. Fletcher]

could involve considerable trouble for the trustee and expense to the estate. We do not have evidence that a substantial number of people suffer hardship under the present system sufficient to justify a radical change such as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) suggests. We must also remember that he said that people involved in this matter may not always have the benefit of proper advice. Bearing that in mind, we cannot avoid the fact that the tenancy may be of value to the estate and that there is a third party involved.

Mr. Gould: I am a little worried about the Minister's point that not many people are involved. We do not know how many people may be involved, but if a technically satisfactory solution could be arrived at, surely it would be worth helping a handful of people. I am not convinced that the numbers are material. The Minister should consider whether it is possible to find a satisfactory solution which would avoid hardship for the families of some bankrupts.

Mr. Fletcher: I agree that there may be some hardship, but there is no evidence available and I do not believe that the fact that there were many such cases was brought out elsewhere. I do not think that there is sufficient evidence to justify the blanket exemption that the hon. Member suggests.

Mr. Gould: The Housing Aid Trust which has advised me on this matter believes that it is serious. I imagine that it would be happy to provide the Minister with the evidence. I wonder whether the Minister would reconsider the matter in the light of any evidence that that organisation provided. On that understanding, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 128, in page 100, line 20 leave out 'is so exercisable'.

No. 129, in page 100, line 21 after '*(a)*', insert 'is so exercisable'.

No. 130, in page 100, line 25 leave out

'exclusively for the benefit of a person other than' and insert 'cannot be so exercised for the benefit of'.

No. 131, in page 100, line 29 leave out from 'time' to

'(whether' in line 30 and insert 'of the transaction or event by virtue of which it is exercisable by that person'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 134

POWER OF CREDITORS TO REQUIRE MEETING TO BE SUMMONED

Amendment made: No. 132, in page 108, line 25 leave out 'one-half' and insert 'one-quarter'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 136

APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE BY SECRETARY OF STATE

Amendment made: No. 133, in page 109, line 33 leave out 'that section' and insert 'this Part'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 137

SPECIAL CASES

Amendment made: No. 134, in page 110, line 26 leave out 'that section' and insert 'this Part'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 138

REMOVAL OF TRUSTEE AND VACATION OF OFFICE

Amendment made: No. 135, in page 111, line 3 leave out 'one-half' and insert 'one-quarter'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 150

ACQUISITION BY TRUSTEE OF CONTROL

Amendment made: No. 136, in page 119, line 14 at end insert

'; but notice of the deemed assignment shall not be required to be given except in so far as it is necessary, in a case where the deemed assignment is from the bankrupt himself, for protecting the priority of the trustee.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 152

CHARGE ON PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE

Amendments made: No. 137, in page 120, line 10 leave out

'the principal residence of the bankrupt or of'

and insert

' a dwelling house which is occupied by the bankrupt or by'.

No. 138, in page 120, line 12 after 'unable' insert 'for the time being'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 153

GENERAL POWERS OF TRUSTEE

Amendment made: No. 139, in page 122, line 23 after 'and', insert

', in respect of the bankrupt's estate, on'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 154

POWER TO DISCLAIM ONEROUS PROPERTY

Amendment made: No. 140, in page 124, line 14 at end insert—

'(7A) Without prejudice to subsection (6) above, the disclaimer of any property in a dwelling house shall not take effect unless a copy of the disclaimer has been served (so far as the trustee is aware of their addresses) on every person in occupation of or claiming a right to occupy the dwelling house and either—

(a) no application under section 155 below is made with respect to that property before the end of the period of fourteen days beginning with the day on which the last notice served under this subsection was served; or

(b) where such an application has been made, the court directs that the disclaimer shall take effect.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 155

POWERS OF COURT IN RESPECT OF DISCLAIMED PROPERTY

Amendments made: No. 141, in page 124, line 35 leave out 'or'.

No. 142, in page 124, line 38 at end insert

'or

(c) where the disclaimed property is property in a dwelling house, any person in occupation of or claiming a right to occupy the dwelling house.'.

No. 143, in page 124, line 44 leave out 'or'.

No. 144, in page 125, line 2 at end insert

'or

(c) where the disclaimed property is property in a dwelling house, any person in occupation of or entitled to occupy the dwelling house.'.

No. 145, in page 125, line 8 leave out 'claiming under the bankrupt as underlessee or mortgagee'.

No. 146, in page 125, line 21 leave out 'claiming under the bankrupt as underlessee or mortgagee'.

No. 147, in page 125, line 32 leave out from 'person' to 'declines' in line 33.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 157

MUTUAL CREDIT AND SET OFF

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move amendment No. 148, in page 126, line 26 at end insert—

'(2A) Sums due from the bankrupt to another party shall not be included in the account taken under subsection (2) above if that other party had notice at the time they became due that a bankruptcy petition relating to the bankrupt was pending.'.

This amendment creates an exception to clause 157(2) of the Bill and re-enacts, in terms appropriately modified to take account of the abolition of acts of bankruptcy by the Bill, the exception currently contained in section 31 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914. It has been represented to us that abuse against the concept of equality of treatment of creditors could occur if the relevant part of section 31 of the 1914 Act is not re-enacted. We agree with this.

Mr. Bermingham: Although I welcome this amendment as a step in the right direction it seems that the gremlins have begun on the right road. Unfortunately, they did not follow the tram tracks to the end of the tunnel. This is exactly the same case with regard to preference. If one knows that someone is going bankrupt, there are ways to gain preference. This good amendment seeks to guard against that happening, but the same thing can happen in company liquidations, deeds of assessment, voluntary arrangements and receiverships. I merely ask the Minister to take on board what I, and practitioners who have advised me, say: having got onto the right tracks, perhaps he would push the train a little further down so as to remove the preference in all other liquidations and receiverships.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 161

FINAL MEETING

Amendment made: No. 149, in page 129, line 41, leave out

'the principal residence of the bankrupt or of'

and insert

'a dwelling house which is occupied by the bankrupt or by'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 164

TRANSACTIONS AT AN UNDERVALUE AND PREFERENCES

Amendments made: No. 150, in page 133, line 25, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

'(7) Subject to subsections (7A) and (9) below, the time at which an individual enters into a transaction at an undervalue or gives a preference is a relevant time for the purposes of this section if the transaction is entered into or the preference is given—

(a) in the case of a transaction at an undervalue, at a time in the period of five years ending with the day of the presentation of the bankruptcy petition on which that individual is adjudged bankrupt;

(b) in the case of a preference which is not a transaction at an undervalue and is given to a person who is an associate of that individual, at a time in the period of two years ending with that day; and

(c) in any other case of a preference which is not a transaction at an undervalue, at a time in the period of six months ending with that day.

(7A) Where an individual enters into a transaction at an undervalue or gives a preference at a time mentioned in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* of subsection (7) above, not being, in the case of a transaction at an undervalue, a time less than two years before the end of the period mentioned in the said paragraph *(a)*, that time shall not be a relevant time for the purposes of this section unless the individual—

(a) is insolvent at that time; or

(b) becomes insolvent in consequence of the transaction or preference;

but the requirements of this subsection shall be presumed to be satisfied, unless the contrary is shown, in relation to any transaction at an undervalue which is entered into by an individual with a person who is an associate of his.'.

No. 151, in page 133, line 43 leave out from 'if' to end of line 12 on page 134, and insert

'—

(a) he is unable to pay his debts as they fall due; or

(b) the value of his assets is less than the amount of his liabilities, taking into account his contingent and prospective liabilities.

(9) A transaction entered into or preference given by a person who is subsequently adjudged bankrupt on a petition under section 112(1)*(d)* above shall be treated as having been entered into or given at a relevant time for the purposes of this section if it was entered into or given at any time on or after the date specified for the purposes of this subsection in the criminal bankruptcy order on which the petition was based.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 169

EFFECT OF BANKRUPTCY ON ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES

Amendments made: No. 152, in page 138, line 7 leave out 'served on' and insert 'given to'.

No. 153, in page 139, line 19 leave out subsection (8) and insert—

'(8) Neither subsection (2) nor subsection (3) above shall apply in relation to any execution against property which has been acquired by or has devolved upon the bankrupt since the commencement of the bankruptcy unless, at the time the execution is issued or before it is completed—

(a) the property has been or is claimed for the bankrupt's estate under section 147 above; and

[Mr. Bermingham]

(b) a copy of the notice given under that section has been or is served on the sheriff or other officer charged with the execution.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 177

FRAUDULENT DISPOSAL ETC. OF PROPERTY

Amendment made: No. 154, in page 145, line 10 after 'causes', insert 'to be made'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 181

GAMBLING

Amendments made: No. 155, in page 147, line 38 leave out from beginning to 'in' in line 43 and insert

'The bankrupt shall be guilty of an offence if he has—

(a)'.

No. 156, in page 148, line 1 leave out from 'speculations' to 'between' in line 3 and insert 'or

(b)'.

No. 157, in page 148, line 5 leave out 'such gambling or' and insert

'gambling or by rash and hazardous'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 182

PENALTIES

Amendment made: No. 158, in page 148, line 19 after '179(1)' insert 'or (3)'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 193

APPEALS ETC. FROM COURTS EXERCISING INSOLVENCY JURISDICTION

Amendment made: No. 159, in page 156, line 21 leave out from second 'Appeal' to end of line 25.

Clause 194

ASSISTANCE FOR OTHER COURTS IN INSOLVENCY MATTERS

No. 160, in page 156, line 31, leave out clause 194.

Clause 202

INTERPRETATION OF PART III

Amendments made: No. 161, in page 160, line 27 at end insert—

'"dwelling house" includes any building or part of a building which is occupied as a dwelling and any yard, garden, garage or outhouse belonging to the dwelling house and occupied with it;'.

No. 162, in page 161, line 15 leave out

'as security for the debt a mortgage, charge or lien on'

and insert

'any security for the debt (whether a mortgage, charge, lien or other security) over'.

No. 163, in page 161, line 23 leave out 'lien' and insert 'security'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 203

TRANSACTIONS DEFRAUDING CREDITORS

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move amendment No. 164, in page 162, line 4 leave out

'that is being wound up'

and insert

'which is being wound up or in relation to which an administration order is in force'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 165 and 166.

Mr. Fletcher: In moving these amendments, I am indebted to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), who moved similar amendments in respect of voluntary arrangements in Committee. This action confirmed the views that had been expressed to us by representatives of the main accounting bodies that a supervisor of a voluntary arrangement, whether individual or corporate, and an administrator should enjoy similar powers to those enjoyed by a trustee or liquidator in attacking transactions which have reduced the value of assets available for creditors and others. The amendments will achieve that aim, and I commend them to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 165, in page 162, line 6, after 'liquidator', insert 'or administrator'.

No. 166, in page 162, line 8, leave out from 'transaction' to end of line 13 and insert—

'*(b)* in a case where a person who is, or is capable of being, prejudiced by the transaction is bound by a composition or scheme approved under Chapter II of Part II or Chapter I of Part III of this Act, by the supervisor of the composition or scheme or by any person who (whether or not so bound) is, or is capable of being, so prejudiced; or

(c) in any other case, by a person who is, or in capable of being, so prejudiced;

and an application made under any of the preceding paragraphs in relation to a transaction shall be treated as made on behalf of every person who is, or is capable of being, prejudiced by the transaction.'.

No. 260, in page 163, line 9, leave out 'individual in question' and insert 'relevant person'.

No. 167, in page 163, line 30, at end insert—

'"security" means any mortgage, charge, lien or other security.'

No. 168, in page 163, line 31, leave out subsection (8).—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 207

AMENDMENTS OF EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION (CONSOLIDATION) ACT 1978

Amendment made: No. 169, in page 167, line 22, after 'under', insert 'Chapter II of Part II or'. — *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 208

AMENDMENTS OF BANKING ACT 1979

Amendments made: No. 170, in page 167, line 24, leave out 'In section 18(1)' and insert

'For subsections (1) and (2) of section 18'.

No. 171, in page 167, line 26, leave out from 'England)' to first 'of' in line 36 and insert

'there shall be substituted the following subsections—

"(1) On a petition presented by the bank by virtue of this section, the court having jurisdiction under the Companies Act 1985 may wind up a recognised bank or licensed institution under that Act if—

(a) the institution is unable to pay its debts within the meaning of section 518 of that Act; or

(b) the court is of the opinion that it is just and equitable that the institution should be wound up;

and for the purposes of such a petition an institution which defaults in an obligation to pay any sum due and payable to a depositor shall be deemed to be unable to pay its debts as mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above.

(2) If a petition is presented by the Bank by virtue of this section for the winding up of a recognised bank or licensed institution which is a partnership (whether limited or not), the court has jurisdiction, and the Companies Act 1985 has effect, as if the institution concerned were an unregistered company within the meaning of Part XXI of that Act."

(1A) For subsection (4) of that section there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(4) In its application to Northern Ireland, this section shall have effect—

(a) with the substitution of a reference to the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 for any reference to the Companies Act 1985;

(b) with the substitution of a reference to section 211 of the said Act of 1960 for the reference to section 518 of the said Act of 1985;

(c) with the substitution of a reference to Part IX of the said Act of 1960 for the reference to Part XXI of the said Act of 1985; and

(d) with the insertion in subsection (2) after the words "(whether limited or not)" of the words "then, notwithstanding section 348(*d*) of the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 (exclusion of partnerships etc. having less than eight members)"."

(2) In subsection (2) of section 19".

No. 172, in page 167, line 40 leave out from second 'any' to end of line 42 and insert

'"provision of Part XVIII to XXI of the Companies Act 1985 or any provision (other than section 93) of Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985; or".

(3) In subsection (8) of that section, for paragraph (*a*) there shall be substituted the following paragraphs—

"

(a) for the reference in subsection (2) to Parts XVIII to XXI of the Companies Act 1985 there shall be substituted a reference to Parts V, VI and IX of the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960;

(aa) for any reference in subsection (5) to section 432 or 442 of the said Act of 1985 there shall be substituted respectively a reference to section 159 or 165A of the said Act of 1960;".'—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 221

CROWN APPLICATION

Amendments made: No 257, in page 175, line 8 after 'under', insert

'Chapter II of Part II or.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 222

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS, TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS, SAVINGS AND REPEALS

Amendment made: No 173, in page 175, line 30 after 'III', insert 'or IV'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Clause 223

SHORT TITLE COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendments made: No 174, in page 176, line 2 at end insert—"( ) section 43;".

No. 175, in page 176, line 6 leave out 'except subsection (8)'.

No 176, in page 176, line 8 leave out '*(f)* sections 209' and insert—

'*(ea)* section 209;

(eb) section *(Disabilities on revocation of administration order against individual)* (2) to (5);

(f) sections 210'

No 177, in page 176 leave out line 14 and insert—

'*(a)* section *[Co-operation between courts exercising jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law]*; '.

No 267, in page 176, line 15 at end insert—

'*(ba)* section *(Amendment of Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976)* ;'.

No 178, in page 176, line 15 at end insert—

'*(bb)* section 208;'.

No 179, in page 176, line 18 after 'and' insert 'Part IV of'.

No 180, in page 176, line 20 leave out 'and the Bankruptcy Act 1883' and insert

'the Bankruptcy Act 1883, the Bankruptcy Act 1914, the Criminal Law Act 1977 and the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 1

TRIBUNAL ESTABLISHED UNDER SECTION 4

Amendment made: No 182, in page 178, line 30 at end insert—

'Supervision by Council of Tribunals

5.—(1) The Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 8(2) (concurrence required for removal of members of certain tribunals), after "6A" there shall be inserted "10A".

(3) In section 13(1) (appeals from certain tribunals), after "10" there shall be inserted "10A".

(4) In Schedule 1 (tribunals under general supervision of Council), after paragraph 10 there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"Insolvency Practitioners

10A. The Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal established under section *(Reference to Tribunal)* of the Insolvency Act 1985."

Parliamentary disqualification

6.—(1) In Part III of Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (disqualifying offices), there shall be inserted at the appropriate place the following entry—

"Any member of the Insolvency Practitioners Tribunal in receipt of remuneration."

(2) A corresponding amendment shall be made in Part III of Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 2

MATTERS FOR DETERMINING UNFITNESS OF DIRECTORS

Amendments made: No. 183, in page 178, line 32, at end insert—

'PART I

MATTERS APPLICABLE IN ALL CASES'.

No. 184, in page 178, line 39, leave out from second 'transaction' to end of line 41 and insert

'liable to be set aside under section 203 of this Act'.

No. 261, in page 179, line 13, leave out

'or section 77 of this Act'.

No. 262, in page 179, line 14, at end insert—

'PART II

MATTERS APPLICABLE WHERE COMPANY HAS BECOME INSOLVENT

5A. The extent of the director's responsibility for the causes of the company becoming insolvent.

5B. The extent of the director's responsibility for any failure by the company to supply any goods or services which have been paid for (in whole or in part).

5C. The extent of the director's responsibility for the company entering into any transaction or giving any preference, being a transaction or preference liable to be set aside under section 94 of this Act or section 522 of the 1985 Act or challengeable under section 615A or 615B of that Act or under any rule of law in Scotland.

5D. The extent of the director's responsibility for any failure by the directors of the company to comply with section 77 of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 4

PREFERENTIAL DEBTS

Mr. Gould: I beg to move, amendment No. 268, in page 181, line 1, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 269, in page 181, line 17, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 285, in page 181, line 27, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 270, in page 181, line 32, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

Government amendment No. 190, in page 183, line 17, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

Mr. Gould: Only an hour ago, although it seems much longer, the Minister was claiming credit for reducing the ambit of Government preference. These amendments give him the opportunity to claim yet more credit, and I hope that he will seize it with alacrity.

More importantly, the amendments seek to achieve what is universally accepted as being a sensible uniformity of provision in this type of taxation. Having reduced the period of VAT preference to six months, a Minister in the other place went on record as saying that the rule should be the same for VAT as for PAYE and national insurance contributions. The Minister will be familiar with the arguments, which we rehearsed at some length in Committee. These amendments offer him another opportunity to carry out that simple principle. Once we have a six-month period for VAT, it is nonsense to have a different period for the other collector taxes.

Mr. Hanley: I remind the hon. Gentleman that this gives my hon. Friend the Minister another chance to agree with the Institue of Chartered Accountants in Scotland.

Mr. Gould: I am not sure that that point has all the force that the hon. Gentleman feels that it should have, given the experience that we all suffered on an earlier amendment, when he used a similar argument, which was brusquely rejected by the Minister. The arguments are familiar, and the Minister's reply may be familiar, but we at least live in hope.

Mr. Millan: I strongly support this series of amendments. It is nonsense that the Government, having conceded the six-month period on VAT, are unwilling to concede it on PAYE. The Minister, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has reminded us, has said that the Government have been generous to make all these concessions, but every concession has been squeezed out of them. They were reluctant to make any concessions on Government preference, but because of the pressure when the Bill was in the other place and in Committee, certain concessions have been made. Similar arguments have been made about the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, which has been going through simultaneously. We welcome the Government concessions on VAT in Committee.

However, the Government's intention was to have VAT and PAYE treated on the same basis—that was how the Bill was drafted, and there is logic in that. There is now no reason why, having conceded the six-month period for VAT, the Government should not make a similar concession on PAYE.

It is not appropriate at this time of night to go over the arguments in detail, or even in principle. There must be a genuine concern among all those who are concerned in these matters, whether professionally or as Members of Parliament, about the position of small creditors in particular. There is a desire to reduce the preference of Crown creditors, in the interests of ordinary creditors who, in many a typical case, will be small firms for which the bankruptcy or liquidation of a debtor can be extremely serious. Even with the six-month period, the Crown will have a considerable preference that is not available to ordinary creditors. It would be logical and in the interests of small creditors if the Government would concede the six-month period for PAYE in the way that they have accepted it for VAT.

Mr. Fletcher: The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) think that the Government have been reluctant in these matters. I confess that we did not table such amendments ourselves. Indeed, that is not likely ever to happen from these Benches on such matters. Nevertheless, I listened to the arguments objectively and constructively, and it was decided that the Government could give way. We have given way to a large extent on Crown preference. The following amendment confirms the extent to which the Government have given way on VAT.

Throughout our proceedings there has been a misunderstanding on pay-as-you-earn. It appeared in the Cork report, in the debates in the other place, and even in Committee and again this evening. The misunderstanding relates to the idea that PAYE is of a term similar to VAT. There is no question that PAYE has a 12-month accounting cycle, and that payments made during the year are paid to account, but the balancing of the book is done at the end of the year.

The hon. Member for Dagenham said that his arguments were familiar and that he expected to hear familiar ones from me. At least in that respect he has not been disappointed.

Mr. Gould: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As all the remaining amendments that are selected are Government amendments, unless any hon. Member wishes to raise any matters, with the leave of the House I shall put them together.

Schedule 4

PREFERENTIAL DEBTS

Amendments made: No. 186, in page 181, line 12, leave out from beginning to 'the' in line 13 and insert 'is referable to'.

No. 187, in page 181, leave out lines 14 and 15 and insert 'the relevant date'.

No. 188, in page 182, line 24, at end insert—

'6. So much of any amount which—

(a) is ordered, whether before or after the relevant date, to be paid by the debtor under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985; and

(b) is so ordered in respect of a default made by the debtor before that date in the discharge of his obligations under that Act.

as does not exceed such amount as may be prescribed by order made by the Secretary of State'.

No. 189, in page 183, line 15, leave out
'in respect of which any value added tax is due'
and insert
'to which any value added tax is attributable'

No. 190, in page 183, line 17, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 191, in page 183, line 24, at end insert—
'and in this paragraph "prescribed" means prescribed by regulations under the Value Added Tax Act 1983'

No. 192, in page 184, line 26, leave out
'(5) An order under paragraph 5'
and insert
'4.—(1) An order under paragraph 5 or 6'

No. 193, in page 184, line 29, after '5', insert 'or 6'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 5

Provisions capable of inclusion in company insolvency rules

Amendments made:—

No. 194, in page 185, line 8, at end insert—
'Registration of voluntary arrangements
5A. Provision for the registration of compositions or schemes approved under Chapter II of Part II of this Act, including provision for the keeping and inspection of a register.'

No. 195, in page 186, line 37, leave out 'are held in' and insert 'have been paid into'.

No. 196, in page 186, line 40, at end insert—
'16A. Provision as to the fees, costs, charges and other expenses that may be treated as properly incurred by the administrator or administrative receiver of a company.

16B. Provision as to the fees, costs, charges and other expenses that may be incurred for any of the purposes of Chapter II of Part II of this Act or in the administration of any composition or scheme approved under that Chapter.'

No. 197, in page 187, line 14, after 'company', insert 'or by the supervisor of a composition or scheme approved under Chapter II of Part II of this Act'

No. 198, in page 187, line 19, after 'company', insert 'or by the supervisor of such a composition or scheme'

No. 199, in page 187, line 27, at end insert—
'21A. Provision imposing requirements in connection with the carrying out of functions under section 7(5) of this Act (including, in particular, requirements with respect to the making of periodic returns).'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 6

Amendments of 1985 Act

Amendments made:

No. 200, in page 188, line 28, at end insert '7 or'.

"1477(2E) Failing to send to registrar of companies a certified copy of authorisation to dispose of certain property.	Summary	One-fifth of the statutory maximum	One-fiftieth of the statutory maximum.".'.

No. 201, in page 189, line 25, at end insert—
'10A In section 426(6) (liability of officer or liquidator of company for default in connection with the circulation of information as to a compromise), after the word "liquidator" there shall be inserted the words "or administrator".'.

No. 202, in page 189, line 25, at end insert—
'10B In section 478(6) [receiver to be appointed within one month of cessation of appointment of earlier receiver] at the end there shall be inserted the words—
"and for the purposes of calculating the period of one month under this subsection no account shall be taken of any period during which an administration order under Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985 is in force".'.

No. 203, in page 189, line 32, at end insert—
'(1A) in subsection(1), after the words "secured by" there shall be inserted the words
"a charge which, as created, was".'

No. 204, in page 190, line 6, leave out 'For subsection (1) of' and insert '(1)'.

No. 205, in page 190, line 7, after 'court)', insert
'shall be amended as follows.
(2) For subsection (1)'

No. 206, in page 190, line 14, at end insert—
'(3) In subsection (3), after the word "provides)" there shall be inserted the words "and on any contract of employment adopted by him in the performance of those functions".
(4) After that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsections—
"(4) For the purposes of subsection (3)*(a)* the receiver or manager is not to be taken to have adopted a contract of employment by reason of anything done or omitted to be done within fourteen days after his appointment.
(5) Where at any time a receiver or manager so appointed vacates office—
(a) his remuneration and any expenses properly incurred by him;
(b) any indemnity to which he is entitled out of the assets of the company,
shall be charged on and paid out of any property of the company which is in his custody or under his control at that time in priority to any charge or other security held by the person by or on whose behalf he was appointed."'.

No. 207, in page 190, line 31, after 'substituted', insert 'the words'.

No. 208, in page 190, line 47, at end insert—
'17A.—(1) Section 476(1) of the 1985 Act (distribution of monies) shall be amended as follows.
(2) After the words "categories of persons" there shall be inserted the words "(which rights shall, except to the extent otherwise provided in any instrument, have the following order of priority)".
(3) In paragraph *(d)*, after the word "remuneration" there shall be inserted the words "and any indemnity to which the receiver is entitled out of the property of the company.".'.

No. 209, in page 191, line 2, at end insert—
'(1A) After the entry relating to section 470(3) there shall be inserted the following entry—

"482(6) Failure to comply with obligation to submit statement of affairs to receiver.	1. On indictment 2. Summary	A fine. The statutory maximum.	One-tenth of the statutory maximum.".'.

No. 210, in page 191, leave out lines 5 and 6 and insert—
'(3) For the entry relating to section 482(5) there shall be substituted the following entry—

No. 211, in page 191, line 24, leave out from beginning to 'after' in line 25 and insert—
'(1) Section 518 (definition of inability to pay debts) shall be amended as follows.
(2) in subsection (1)*(a)*'.

No. 212, in page 191, line 26, at end insert—

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

'(3) In subsection (1) *(d)* for the words from "(and, in determining" onwards there shall be substituted the words "as they fall due".

(4) After subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) A company is also deemed unable to pay its debts if it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that the value of the company's assets is less than the amount of its liabilities, taking into account its contingent and prospective liabilities."'.

No. 213, in page 192, line 12, leave out 'the Insolvency Act 1985' and insert 'that Act'.

No. 214, in page 193, line 30, at end insert—

'37A After subsection (1) of section 625 (transactions in fraud of creditors) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(1A) A person shall not be guilty of an offence under this section—

(a) by reason of conduct constituting an offence under subsection (1)*(a)* above which occurred more than five years before the commencement of the winding-up; or

(b) if he proves that, at the time of the conduct constituting the offence, he had no intent to defraud the creditors of the company."'

37B In section 626(1)*(d)* (failure to inform liquidator that false debt has been proved), for the words "for the period of a month to inform the liquidator of it" there shall be substituted the words "to inform the liquidator as soon as practicable".'

No. 215, in page 194, line 14, at end insert 'the words'.

No. 216, in page 194, line 36, at end insert—

'46.—(1) In section 669 (inability of unregistered company to pay debts), at the end of paragraph *(d)* there shall be inserted the words "as they fall due".

(2) That section, as amended by sub-paragraph (1) above, shall be re-numbered as subsection (1) of that section and after that provision as so renumbered there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2) An unregistered company is also deemed unable to pay its debts if it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that the value of the company's assets is less than the amount of its liabilities, taking into account its contingent and prospective liabilities."'.

—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 8

Consequential Amendments

Amendments made:—

No. 217, in page 198, line 9, at end insert—

'The Bills of Sale Act (1878) Amendment Act 1882

1. In section 11 of the Bills of Sale Act (1878) Amendment Act 1882 (local registration of bills of sale), for the words "the London bankruptcy district as defined by the Bankruptcy Act 1869" and the words "the said London bankruptcy district" there shall be substituted, in each case, the words "the London insolvency district".'.

No. 218, in page 198, leave out lines 10 to 22.

No. 219, in page 199, line 19, at end insert—

'(10) In section 30(1) (interpretation), for the words "the Bankruptcy Act 1914" there shall be substituted the words "the Insolvency Act 1985".'.

No. 220, in page 200, line 44, at end insert

'and at the end there shall be inserted the words "or of a composition or scheme proposed for the purposes of Chapter II of Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985 being approved under that Chapter"'.

No. 221, in page 201, line 28, after 'under,' insert 'Chapter II of Part II or'.

No. 222, in page 202, line 5, leave out from 'adjudged"' to end of line 7.

No. 223, in page 203, line 47, at end insert—

'The Conveyancing and Feudal Reform (Scotland) Act 1970

17A. In Schedule 3 to the Conveyancing and Feudal Reform (Scotland) Act 1970 (the standard conditions of a security), in standard condition 9(2)*(b)*, for the words from "or an order" to "1925" there shall be substituted the words "or his estate falls to be administered in accordance with an order under section 216 of the Insolvency Act 1985".'

No. 288, in page 206, line 8, at end insert—

'(3A) In paragraph 2(2), for the words "in a case where the relevant event took place on or after the day of the passing of the Social Security Act 1985" there shall be substituted the words "in any other case".'

No. 224, in page 206, line 43, leave out from second 'or"' to end of line 45.

No. 225, in page 207, line 15, at end insert

'and at the end there shall be inserted the words "or a composition or scheme proposed for the purposes of Chapter II of Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985 is approved under that Chapter"'.

No. 226, in page 207, line 27, after 'under', insert 'Chapter II of Part II or'.

No. 227, in page 207, line 46, at end insert

'and at the end there shall be inserted the words "or a composition or scheme proposed for the purposes of Chapter II of Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985 is approved under that Chapter"'.

No. 228, in page 208, leave out lines 4 to 6.

No. 258, in page 208, line 12, leave out from 'corporate),' to end of line 15 and insert

'after paragraph *(b)* there shall be inserted the words "or

(c) on the holding of a creditors' meeting summoned under section 75 of the Insolvency Act 1985 (effect of insolvency on members' voluntary winding up),"'.

No. 230, in page 209, leave out lines 11 to 17.

No. 230A, in page 209, line 29, at end insert—

The Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982

35A After paragraph *(b)* of section 18(3) of the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 (judgments to which provisions relating to the enforcement of judgments within the United Kingdom do not apply), there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(ba) a judgment given in the exercise of jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law within the meaning of section *(Co-operation between courts exercising jurisdiction in relation to insolvency law)* of the Insolvency Act 1985;"'.

No. 231, in page 210, line 24, at end insert—

The Housing Act 1985

38.—(1) The Housing Act 1985 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 3(4) of Schedule 19 (suspension of condition as to residence), for the words "is administered in bankruptcy under section 130 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914" there shall be substituted the words "falls to be administered in accordance with an order under section 216 of the Insolvency Act 1985".

(3) In paragraph 5(3) of that Schedule (conditions affecting house purchased by means of advance), for the words "being administered in bankruptcy under section 130 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914" there shall be substituted the words "falling to be administered in accordance with an order under section 216 of the Insolvency Act 1985".'.

No. 232, in page 210, line 24, at end insert—

'The Administration of Justice Act 1985

39. In section 16(1)*(g)* of the Administration of Justice Act 1985 (conditional licences), for the words "and having obtained his discharge" there shall be substituted the words "and discharged".'.—*[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 9

Transitional Provisions and Savings

Amendments made:

No. 233, in page 210, line 31, after '(2)', insert 'or (3)'.

No. 234, in page 211, line 8, at end insert—

'4A. Section *(Restriction on use of company names)* of this Act shall not apply where the relevant company (within the meaning of that section) went into liquidation before the coming into force of that section.'.

No. 235, in page 212, line 7, leave out "20" and insert "19".

No. 236, in page 212, line 7, leave out "45" and insert "46".

No. 237, in page 213, line 10, leave out "in the 1985 Act to a winding-up order" and insert "to a winding up".

No. 238, in page 217, line 42, at end insert

"(2) References in sub-paragraph (1) above to setting aside a transaction include references to the making of any order which varies or reverses any effect of a transaction." *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Schedule 10

REPEALS

Amendments made:

No. 239, in page 218, line 5, column 3, at beginning insert—

"In section 302 (1), the words "or liquidator"."

No. 240, in page 218, line 16, at end insert

"37 & 38 Vict. c. 42	The Building Societies Act 1874	In section 32, the words "under the supervision of the court".
6 & 7 Eliz. 2 c. 45	The Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958	In section 4, in subsections (2)(*b*) and (4)(*a*), the words "or under the supervision of".
1975 c. 75	The Policyholders Protection Act 1975	In section 5(2), the words "or subject to the supervision of".'

No. 241, in page 218, line 16, at end insert

1982 c. 50	The Insurance Companies Act 1982	In section 57(1), the words "or under the supervision of".'

No. 242, in page 219, line 40, column 3, leave out "Sections 611 to 618" and insert

"Sections 611 to 615
Sections 616 to 618".

No. 243, in page 219, line 44, column 3, at end insert

"In section 625(1), the words "with intent to defraud creditors of the company" and the words "with that intent"."

No. 244, in page 220, line 21, column 3, leave out "and "or 609"" and insert

"the words "or 609" and the words from "or appointing" onwards".

No. 245, in page 221, line 2, column 3, at end insert—

"except sections 121 to 123".

No. 246, in page 222, line 12, column 3, at end insert—

"Section 13A(2)(*b*)".

No. 247, in page 222, line 35, at end insert—

"1983 c. 19.	The Matrimonial Homes Act 1983.	Section 2(7)."

No. 248, in page 222, line 39, at end insert—

"1985 c. 00.	The Housing Act 1985.	Sections 121 to 123."

No. 249, in page 222, line 39, at end insert—

"1985 c. 00.	The Administration of Justice Act 1985.	In section 16(1)(*f*), the words "or while a receiving order is in force against him". Section 17(2)(*b*).".

No. 250, in page 223, line 3, at end insert—

"4 & 5 Geo. 5 c. 59.	The Bankruptcy Act 1914.	Sections 121 to 123."

No. 251, in page 223, line 25, at end insert—

1977 c. 45.	The Criminal Law Act 1977.	Section 38(5).

No. 252, in page 223, line 38, at end insert

"1982 c. 27.	The Civil Jurisdiction and Judgements Act 1982.	In section 18(3)(*c*), sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii)."

No. 253, in page 223, line 44, column 3 at beginning insert

"Section 57(2)".

No. 254, in page 223, line 47, column 3 at end insert

"Section 69(6)".

No. 255, in page 223, line 52, column 3 leave out "and".

No. 256, in page 223, line 54, column 3 at end insert "and to sections 18 and 19(8) (*a*) of the Banking Act 1979". *[Mr. Fletcher.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wales's Consent, signified.]

11.15 pm

Mr. Fletcher: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have made a contribution to the many problems raised during the debates in this House and the other place. I am satisfied that the Committee in particular contributed substantially to the quality of the legislation. As I do not wish to embarrass Labour Members, may I say quietly that I am grateful for their constructive approach. I hope that that augurs well for the legislation on financial services, which the Government hope to introduce next Session. I am also extremely grateful to my hon. Friends who were equally objective and constructive in proceeding with the legislation.

The Government set out with many objectives, which have been debated. However, I am happy to say that we still have licensed insolvency practitioners. We have fresh powers to disqualify unfit directors, powers to reduce limited liability through wrongful trading, and a new, helpful and constructive administration procedure. I hope that insolvency practitioners and the commercial world generally will find the Bill greatly advantageous to them. I hope that the poor bankrupts who find themselves in trouble over a relatively small sum will find the new simplified procedures helpful.

11.19 pm

Mr. Gould: The Minister's generous remarks are typical of the good humour with which both the Committee and the House have dealt with the Bill. Just as he thanked his hon. Friends, I should like to thank mine, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) for the great support and work that he has done in Committee and throughout the Bill's passage.

None of those agreeable aspects of the Bill's proceedings will deter me from making one final point that I am sure the Minister would expect me to make. We have had to deal with the Bill in the most difficult of circumstances. Some of his hon. Friends totalled up the number of amendments made throughout the proceedings, and came to the grand total of 1,000. I confess that I did not do that sum, but it is true that we had over 400 Government amendments in Committee and another 200 on Report. That is virtually unprecedented, and even more

[Mr. Gould]

remarkable when one considers that we are dealing with a Bill on a subject that has been under consideration since 1977. One cannot help but think that something went wrong somewhere and that the consultation procedures were inadequate for presenting a Bill of this complexity. The consequence was that the parliamentary procedures for scrutinising this important and complex measure were stretched virtually to breaking point. At times some of us felt almost overwhelmed by the volume of amendments and new clauses. I am sure that even the Minister found it difficult at times to keep pace with what was happening.

The consequence of that is that, while the Minister is right in saying that the Committee can take credit for having improved the Bill, the Bill is still not — and I am sure that my hon. Friends agree with me in this respect — in as good shape as it should have been. We have done what we can in the time available and with the resources available to us, but in the end the Bill still needs considerable amendment. It is unfortunate that we may yet again have to rely on another place to achieve that further refinement of the Bill. If that is so, I fear that the Government have no one but themselves to blame. On the other hand, the Minister is both generous and correct when he says that the Committee has done a good job. I hope that in that respect at any rate we have made it a better Bill than it was when it came to us.

11.22 pm

Mr. Hanley: I must crave the indulgence of the House while I make a few remarks on Third Reading.

I do not apologise for doing so, because I believe that there should be on the record certain matters that have not been discussed tonight. My hon. Friend the Minister has listened hard, often and widely. I know that we are all grateful for that. We are grateful for the careful consideration that he has given to our pleas and the careful consultation that he has gone into, particularly with his officials. If only that consultation had happened before report or even Third Reading, perhaps 1,000 Government amendments would not have been necessary. Maybe there would have been 1,000 paragraphs in a working party report. On this Bill, the case for a draft Bill on a technical matter has been proved.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the progress that we have made on preferential creditors. He is right in saying that the Government should be congratulated on trying to help small unsecured creditors. It was the Government's initiative that helped in removing corporation tax, and particularly the pernicious charge of local authority rates. Indeed, tonight the Government could have reversed the progress that we had all made on VAT being brought down from 12 to six months. The Government deserve some credit for accepting the Committee's view. In doing so, the Government will greatly help small firms that are creditors of those who go into liquidation.

Therefore, we should be grateful for many small mercies in the Bill. However, on the record should be certain matters on which my hon. Friend the Minister and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), agreed to come back to the Committee, having considered them. If the Bill is going to another place, we should put those matters to it.

First, on clause 7 the Minister undertook to consider whether provision with regard to the frequency of misconduct should be incorporated in a practice direction or in the rules. If the Government have dealt with any of those matters, I am sure that they will understand that it is difficult to find them in the vast volume of amendments.

Secondly, my hon. Friend the Minister said that he would consider provisions to enable a disqualified director who had been rehabilitated to apply to have the disqualification terminated. That is in clause 13. In clause 34 the Minister said he would consider making it a requirement for information to be given to the workforce. That has been mentioned tonight, but there was no progress. In clause 68, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), agreed to reconsider whether early dissolution should occur where an administrative procedure is in place. In clause 70 the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State — my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) — said that he would investigate the concern of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about there being no provision to deal with the possible lack of a quorum at the final meeting.

In clause 81, the hon. Member said that he would consider the suggestion by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) that deposit payments should have preferential status. That was discussed tonight, but it is still a matter of major concern. In clause 97, my hon. Friend the Minister agreed to consider from my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) that the appointment of an administrative receiver should be recognised with regard to floating charges. In clause 105, he agreed to consider the suggestion by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South that the court should have power to give a direction about dealings with assets during the period of an interim order.

You will be pleased to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are not many more, but I want them on the record. In clause 108 the Minister agreed to think about the suggestion by the hon. Member for Tynemouth that courts should have power to make a bankruptcy order immediately if attempts to have a voluntary agreement fail with regard to the decision of creditors meetings.

Mr. Fletcher: Where we were able to table an amendment in accordance with commitments, we did so. Where we could not, we wrote. I certainly wrote to hon. Members explaining why we could not follow up commitments that I had given in Committee.

Mr. Hanley: Many of these matters raised in Committee were of interest to more than the hon. Member who raised them. Having heard that assurance from the Minister, I should be very grateful if I could have sight of some of the letters, and I will undertake to the Minister to write to the hon. Gentleman concerned and ask for such information. I am merely trying to put these on the record so that the other place may consider them. I am about two thirds of the way through my list, and if their lordships are sitting on the edges of their red lined benches dying to know the other items, I will in turn write to them and give them the other seven items about which I have had no response.

Mr. Bermingham: For the last time in this Bill, I will come to the aid of the Minister and reassure the House that

I received a letter in respect of each and every one of the matters I raised, and the letters were both helpful and explanatory. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will join with me when I say how grateful I am to the Minister for the way he replied in these matters.

We leave this Bill as we began it. It has taken 100-plus years to get this far in improving insolvency law, but perhaps we have laid a few markers on the road. I hope it will not be another 100 years before we begin to develop the ideas in the Bill, many of which were canvassed in Committee. Parliamentary draftsmen often say, "It cannot be done," but where there is a will there is a way. The markers are on the road and many of us who took part in the debate on the Committee stage of this Bill know well where we want those markers to take us.

We say gently to this Government and to successive Governments that once this Bill goes into operation and flaws are found, those of us who are interested in the subject will bring those flaws back for correction. We all want to have a civilised insolvency law to remove the cruelty of the Riley case. We want to be able to catch and stop the war referred to tonight, or stone the gnome as I kept referring to it in Committee. If we are going to do that, we have to accept that insolvency law must develop with changing times, with the changing concepts in industry, and with changing methods in the service industry. It cannot be allowed to stay the same from 1880 until 1980 or from 1914 until 1985. We have to update the law, and we have to take on board the new ideas, commercial and otherwise, that exist.

For all those who served on the Standing Committee, the Bill has been an interesting exercise. I hope that for those who have had to listen to us it has not been too boring an exercise. To those who helped members of the Committee from without this place and in the various professional bodies we all owe a deep debt of thanks. Much of what we portrayed in the Committee came from their advice and guidance, and it is right that we should place on the record our gratitude for the great help that we get, which is voluntarily and freely given to us.

Perhaps the House of Lords can push the Bill just a little further down the tram tracks, and perhaps the gremlins will not get in the way too much.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Consumer Protection

That the draft Food Imitations (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 21st June, be approved.

Merchant Shipping

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) (Ships Built Before 25th May 1980) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Fire Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Grain) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

Agriculture

That the draft Agriculture Improvement Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.

That the Agriculture Improvement Scheme 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1029), dated 5th July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Question agreed to.

DISCHARGES OF DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4519/85, a proposal for a Council directive on the discharge of certain dangerous substances into water, and affirms the need for a Directive to deal with pollution by substances meeting the List I criteria set out in Council Directive 76/464/EEC, and which requires monitoring for the levels of those substances in the aquatic environment, irrespective of source.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Michael Starrs (Mobility Allowance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. — *[Mr. Boscawen.]*

11.32 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am particularly grateful for this opportunity to debate the case of Michael Starrs, and I welcome the interest which the Minister's Department has shown and look forward to the hon. Gentleman's response.

Michael Starrs is a father, aged 47. Clearly he is very severely disabled and an extremely ill man. Until his first serious illness struck in 1965, the year when a fateful operation for a duodenal ulcer was performed, Michael was extremely fit and far from work shy. As a national service man, he served in the 15/19 King's Royal Hussars in Northern Ireland in the late 1950's. Apart from that period, and until his illness, he worked as an apprentice and then as a welder in Tolleross foundry.

Prior to his illness, Michael's average weight was 10 stone 7 pound. Now it is just 8 stone. He has twice applied for mobility allowance and had been refused on both occasions.

Tonight I have to ask the Minister why and, grateful though I am that the hon. Gentleman is present to reply to the date, I have to tell him that I shall listen very carefully, as will my constituents, to his reply, because it is a case which has baffled many people and continues to baffle me.

I have to ask the Minister why there should be a refusal in the case of a man who is qualified for and has been given a wheelchair by the National Health Service, presented by Belvedere hospital. Why should there be a refusal in the case of a man who was informed by letter on 8 March 1983 by the Ministry of Transport that the restricted condition of his legs meant that his driving licence would cover hand controls only? Why should a man who is fed intravenously or who is otherwise dependent on baby food or a liquid diet be judged so harshly? Why, when a man suffers from such obvious fatigue that his walking is considerably impaired and when it would be cruel in the extreme to make demands beyond his present limited capacity, is this not taken into account?

Those questions are also being asked by my constituents, 3,500 of whom have petitioned me to insist on a full inquiry into the whole of Michael Starrs' case, including his medical history, and some of those people themselves receive mobility allowance. Some of them are the same constituents who got together in a local social club and presented Michael with a hand-controlled car, which gives him the little comfort that he has when he can afford to run it.

Last year the local newspaper in my constituency, the *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser*, published a prominent article headed

"Michael's 19 years of hell."

It reflected, quite properly, the views of those in my community and strong views generally that those involved in social security have not yet found a satisfactory conclusion.

In March 1965, at the age of 26 years, Michael was admitted to Hairmyres hospital, East Kilbride. He underwent an operation for a duodenal ulcer. From that date until now he has never had a normal meal because his digestive system cannot cope with one. As it was not in his nature to be voluntarily without work, he applied for and was given a light job in the Gartcosh strip mill from 1965 to 1970. However, even that became too much for him and his consultant wrote to British Steel and told them so. After a lengthy period as an out patient and sometimes as a in-patient, yet another operation, the third in all, took place in 1970 to deal with the complications which had arisen from the earlier operation in 1965. It is a matter of medical history that a piece of silk, which lingered from Michael's first encounter with surgery, had to be removed. Michael tried to resume work but found that his condition had deteriorated so badly that he experienced a burning sensation every time that he attempted to swallow, a condition which persists to this day.

Michael finally accepted early redundancy and left his employment with £800 for his 20 years' service. With that he was left to face the future. Michael has existed on invalidity benefit since then. It is not surprising that his faith in social services has been somewhat shattered. Astonishing though it may seem, in 1976 he was called before a medical tribunal and his invalidity benefit was discontinued. He appealed to the health commissioner, who restored it. That establishes that tribunals are not always right, and certainly have not been so in Michael's case.

The first tribunal that heard Michael's application for mobility allowance sat on 13 October 1980. It concluded:

"We have considered the evidence and observed the claimant walking out of doors. He walks slowly with a hesitant gait and with the aid of a stick but without apparent pain or severe discomfort."

The best person to make a judgment on his ability to walk and his discomfort is Michael. On that evidence, which is supported by all who know him, there is and has been considerable discomfort. I find it incredible that the tribunal could have reached such a conclusion.

I gave evidence at the second tribunal hearing in January. It had before it a great deal of information, including the opinion of Dr. Ian Bone, a consultant neurologist, who said:

"He walks in an extraordinary manner, bent forward as though walking on a treadmill. The walking is symmetrically abnormal but becomes more bizarre when the stick is held in the left hand. On general examination, he is a small emaciated man."

Having heard the evidence and made my contribution to the tribunal, I believe that my constituent suffered in the conclusions reached because of aconflict of medical evidence about his condition. There were several diagnoses from various doctors. Doctor No. 1 said that Michael suffered from multiple sclerosis, doctor No. 2 said that it was

"post-gastric surgery debility ataxia"

and a third doctor concluded that Michael's condition was caused by a psychosomatic illness.

The doctor who knows most about the case is Mr. Starrs' own medical practitioner, Dr. Edward McCabe, a man who does not use words lightly and thinks carefully before he reaches a conclusion and offers it for consideration. He said:

"Mr. Starrs suffers from a difficulty in locomotion which I feel qualifies him for a mobility allowance."

That is the unreserved view of a doctor who knows Michael and has seen the condition develop and Michael's health deteriorate.

Unfortunately, the tribunal did not share that opinion. It concluded:

"We have observed the claimant walking a distance in excess of 100 yards outside. The claimant can walk such a distance, as was confirmed by Mr. Clarke, slowly and gingerly with frequent short pauses for no apparent reason and without any evidence of distress."

I found that conclusion astonishing and I regret to have to say that it was a distortion of the evidence that I gave. I made it clear that on a very cold winter's morning I walked 100 yards with Michael Starrs and I had to stop with him on five or six occasions. He was unable to continue and was caused considerable distress. I was cold and Michael, in his condition, must have felt much colder. How the tribunal could have reached that conclusion is a mystery which still invites an explanation.

I have discussed all the papers in the case and the facts known to me with my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who introduced the legislation that provided the mobility allowance. He would have spoken in the debate, but unfortunately he has to be out of the country on parliamentary business. However, he has encouraged me to say that he finds it astonishing that Michael Starrs has not been given a mobility allowance. He would have supported my case, and I find that support a great comfort.

On the basis of the evidence in this case, there must be a suspicion that applicants for the allowance, at least in Scotland, if not elsewhere, are being subjected to more stringent tests than many people would feel are desirable. I know of the independence of adjudication authorities, yet there is a clear injustice in the case of Michael Starrs and it worries me that similar injustices might be occurring in other cases.

If the Minister tells the House that he cannot intervene in the case, there will be considerable disquiet amounting, yes, to disgust in Coatbridge and throughout my constituency.

I invite the Minister to share my contempt for the procedures which have condemned Michael Starrs to immobility and dependence whereas with the allowance which the thousands of people who know him think he should have he could be mobile and independent.

I cannot believe that a man and his family who are experiencing such stress and pressure will not be compelled later to make even greater demands upon the National Health Service. No saving is made by not granting the allowance.

I say to the Minister and to the adjudicating authorities that I cannot accept their view. I cannot accept that Michael Starrs should be treated in this way. The fight will continue beyond this debate.

I sought the opportunity to ensure that we had an Adjournment debate on the issue because I profoundly believe that the case speaks for itself and invites correction. I should be delighted if the Minister responded positively, not just in the interest of Michael Starrs and his family, important though that is, but in the interests of humanity.

11.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) for raising the case tonight. I congratulate him on the eloquence and sincerity with which he put the case. He has pursued Mr. Starrs' claim for mobility allowance with great assiduity for some time.

It will be no surprise to the hon. Gentleman to learn that great as my sympathy is for Mr. Starrs and his difficulties, I cannot make any decision on his claim. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand.

The reason is that mobility allowance claims, in common with claims for other social security benefits, are decided by independent adjudicating authorities. An adjudication officer examines a case in the light of a medical report prepared by a doctor, in the first instance. If the claimant appeals, a medical board reconsiders the case. There is a further right of appeal to a medical appeal tribunal whose decision is final on the medical questions.

I accept that mistakes can be made at any stage in that process and changes in decisions can be made. However, over many years under all Governments the independent nature of the adjudicating authorities has been preserved. Ministers cannot intervene. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's argument about the view of a particular doctor, but I hope that he will accept that the views which we collect through the medical appeal tribunal system offer a wide range of experience and knowledge which must be accepted as being valid.

A decision by a medical appeal tribunal can be challenged only by way of an appeal on a question of law to the Social Security Commissioner. Neither Ministers nor officials of the Department can decide claims, nor can they alter or try to affect decisions given by those authorities.

Before I deal with the specific case of Mr. Starrs it might be helpful if I explain briefly the medical qualifying conditions for the allowance.

Mr. Clarke: At the second tribunal the chairman was Queen's Counsel. If Michael Starrs appeals, can he be represented by a Queen's Counsel and have legal aid?

Mr. Whitney: I would need to write to the hon. Gentleman on that precise point. Mr. Starrs has the right of appeal, but I would not want to mislead the House on the detail.

The medical qualifying conditions were set out in 1976. The hon. Member for Monklands, West referred to his colleague the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who was intimately connected with the introduction of the benefit in 1976. Careful consideration was given to the conditions in the light of the resources available and the need to provide a cash allowance which would be a worthwhile contribution towards the additional expenses which disabled people incur in getting about. It was decided that the allowance should be available to those severely disabled people who are unable, or virtually unable, to walk due to physical disablement.

Virtual inability to walk is not defined in the legislation, but regulations lay down the kind of factors that are to be taken into account in assessing a claimant's walking ability. These include the distance a claimant can walk and the speed, length of time and manner in which he can make progress without severe discomfort.

I must emphasise that the adjudicating authorities are responsible for the interpretation of these conditions and for their application in individual cases. They can, for instance, decide that a mental handicap has a physical cause or that its effect is to produce a physical disablement but the test for the allowance remains one of walking ability.

[Mr. Whitney]

The first claim by Mr. Starrs was received on 13 October 1980. The decisions, in turn, of the insurance officer, medical board and the medical appeal tribunal were that he was not unable or virtually unable to walk and thus not entitled to the allowance. He was refused leave to appeal against the decision of the medical appeal tribunal on a question of law by both the medical appeal tribunal and the social security commissioner.

Mr. Starrs subsequently made a fresh claim for the allowance which was received on 1 June 1983. Again, an insurance officer, medical board and medical appeal tribunal, in turn, decided that he was not unable or virtually unable to walk. He has now sought leave to appeal to the social security commissioner on a question of law and we currently await the decision of the medical appeal tribunal chairman on this application. If such leave is refused, Mr. Starrs will still have the opportunity of seeking leave direct from the commissioner.

The hon. Gentleman will thus see that a final decision has not, as yet, been given on the claim made by Mr. Starrs and I cannot, of course, anticipate the likely outcome.

The question whether the qualifying conditions are satisfied are considered as at the date on which the claim is received by the Department. If Mr. Starrs considers that his walking ability has become worse since he made his last claim, it is open to him to make a fresh claim which will be considered in the light of his walking ability at the time that it is received.

I recognise that Mr. Starrs' case had taken a long time to resolve. It is inevitable that such cases should be protracted because of the importance both for the claimant and the Department of gathering all the facts, of obtaining medical reports and of considering all the evidence carefully. However, we have been concerned about the length of time cases like Mr. Starrs' take and we have been considering what we can do to speed up the process of adjudicating on claims. I am glad that we have made some progress, although there is more to do.

Mr. Starrs' claim has not beeen finally decided. He has applied for leave to appeal to the social security commissioner against refusal of mobility allowance. In any case, if the decision goes against him and Mr. Starrs believes that he now satisfies the criteria, he can apply again.

I have carefully noted the points made by the hon. Member for Monklands, West and shall write to him on the specific point he raised. He has argued Mr. Starrs' claim cogently and effectively. I shall note his continuing interest and keep closely in touch with him about this case. The lessons that may be learnt about the handling of this case will be taken to heart by the Department.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 19 July 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Top Salaries Review Body

9.34 am

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask for your advice, and for your protection of the House. You will recall that yesterday afternoon, after Prime Minister's Question Time, the Government announced their attitude towards top pay in the Civil Service, the armed forces and the judiciary, and did so suddenly and three days earlier than the press had been allowed to believe.

The Opposition have pressed the Government to make a statement on this matter, not least because it has implications that go far wider than the 2,000 men and women involved. Questions on this subject need to be answered, in the national interest. I give one example. We need to know what the Government believe will be the effect of a 30 per cent. increase in the salary of the permanent secretary at the Department of Education and Science on the prospect of the teachers accepting a pay increase of 6 per cent. or a little more. Such questions are vital for the nation.

The Government have refused point blank to make such a statement and I ask you, Mr. Speaker, what recourse Opposition parties, and Parliament in general, have, and how we can ask the Government to do what is clearly necessary.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was an answer to my question that gave the Government's reaction. I need time to reflect on the wealth of detail in the answer given by the Prime Minister yesterday. I hope that the Government will not rush into an early statement and force me and the rest of the House to give an ill-considered reaction to this most important point. I urge the Government to give me time to think about it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you recall that a fortnight and a day ago, at business questions, I asked about a statement on top salaries? We have just had a statement about teachers' pay from the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I suggested that it would be a good idea if, on the next occasion that we had a statement about the paltry offer being made to the teachers, it could be followed by a statement on the Government's attitude towards top pay, including the £24,000 that is being given to Sir Robert Armstrong, the Secretary to the Cabinet. He is one of the advisers to the Government on how to tell people to keep their wages down.

When I put that question to the Leader of the House, I got the clear impression that the Government would take the point on board. Yesterday the Government deliberately got a question planted to prevent the matter from being debated openly in the House. While Tory Members of Parliament were upstairs in Committee Room 14 trying to cheer the Prime Minister on all her so-called wonderful efforts in the past 12 months, she should have been down here in the House, at the Dispatch Box, explaining why pensioners are stuck with a 7 per cent. increase, nurses will get only 7 per cent. with some clawback, teachers are offered only 5·8 per cent., and local authority manual workers are given only 4 per cent., whereas the top brass can get up to nearly 50 per cent. increases in pay.

It is a scandal, and the Government do not have the guts to come to the House and face the music, and explain how they have managed to pay such extortionate increases to people who are doing very nicely, thank you.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that it is recognised that there is concern about this matter on both sides of the House and that therefore an early statement and debate would be welcomed by many people, both inside and outside the House.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday, the Secretary of State for Employment made a statement about the abolition of wages councils which have protected the wage rates of workers under the age of 21. That statement was the same length as the written answer by the Prime Minister on top salaries. The statement on Wednesday allowed Tory Members to argue that the wages of young people such as hairdressers earning £34 or £35 a week should be reduced to create employment. Yesterday Opposition Members were denied the opportunity to argue that 2,000 people — judges, top civil servants and leaders of the Armed Forces — already earning £40,000 or £50,000 a year should not be given another £10,000 or £20,000. The Government are two-faced and operating double standards.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to make observations about yesterday's announcement. In spite of the purple prose of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), the paucity of attendance on the Opposition Benches suggests that next week might be a better time to discuss the matter. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to use your good offices to ensure that the House has such an opportunity next week.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before the House becomes any hotter on this matter, will the Leader of the House say whether a statement is to be made today?

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that notification of a statement does not have to be given to me before 10 o'clock, but I can tell the House that I have had notification that a business statement is to be made at 11 o'clock. Of course, I have no idea what it contains.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting,—

(1) the provisions of paragraph (1)*(b)* of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall not apply to the two Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Hurd relating to Northern Ireland; and

[Mr. Speaker]

(2) Mr. Speaker shall put the Question on the first Motion not later than half-past Eleven o'clock and on the second Motion not later than half-past Two o'clock. —*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Betting and Gaming (Northern Ireland)

9.42 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland (Mr. Christopher Patten): I beg to move,

That the draft Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 26th June, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to bring up to date the social law in Northern Ireland on all forms of betting, gaming, lotteries and amusements with prizes. The present law is outdated, is proving increasingly difficult to enforce and has fallen into disrepute in many respects. The order seeks to remedy that highly unsatisfactory situation by replacing all existing enactments with legislation which will reflect current attitudes to gambling and demands for gambling facilities and which can be expected, therefore, to command general public respect and to be capable of proper enforcement.

The legislation is lengthy and complex, and I shall not go into it in impenetrable detail. Instead I shall concentrate on the main provisions. Hon. Members may raise issues of detail with which I shall attempt to deal later if I have the opportunity.

Part II of the order largely re-enacts the existing betting law, but makes several changes aimed at making it more efficient in its operation. The major change of substance is to allow greyhound tracks to operate a tote. Because of a quirk in the existing law, only horse racecourses can be licensed to operate the totalisator in Northern Ireland, even though the law for the rest of the United Kingdom permits the tote at greyhound tracks. The Government see no reason why greyhound racing in Northern Ireland should not have the same facility, thus giving punters at the four greyhound tracks the choice of betting with bookmakers or the tote.

The order contains new rules for the conduct of bookmaking offices. Restricted sound broadcasts of race commentaries — the Extel service — will be allowed. Also in line with recent changes in the corresponding law in Great Britain, it will be possible to relax, by subordinate order, the restrictions on the facilites which may be provided in bookmaking offices. These will include television broadcasts. The Government have no immediate plans to exercise that power in Northern Ireland, but the law both here and elsewhere needs to allow for a little judicious flexibility to cope with changing social habits.

Part III of the order deals with gaming. It has five chapters. The first applies to gaming of a private kind, for example, in a family or between friends. Its aim is to force all gaming with the potential for abuse into the control system to be established by chapters II and III, as well as prohibiting all gaming in public places. Bankers' games and games which by their nature are not of equal chance, are prohibited except on domestic occasions, for example in one's own home or in places such as hostels.

Chapter II provides a comprehensive code for the control of bingo promoted commercially in private bingo clubs licensed by the courts for that purpose. The Government considered carefully whether to provide, as in Great Britain, for the licensing of gaming clubs in which other forms of commercial gaming may take place, such as casinos. We concluded that there is no evidence of any significant demand in Northern Ireland for that type of

gaming club. We have tried throughout the order not to stimulate demand for betting or gaming that does not clearly exist.

Chapter III deals with gaming by means of gaming machines. Anyone who wishes to supply or maintain a gaming machine will have to obtain from a court a certificate or permit authorising him to do so. The purpose of this and the other provisions of the chapter is to prevent racketeering and the spread of machines to places where there is no real public demand for them.

Gaming machines which may pay big prizes, usually known as jackpot machines, are prohibited except in registered private members' clubs or when used for fund raising at bazaars, sales of work, fetes or similar entertainments promoted for non-commercial purposes.

To have gaming machines, a club must register with the court, either under the order or the Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Act 1967. As in Great Britain, a registered club will be limited to operating a maximum of two gaming machines. A few clubs in Northern Ireland already have more than that because the existing law has been interpreted by the courts as permitting the use of machines as a means of running private lotteries.

We see no good reason why clubs in Northern Ireland should have a greater entitlement to machines than clubs in the rest of the United Kingdom where the limit of two applies. Apart from the objections on social grounds to a greater number of machines—I do have such objections—the Government are concerned on the basis of Royal Ulster Constabulary advice that in certain areas of Northern Ireland the proceeds from the machines in certain clubs are helping to finance the operations of paramilitary organisations. Indeed, there is a strong case for a complete ban on the use of machines in clubs.

However, the Government recognise that such a ban would be regarded as unreasonable since it would unfairly penalise the majority of highly respectable clubs that have no links with the paramilitaries. Taking all that into account, the Government conclude that the limit of two is reasonable. The choice was between none at all and two, not between two and more than that.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Instead of limiting the number of machines to two, have the Government considered limiting the stake to 2p so that more machines could be operated for the same amount of money?

Mr. Patten: We considered all sorts of options. The real problem is controlling the number of machines to ensure that paramilitary organisations do not find it easier to put a hand into the back of the machine. It is easier to meter a smaller number of machines. We considered a number of options in close consultation with the RUC. I believe that we have come to a right and sensible decision.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): How many clubs does the RUC suspect are being used to raise funds for paramilitary organisations? What percentage do they represent of the total number of clubs in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Patten: I cannot give an exact figure, but it is relative small as a proportion of the total number of clubs in Northern Ireland. However, the number is sufficiently large for us to take a severe view. It is sufficiently large for us to take a similar view when preparing legislation for the registration of clubs which we hope to bring before the House in the next Session. I am absolutely determined that we should ensure that a number of the abuses that exist at present are dealt with in that legislation.

I appreciate and sympathise with the drift of the hon. Gentleman's question. However, it seems difficult, if not impossible, to have one law for one sort of club and another law for another—to have one law, as it were, for Bangor or Holywood and another for other parts of Northern Ireland. I appreciate the strength of feeling on the subject, but we could not conceivably have made that sort of distinction.

Amusement with prizes machines which pay prizes not exceeding £3 in value are restricted to travelling showmen's fairs, licensed bingo clubs and premises of a type prescribed in regulations made by the Department and either licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor or granted an amusement permit by a district council. These provisions are much much restrictive than those in the law of Great Britain, where virtually any type of premises qualifies.

In Northern Ireland, primarily to prevent exploitation of the machines by paramilitary organisations, but also on social and other grounds, the Government consider it essential to have the power to limit the range of premises entitled to install machines. In the short term, the Government intend that only amusement arcades and similar premises used mainly for the provision of amusements should be allowed to install machines, subject to the grant of an amusement permit by a district council.

There is no prospect in the immediate future of the Government allowing machines in other types of premises—in particular, public houses. I fully appreciate why, in this respect, the licensed trade in Northern Ireland should feel that it is being treated unfairly compared with clubs, which will continue to be allowed to have up to two machines which may be of the jackpot type. However, I trust that the House will accept and understand why the security advice must be a major consideration in deciding if and when any particular types of premises which are open to the general public should be prescribed. The Government will keep the position under close review.

Chapter IV provides for small gaming which consists of games played at entertainments promoted otherwise than for private gain. This will primarily cover such charitable and non-profit making activities as bridge and whist drives, but will also allow other games such as bingo to be promoted, for example, by clubs for the benefit of the membership in general.

Chapter V is the last chapter of part III of the order dealing with gaming. It allows clubs to make modest charges for taking part in equal chance non-banker gaming without contravening the general prohibition on participation charges in chapter I. Clubs will be able to make charges sufficient only to cover the cost of providing the facilities for the gaming. The Department may by order vary the limits on the daily charge or specify different limits for different games. The chapter also prohibits, subject to specified exceptions, the advertising of facilities for gaming and allows a landlord to evict a tenant or occupier of premises convicted of using the premises for illegal gaming.

I should, before leaving that chapter, mention that the various regulatory and enforcement functions which in Great Britain fall to the Gaming Board will be discharged

[Mr. Patten]

in Northern Ireland by other agencies, the courts, district councils, the police and, for some purposes, my Department.

The Government recognise that in Great Britain the Gaming Board plays an important role in supervising gaming and has been highly successful in purging it of criminal elements. However, as large-scale commercial gaming is not to be permitted in Northern Ireland, we do not think that the establishment of a Northern Ireland board would be justified. There are, in addition, security considerations which we cannot ignore.

Mr. William Ross: The Minister said that there were security considerations which could not be ignored. Is he really saying that those security considerations apply to clubs and especially to clubs that are under the control of paramilitary organisations? Was that behind his remark?

Mr. Patten: Yes, that was behind my remark, and I believe that the RUC is in a better position to deal with some of those pressures than would be, for example, the inspectors of a gaming board, even if such were necessary.

Part IV of the order deals with lotteries. It makes all lotteries unlawful, other than small lotteries at exempt entertainments, private lotteries and public lotteries promoted by a registered society for the support of charities, sports, games, cultural activities or other non-commercial purposes.

The provisions for small and private lotteries largely re-enact the existing law. The major change is that societies registered with a district council for the purpose will be able to promote public lotteries. For the most part, these provisions mirror similar provisions for societies and lotteries in Great Britain. An important protection is that anyone who wishes to act as an external lottery consultant or manager will have to hold a lottery certificate issued by a court.

I have made no reference to local lotteries, such as those which local authorities in Great Britain may promote for specified objects. The Government's published proposals had provided for these, primarily so that we could test reactions, particularly the reactions of district councils in Northern Ireland. However, responses from the councils showed that few, if any, would want to run local lotteries. Furthermore, several councils strongly opposed the provision on moral and social grounds. In the circumstances, we decided, I am sure rightly, against local lotteries.

Part V deals with amusements with prizes and prize competitions. It allows amusements with prizes other than by gaming machines at non-commercial entertainments, and subject to specified restrictions on a commercial basis of travelling showmen's fairs, in licensed bingo clubs and in premises used wholly or mainly for the provision of amusements under permit by a district council.

That part re-enacts the existing law in Northern Ireland relating to newspaper and other competitions. It prohibits the conduct, through any newspaper or in connection with any trade or business, of any prize competition which involves forecasting the result of an event or any other competition in which success does not depend to a substantial degree on the exercise of skill.

Part VI covers a variety of matters. Cheating will continue to be an offence, and gambling debts will remain irrecoverable in law. The police will have rights of entry without a search warrant to all premises with facilities for engaging in betting, gaming, lotteries and amusements with prizes and, with a warrant, to any premises at all.

That is a necessarily brief outline of the main provisions of the order. I hope that I have given an adequate picture of its principal aims. I assure hon. Members that the provisions have been carefully thought out. They have been the subject of months, indeed years, of careful scrutiny and consultation, as the House would think appropriate, with the RUC.

I emphasise that while they have been based broadly on comparable provisions in the law in Great Britain — taking account, of course, of the later recommendations of the Royal Commission in 1977-78—the Government have also taken care to ensure that they are tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of Northern Ireland. I believe that the new laws will provide a clear and firm framework which will enable gambling to take place in Northern Ireland under proper controls, and I therefore commend the order to the House.

9.58 am

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The Minister described this as complex law. Looking at this massive order, with its 187 articles, 21 schedules and 191 pages of legislation—a rehash of existing law, the revocation of existing law and new legislation—one sees how well-founded are the comments that regularly come from this Bench about Northern Ireland legislation. If ever there was an order which should have been treated as a proper Bill, with opportunities for adequate debate and the tabling of amendments, this is such an order. It is a huge and very important piece of legislation, yet we have to deal with it by a procedure that is seen to be more and more unsatisfactory as each order passes through the House. It is quite mad that legislation like this, dealing with such an important matter in Northern Ireland, should be dealt with in this manner.

I understand that there are all sorts of consultation periods, that the Assembly has looked at the order, and that many bodies and organisations have taken an interest in it, but at the end of the day the defects in the legislative process still remain. The Members of this House who are finally responsible for it have not had the opportunity to discuss and probe to find out what lies behind the words which appear on the face of the order.

We on this Bench give a general welcome to the fact that the law is now being not only clarified but brought together inside the pages of one document. Under the order, there is liberalisation in the law. The order might bring the law into a form that is more enforceable and will not, as the Minister said, fall into disrepute in the manner of some of the previous legislation which in many areas was not enforced.

We appreciate that the order follows closely the law in Great Britain, and we can give a general welcome to that; but, from the Minister's remarks, the House will have gathered that there are differences in the social scene in Great Britain compared with that in Northern Ireland. We would have wished to table amendments to try to make changes to meet more closely the needs of Northern Ireland.

We deeply regret that we never seem to have produced for us a complete list of the changes which have been made

in existing law, nor do we have an opportunity to examine those changes and try to work out in our own minds what they will be.

We appreciate that the Government tried to get the order passed before the summer recess last year, and that it was brought before the Assembly at that time in great haste. Now we are dealing with it a year later. If speed is so important, why has it taken an extra year——

Mr. Chris Patten: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, we published a 33-page explanatory document which fairly clearly answers some of his questions on the order.

Mr. Ross: I have read the explanatory document, but I should have liked to have rather more detail. Perhaps it is our fault for not asking for it at a much earlier stage.

The law dealing with bookmakers appears to be largely a rehash of the existing law. In some of the evidence presented to me, there were allegations that bookmakers' premises had increased in number, but the bookmakers, at another point in the evidence, alleged that 40 premises were not in operation. Is that allegation correct? If it is, can we take it that there has not been any increase in the number of bookmakers' premises in the past few years in Northern Ireland, and that the need for such premises in the community is at present adequately met?

If the number of premises is adequate, why is the concept of demand being introduced in place of the concept of need? My understanding is that there is a difference of emphasis here, and I am curious to know why we have got into this position. Does the Minister envisage the possibility of some of the larger bookmakers expanding their operations, or is he leaving the door open for further competition beween them? Indeed, I should like to have an explanation as to how bookmakers compete.

Will the Minister explain the benefits that will arise from the extension of the legislation to include greyhound racing? I know that there has been a demand for it, but I am not clear whether any real benefit will accrue to greyhound racing in Northern Ireland, given that it is controlled not from within the United Kingdom but from without. Therefore, can any real benefit be expected from the change?

I am concerned about the differences in treatment between public houses and clubs. I understand that some of my hon. Friends will be dealing with the problem of gaming machines. Over the years, the owners of public houses seem to have had a bad deal. They are not places that I frequent very much, nor do I frequent clubs. However, people complain to me that whereas clubs enjoy considerable benefits in rating valuation, the machines that can be operated, the hours of opening, the sale of alcohol and so on, with a charter to receive even more benefits, public houses, which provide similar services, are tied to the current restrictions. There seems to be a degree of inequity which should be examined. I am not happy about it, and many people in Northern Ireland are not happy either.

I have read the clubs' submissions. They say how badly off they are and how much they need the machines, but the figures which are published every year show that vast sums are received by the clubs from their sales of alcohol. Indeed, one wonders whether many public houses sell as much alcohol as is sold by some of the clubs. I should like to know what happens to the profits from the sale of alcohol in clubs. I do not think they are doing it as a social function without profit. Therefore, I take a jaundiced view of the clubs' claim that they need the profits from the gaming machines if they are to survive. I just do not believe the stories that I am told.

Various churches in Northern Ireland have raised the question of bingo, and there was considerable comment in the Assembly. A brand-new gambling industry is coming into being. We are seeing not only the legalising of the existing position, to which a blind eye has been turned for many years, but the creation of a new commercial industry that will be different from the present one, and many people are not altogether happy about it.

I hope that the Government will keep a very close eye on the development of bingo in Northern Ireland in the coming year. I hope that they will look closely to see how the entire body of legislation, especially the new concepts in it, will work. I hope that they will be prepared, if necessary, to make further changes if they find that it is not having the good results that we hope will follow from it.

Up to now, bingo has been permitted by the RUC on the ground that it is a private lottery and can be held to fall within the law. It is only when it is openly and blatantly run as a commercial enterprise that warnings are issued and action is taken. I am aware of bingo halls being closed. I do not believe that bingo can be regarded as a lottery. I understand that cases have been fought in the courts on the question that bingo cannot be held to be a lottery because more than three numbers have to be drawn in order to get a winner. That seems to be the make or break point. The law has been openly flouted in the past. The existing situation is now being legalised and a new situation is being created. Until we see the end result, we should be wary about going any further than necessary down that road.

Nobody in Northern Ireland is particularly happy about that aspect of the law. Northern Ireland is not generally a gambling society. At least, we say that it is not—sometimes one wonders. However, powerful forces in Northern Ireland view the new concept of the bingo halls arising as a result of the order with a fairly sceptical eye. I hope that the Minister will assure us that he will be very careful about the way in which that is monitored and that he will keep an eye on it over the next year or two.

There is also the whole argument about people running the various gambling organisations in Northern Ireland having to be members of the community in Northern Ireland. I can appreciate the general thrust of that argument. However, I hope that we would not be so inflexible as to bar all persons who live outside Northern Ireland, in other parts of the United Kingdom. I appreciate that there might be a problem if owners of gambling establishments lived outside the United Kingdom. That is different. However, if a ban is put on other United Kingdom citizens who live in the United Kingdom, we should see that not all such folk are banned. Some people who formerly lived in Northern Ireland still have interests there. That matter needs to be kept under review.

My understanding is that a lottery is a distribution of prizes in a competition without the use of any skill. In other words, it is pure chance. Some lotteries have been legal up to now, although in general terms all lotteries are illegal. Can the Minister tell us who in Northern Ireland would want to organise a lottery on such a scale that

[Mr. Ross]

£1 million-worth of tickets would be sold? Would that number of tickets be sold in Northern Ireland alone? Who would want to organise that? For what purpose? Alternatively, could tickets for the lottery be sold outside Northern Ireland? Lotteries are popular. Everyone hopes to get a plum the size of a house for a small outlay, but it does not often happen.

I do not like large lotteries, although, like everyone else in the House, I am dogged with requests to buy tickets for this, that and the other good cause. In the past, loopholes have been caused by using small print to say that the money is a donation to the charity involved — not an entry fee or anything else. I am curious as to whether such small print will be affected by the part of the order dealing with lotteries. Is it still an escape clause for those who organise lotteries, or is that loophole being closed?

One thing that has puzzled me and many people in Northern Ireland over the past year is the reason behind the Government's blunt refusal to create a gaming board in Northern Ireland. In reply to my intervention, the Minister said that security considerations were involved. What an enormous can of worms was opened up by that remark. The Gaming Board in Great Britain has been highly successful and was fulsomely praised by the Minister. Such a board is not being created in Northern Ireland. There had to be some good reason behind the Government's refusal to countenance a gaming board in Northern Ireland. It has been exposed at last—security considerations. The Government believe that only the police have the manpower, and perhaps the fire power if it comes to that, to organise raids on premises where paramilitary organisations reign supreme and to keep such premises under some modicum of control. Only the police have the expertise, the ability and the back-up to do the job that may become necessary in some aspects of the law.

If the Minister had been more forthcoming much earlier, some of the misgivings that many of us have had in regard to a gaming board and the failure to set one up in Northern Ireland would have disappeared. That was a welcome remark. In giving the reason and saying that it is a matter for the police, the Minister has cleared the air considerably. Can the Minister also tell us what steps the RUC has taken to build up the necessary expertise, and what co-operation, co-ordination and exchange of information there will be between the RUC and the Gaming Board in Great Britain, which has the body of expertise from which the Northern Ireland enforcement agency will have to draw in future? That is an important point. We should like an assurance that the police in Northern Ireland will be able to draw on the skills over here and, if necessary, personnel — only for advice — from this side of the water. We do not want the police to be bereft of the expertise that they need to deal with the matter. We are setting up a completely new group of people in the RUC to do the job in Northern Ireland that the Gaming Board does on this side of the Irish sea.

The Minister touched on the disrepute in which the present law is being held in Northern Ireland. It is a damnable thing when the law of the land is openly flouted and broken, and no attempt is made to enforce the law. I greatly welcome—as I think does everyone in Northern Ireland who is concerned with the subject—the effort that has been made to clarify the law and make it more easily enforceable. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Minister will say that it is the intention of the Government and the police rigidly to enforce the law.

Law that is flouted eventually not only falls into disrepute, but is completely disregarded. It is difficult if it reaches that state of low esteem in the minds of the public and the police. It is difficult to retrace one's steps and try to enforce it. This is a brand new start. It is an opportunity to screw down the gambling industry in Northern Ireland and see that it complies with the regulations that the House makes. I hope that the Government will see to it that the law is enforced.

Now that we have had a chance to consider new legislation and changes that are being made to legislation, I hope that the Government are prepared to review it in two or three years at the maximum, or possibly before that. I am not absolutely sure that we have got it quite right yet. We need to keep an eye on it. We want to be assured that the Government will be prepared to look at it in future and that, if any further changes are necessary, it will be possible to make them.

10.18 am

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I welcome the opportunity of following the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) in this short but important debate.

I have some sympathy with the interested party which, when this matter came before the Northern Ireland Assembly, found that it had to digest, in unseemly haste, 180 pages of parliamentary draftsman's language and formulate a reply — and all within eight weeks. This short debate, by its very nature, amounts to a Second Reading debate, in which we are discussing the principles behind the legislation, and a Committee stage, in which the detail, too, has to be examined.

The Minister referred to an explanatory note prepared by the Department. I found that particularly helpful. However, I wonder why it is that, for as long as we have a United Kingdom consisting of Great Britain and Northern Ireland — notwithstanding the aspiration for Irish unity which, if it does not blow with the gust of the wind of change, is nevertheless a wind that is rising and increasing in vigour — legislation for Northern Ireland, which may be modern and progressive or simply seek to bring uniformity, lags so far behind that of mainland Britain. It must be in the interests of all citizens of Northern Ireland to have the benefit of uniform legislation.

I understand that the Government wish to introduce what they describe as a single piece of modern legislation that more accurately reflects present-day attitudes to gambling and the demand for gambling facilities in Northern Ireland, which fulfils the dual purpose of attracting public support and reflecting present-day attitudes to gambling. The Minister described the order before us as lengthy and complex but pointed out that the Government were not seeking to stimulate demand for betting and gambling. He also referred to the moral and social grounds that led some local authorities to oppose the extension of local lotteries to them.

The legislation before us will last until the end of the century and well into the next. We are told that some people who were consulted regarded gambling as a sin and a wholly evil activity, which could not be reconciled with their religious beliefs and principles. In this context, I am reminded of an incident many years ago when a

Conservative Chancellor, Harold Macmillan, introduced the premium bond. I was a junior reporter at the time and all the local churches sent telegrams of dissent because they felt that the Chancellor was doing a wicked, wicked thing. Few would now look upon premium bonds as wicked, especially people who have won prizes from them, but even more especially the state, to which revenue has accrued from their sale.

Mr. William Ross: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that people who thought that premium bonds were wicked would not have bought them in the first place?

Mr. Bell: I appreciate the logic of that intervention. Many people enjoy participation in a national lottery, but the main beneficiary is the state. The Minister said that most local authorities opposed the lottery system and that the only major change in the original proposals had been to delete a provision for the running of public lotteries by district councils. I note that that change was requested by the Assembly and by several councils, which strongly opposed such a provision on moral and social grounds—I assume that that was the basis of the intervention of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross)—and on the ground that there was no demand on the part of councils to run public lotteries. Those of us who have seen the success of the French loterie nationale regret such a short-sighted decision, the only effect of which is to deprive local councils of funds.

I do not wish to reflect discourteously on the views of others, but Voltaire once said that when it comes to money we are all of the same religion. When it comes to the extension of betting, gaming, lotteries and amusements and the provision of a legal framework to encompass such activities in Northern Ireland, we are entitled as democratic Socialists to say that the people of Northern Ireland themselves must choose whether they wish to have the freedom to indulge or not to indulge in activities of that kind, bearing in mind the views of the RUC and the existence of paramilitary organisations to which reference has already been made.

I tend towards the view that gambling is an innocent leisure activity that should cause little or no harm. It is possible to lose all one's money on the horses, but it will not be possible to lose all one's money at the casino table because there is no provision for casinos. Nevertheless, when pitch and toss was illegal it was still played in the pit villages of old, with one pit lad always keeping an eye out for the local bobby. It is right, therefore, that if there is to be gambling it should be regulated and supervised within the context of a legal framework known and understood by all.

I well understand the embarrassment and shame that descended upon Downpatrick race club when bookmakers welshed on bets and failed to pay out. It is rather like the capitalist system in which we live — you pays your money and you sees the show or, as we say in law, damage lies where it falls. Bookies welshing on bets, however, is a matter for the race club rather than for the statute book —it is a fact of life and one to be avoided, especially if the punter has backed a winner.

I read with amusement that members of the Assembly committee were able to ascertain what every law student knows—that wagers are not enforceable contracts—and that if there are bookies who welsh on bets there are also punters who do not pay their betting debts. Such people are usually warned off the course.

I note that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, meeting in Belfast, registered its strong disapproval of anything that makes gambling more attractive, tempting or popular and the Government have borne those views in mind in framing the legislation. One sure way to increase the attractions of gambling would be to cloak gambling debts with the authority of law. That has never been done so as to avoid stimulating demand and to ensure that gambling remains what it is — a pleasurable pastime and not a business or a contract carrying enforceable obligations.

I smiled, too, when I saw that although members of the Assembly opposed betting and bookmakers they thought that bookmakers' fees were too small. I have forgotten what the wages of sin is, but in relation to gambling, bookmakers' fees are apparently not high enough for such an allegedly sinful activity.

I am also somewhat bemused about why the Presbyterian Church in Ireland believes that the extension of the tote to greyhound tracks would not merely add to the attractiveness and ease of gambling and be more likely to tempt the casual punter but would be especially attractive to women. I have no idea why women should be singled out as being more likely to be tempted to gamble on such a masculine sport, but if that is the view of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland it must be so — although I am glad to note that that argument did not carry weight with the Social Services Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly. We are as anxious for women to have a fair deal in Northern Ireland as elsewhere in the British Isles, but I doubt whether they would be especially likely to succumb to the temptations of totalisator betting at the dogs, to use a colloquial expression. I doubt, too, whether a supply of one-armed bandits, public lotteries and bingo halls will do

"untold damage to the fabric of our society"

or constitute

"an attack on our very national character".

I accept the views of the Minister in relation to paramilitary organisations which may be involved in social clubs, but it is specious to argue that because there is now to be a legal framework for betting, gaming, lotteries and amusements, additional policing and law enforcement will be required. Even if that were so, I doubt whether it could be established as a corollary that the police would have less time for security duties or that more police or more police overtime would necessarily be required.

The Opposition join the Government in welcoming the legislation and commending it to the House.

10.29 am

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I am not a gambler. I do not go to the horses or to the dogs, I do not play cards or bingo and I do not play any of the many amusement machines which induce people to part with hard-earned money for so-called amusement. However, I suppose that many hon. Members have gambled their previously secure careers on a somewhat precarious one. Their future depends upon those who elected them. By our endeavours, diligence and willingness to serve our constituents, we hope to persuade them to return us as Members of Parliament. But that is not provided for in the order.

Representations have been made to me by the licensed victuallers and publicans in my constituency. They feel that they have been unfairly treated. All that they want is to be given an equal opportunity with the registered clubs

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

to sustain their livelihood. There has been a considerable decline in the number of public houses. If the drinking pattern of recent years is maintained, pubs will continue to disappear as more clubs come into existence and obtain licences to sell alcohol. I agree with the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) that clubs obtain a substantial part of their income and profits from the sale of alcohol. The records show that there is a steadily increasing turnover in clubs from the sale of alcohol.

I am also worried that the choice offered to tourists will be more restricted if the number of public houses continues to decline. Visitors do not easily obtain membership of clubs. Public house proprietors believe that the order is a charter for clubs which already enjoy a considerable advantage over public houses. I do not agree that the claim by clubs that they need the income from amusement machines to finance the running of their club activities is valid. The same argument could be used by public house proprietors. They could validly claim that they have to pay higher rates and higher wages to retain regular staff. Some people admit that clubs contribute to the black economy because the unemployed are ready to volunteer their services behind the bar or within the club for cash payment.

The overheads for publicans continue to rise while more and more of their customers drift away and join the latest club. They have, therefore, valid grounds for complaining that they are being unfairly treated. If gaming machines can be sited in clubs where the consumption of alcohol is steadily rising, I hope that a convincing reason will be offered for denying this source of income to the public house sector.

I hope that we shall be told what control is exercised over the pay-out from gaming machines. The machine is always the winner. Those who play it live in hope of winning the jackpot. They become addicts and play for as long as their money lasts. They are like the elderly, retired lady who goes to her local golf club, has her gin and tonic first thing in the morning, collects the change from a £5 note in 10p coins and plays the machines until they have all gone. Whether or not the machines pay out in the meantime, she plays until the 10p coins have run out. Amusement machines undoubtedly cause addiction.

Young people also become addicted. They live in the false hope that they will have a big win. There is evidence that not only are they prepared to spend money to satisfy their addiction but that they are prepared to steal, rob and mug in order to gamble. As the former vice-principal of a very large school, I found that the biggest single problem for my colleagues and me in 27 years was the amusement arcade craze. There was an endless trail of truancy and theft both inside and outside the school from parents or any other possible source to obtain money with which to play the machines. Nobody benefits from the gaming machines except the proprietors and those who are involved in the manufacture and allocation of the machines.

The majority of people in Northern Ireland are opposed to the installation of gaming machines in either public houses or clubs. However, they are prepared to be fair and would readily accept parity of treatment between pubs and clubs. They do not accept that amusement machines should be permitted inside clubs but not in pubs. Will the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland say whether, even at this late stage, the order can be amended to ensure parity of treatment between pubs and clubs? If he is able to justify the siting of gaming machines in pubs, I hope that he will be able to explain why they should not be permitted in public houses.

I agree that the legislation will help the Royal Ulster Constabulary in its law enforcement role. Can the Under-Secretary of State give the reason for the registration of clubs under this order? There is already the Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Act 1967. If clubs are to be registered under two different measures, what are the advantages and disadvantages of each measure for clubs?

10.38 am

Mr. Chris Patten: The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) began this interesting, albeit short, debate by noting that this legislation is very complex. He is right about that. I note what he said about the legislative process. I was not surprised. I shall pass on his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He gave a general welcome to the order. We shall keep its operation under review.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked why it had taken us since last summer to bring the order before the House. In our defence, I repeat what the hon. Gentleman said. This is complex legislation; it is probably the most bulky and complicated Northern Ireland legislation for 20 or 25 years. That accounts for much of the time that we have taken to bring it from the drawing board to the Dispatch Box.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East began his detailed critique of the order by asking about the change in the criteria regarding bookmakers' offices. He may be misinformed, as others have been, about the consequences of the amendment of the 1957 Act which provides that a licence shall be refused if there are already an adequate number of licensed offices in the locality. The "adequate number" is the maximum number of offices previously licensed in the locality. However, that provision is qualified by the words

"unless there are special circumstances"

which have proved decisive in practice.

That ground has been replaced in the order by the provision that a court shall refuse a licence unless it is satisfied that

"having regard to the demand in the locality . . . for facilities afforded by licensed offices, the number of such offices for the time being available . . . to meet that demand is inadequate".

We do not agree that that wording is less restrictive than that in the 1957 Act. I repeat that the decisive phrase in that Act was

"unless there are special circumstances".

The onus will continue to lie on the applicant to satisfy the court that existing facilities in the locality are inadequate.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East referred to the allegation that there is in the order, and more generally, an inequity between clubs and pubs. The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) made a similar point in his interesting speech. The question is whether the Government are justified in treating clubs and pubs differently in relation to gaming machines.

Unlike licensed premises, clubs are not open to members of the public and are not run for avowedly commercial purposes; therefore the Government accept that, as in Great Britain, private members' clubs in Northern Ireland should be allowed to operate up to two jackpot machines, which is fewer than they can operate at present.

Although licensed premises in Great Britain may be authorised to operate amusement-with-prizes machines, the Government consider that in Northern Ireland, because of its special security problems and because of the need to prevent exploitation of gaming machines by criminal and other undesirable elements, it is essential to be able to control strictly the types of premises open to the public that should be allowed to have such machines.

Decisions on whether particular types of premises, such as pubs, should be prescribed for that purpose, will be taken in the light of prevailing circumstances, having regard, among other things, to the advice of the police. All life is about drawing lines. On security grounds, we have drawn the line in this place on this occasion. However, in responding to the major anxieties of the hon. Members for Londonderry, East and for Antrim, East, I repeat that we hope to legislate on liquor licensing and on clubs in the next Session. I trust that that will remove the sense of unfairness that lingers, as I know from having met representatives of publicans.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East referred to commercial bingo and suggested that there might not be much evidence to support our proposal to allow bingo clubs in Northern Ireland. He also hinted that we might be encouraging reckless spending at the expense of housekeeping needs.

There is adequate evidence of demand for bingo in Northern Ireland where, in recent years, a number of private clubs have been established. Strictly speaking, bingo is illegal, except when run as a private lottery or for non-commercial purposes. There are grounds for believing that a number of existing clubs are primarily commercial ventures.

The Government believe that, where there is a discernible public demand for this sort of activity, it is preferable to recognise that fact and to allow it be run legally and subject to appropriate controls. That is what the legislation aims to do.

The Royal Commission on gambling in Great Britain found in 1977-78 that it had not been possible to substantiate suggestions that bingo clubs had been the cause of family neglect and that overspending in clubs at the expense of housekeeping contributed to domestic friction. There are many more important reasons for domestic friction. On the contrary, the Royal Commission accepted that the clubs provided a valuable social function in relieving loneliness and boredom and by providing places where people could meet socially and at little expense. The number of bingo clubs in Northern Ireland will be restricted to what the courts consider justified, having regard to the demand for such facilities and the extent to which they are available in the locality.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked about residential requirements. We appreciate that the requirement that applicants seeking licences under the order should ordinarily reside in Northern Ireland may present difficulties for some individuals or companies, particularly because of the introduction of legal restrictions in some areas not covered by the existing law.

The purpose of the residential requirement is to facilitate enforcement of the law and to enable the police and the courts to be satisfied of the fitness of applicants for various licences under the order, including licences for bookmakers, bookmaking offices, bingo clubs, gaming machine certificates and so on. I am sure that hon. Members will accept that a residential requirement is essential. The advice from the RUC was that 12 months was the minimum period of residence that would be appropriate.

As a residence requirement would apply to an individual and to members of a partnership seeking a licence, it is logical that the same requirement should apply to those responsible for the local management and control of a company. That is in line with the policy followed generally by the Gaming Board in Great Britain, which almost invariably insists that the directors, or at least a majority of them, of a company seeking a certificate of consent or a gaming machine suppliers' certificate should reside in Great Britain.

In effect, therefore, a Northern Ireland enterprise wishing to extend its operations to Great Britain would encounter the same difficulties as would a company from Great Britain wishing to operate in Northern Ireland. Of course, it is open to any company to establish a locally based subsidiary company under the control of locally resident directors, thereby meeting the residence requirement in the order. I hope that that will provide the sort of flexibility that the hon. Member for Londonderry, East seeks.

The hon. Member asked about the benefits of the operation of the tote at dog tracks. Representatives of greyhound track operators have insisted for many years that the lack of that facility has had a detrimental effect on their business and on the greyhound industry generally. I sympathise with that view.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked whether lottery tickets could be sold outside Northern Ireland. That would depend on the relevant social law applying in the country in which the tickets were to be sold.

The hon. Gentleman understandably dwelt at length on our decision not to establish a gaming board in Northern Ireland. I draw his attention again to the security considerations to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Bell: The Minister mentioned companies in Northern Ireland in the betting business. Will he confirm or comment on the possible gain of 240 jobs in Northern Ireland and the generation of an extra £6·92 million for the public purse if gaming laws in Northern Ireland were brought into line with those in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman might have pool betting in mind. Throughout the consultation period, we received no representations on that subject. Had we done so, we should have taken account of those representations when drafting the order. By the time that we received those representations, we were unable to redraft the order. We have made it clear throughout that we are trying to meet known existing demand rather than to stimulate demand. In any future amendments of the legislation, we shall have to take account of the representations made to us.

I suppose that it would be possible to argue that, if we had allowed the establishment of casinos in Northern Ireland, it might have created a great deal of employment. However, I do not think that there is an existing demand for casinos. We would have stimulated it, and much against the judgment and social habits of many people in Northern Ireland who would have found casinos offensive. I am always prepared to meet and, I hope, deal helpfully with people who make proposals to create employment in

[Mr. Patten]

Northern Ireland. I have met some of the representatives of the interests to which the hon. Gentleman referred before and I would be happy to meet them again.

The need for a gaming board in Great Britain arose primarily from the decision to allow commercial gaming clubs there. As there is no evidence of demand for such clubs in Northern Ireland—the order does not provide for them—it is considered that the establishment of a gaming board would not be justified. The certification and policing functions related to other types of gaming activity carried out by the board in Great Britain will be discharged, where appropriate, by other bodies in Northern Ireland including the courts, the local authorities, the police and, for certain purposes, the Department. I hope to satisfy the hon. Gentleman that the RUC will take appropriate measures to ensure that it can uphold this law.

In an interesting speech, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) referred to the limit on the time that we have given the Assembly to consider this extremely complicated piece of legislation. A limit has to be put on consultation periods. We were anxious to press ahead with such speed as the complexity of the legislation allowed, but we were able to take account of comments made by the Assembly and others after the end of the consultation period.

Mr. Bell: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm the Assembly's disappointment at the Government not accepting more of its recommendations? I understand that the order includes but two of the Assembly's 15 suggestions in full and another two in part. Does he agree that that reflects the curious dichotomy in the thinking of those who want legislation relating to Northern Ireland to approximate to that for the rest of the United Kingdom but who, when confronted with legislation with that in mind, back away from it so quickly that the obverse turns out to be true? The public perceive that there are such differences in outlook and temperament that, in the end, separate legislation is necessary. Would the hon. Gentleman like to spend a moment discussing that attitude in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Mr. Patten: It is not for me, but perhaps for divine providence, to fathom the workings of the Assembly on this issue. The hon. Gentleman criticised us for not accepting local lotteries. That was one of the Assembly's suggestions that we accepted. Some of the arguments that lay behind the Assembly's recommendations were a little Byzantine for me. I think that we have taken adequate account of the Assembly's recommendation.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Does the Minister recall that, when the ill-fated Northern Ireland Act 1982 was going through the House, many of us warned —and the House generally agreed—that, if a body were established without being given any responsibility, it could be expected only to be irresponsible and unconstructive?

Mr. Patten: I have had the opportunity, since I have taken a more active interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland than I took in 1982, to take a certain amount of Northern Ireland legislation through the House. On most occasions when I have had that great privilege we have dealt with Assembly recommendations that have been more helpful than they were on this occasion. I do not mean to criticise the committee over which one of the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends presided with such distinction, but we have had more useful reports on other orders. I understand some of the social pressures that made it difficult on occasion for the Assembly to deal as one might have liked with this order.

I accept that there is a demand for lotteries. We are meeting it in the order. All that is at stake today is whether we have been right to say that district councils should not run local lotteries. As local councils did not want to run local lotteries, I do not think that we would have been right to force them to do so.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East said that he is not a gambler and therefore came to this subject with some humility. My knowledge of this subject is not based on anything so vulgar as experience, though I did once go into a betting shop.

The hon. Gentleman referred to what the hon. Member for Londonderry, East said about the comparison between the treatment of pubs and clubs. I think that I have dealt with that matter in my response to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East. As for control on pay-outs from machines, we are establishing a regime of controls under chapter III of part III and in schedule 11. I hope that they will be adequate.

We realise that the order raises important social and environmental issues and that many people hold strong, albeit widely divergent, views about what legislation on these matters should contain. We are also conscious of the serious harm and suffering that excesses of gambling can cause individuals, their families and society. We are also conscious of the need to ensure that facilities for gambling will not be open to exploitation by criminals and other undesirable elements in the community.

However, we respect the freedom of the individual and do not want to interfere any more than is necessary in activities which, for the vast majority of those who engage in them, are normally quite harmless. We also accept that, when there is demand in a substantial section of the community for facilities that enable them to participate in various types of gambling, it is neither realistic nor desirable to attempt to suppress such activity. We have borne all those factors in mind when considering what measures would be appropriate for Northern Ireland.

It is inevitable that, when dealing with issues of this type, finely balanced judgments have to be made. That applies no less to Governments than to individuals. Although we make no claim to infallibility in this respect, we believe that the order achieves a reasonable balance between the legitimate interests of those who want the law to reflect the demand for gambling facilities, and the need to ensure that gambling takes place in a framework of statutory control that protects the interests of society in preventing abuse of those facilities. In that spirit, I have great pleasure in commending the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 26th June, be approved.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 5 (Friday sittings).*

Top Salaries Review Body

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook) *(by private notice)* asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the report of the Top Salaries Review Body.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Rees): I have been asked to reply. I have nothing to add to the written answer given yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth).

Mr. Hattersley: Clearly, the Prime Minister, who has direct responsibilities for these matters and who is in London this morning, should have had the courage to answer. The fact that she chooses to hide behind the Chief Secretary, of all people, shows the depths of desperation in which the Government find themselves. Although the Chief Secretary may have nothing to add now, sooner or later public opinion will make the Government add something to yesterday's inadequate statement.

How do the Government justify abolishing wages council protection for young low-paid workers one day and awarding a salary increase of £23,750 a year to the Secretary to the Cabinet the next? Have the Government now converted to the principle of comparability, or has comparability simply been wheeled out as an excuse to pay massive wage increases to the already highly paid?

If comparability is something more than camouflage, is the principle to be applied throughout the public service? Can the job that Lord Plowden did with such success for top salary earners be extended to other areas—the teachers and Lord Houghton, the miners and Lord Wilberforce, the nurses and Lord Halsbury, and local authority manual workers and Professor Hugh Clegg? The Government have denounced all those cases of comparability. The Chief Secretary had better tell us whether they have mended their ways and now believe that that is the proper way to proceed.

Will the Chief Secretary tell us about the two justifications which have been offered for the review? The first is that these people pay particularly high levels of taxation. I hope that the Chief Secretary has the grace to admit that these people—the top salary group—are the only section in the population who have received any net benefit from the Government's taxation policy. It is the one group that is paying less tax than before 1979. Eighty-seven per cent. of the population is paying more, and the Chief Secretary had better admit that.

The second justification is that the increases are necessary to recruit the right sort of people. That is what the Government spokesman said on the radio this morning. At present salary levels are the judges inadequate, the generals inefficient and the permanent secretaries incompetent, especially those who have been hand-picked by the Prime Minister during the past two years? Clearly the Prime Minister was desperate to avoid a debate on the subject, but she cannot run away from the consequences of her philosophy, which are demonstrated by this decision.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no question of giving way in the middle of a series of questions.

Mr. Hattersley: Whatever the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) may wish to say, he would defend the Government if they decided to kill the first-born on 23 December one year. Whatever he may say, the public relations image of compassionate Conservatism lasted for about 48 hours, as witnessed by the fact that the Chief Secretary, of all people, was wheeled in for today's statement.

The Government have one rule for the rich and another for the rest. It is that commitment to the divided society which makes the Government increasingly despised throughout the country.

Sir William Clark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during his long harangue the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that I would support the Government, even if they killed the first-born. Surely that is so offensive that it should be withdrawn immediately.

Mr. Speaker: If the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made that accusation, I am certain that he would wish to withdraw it.

Mr. Hattersley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The remark was intended as an image, but if the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) wishes to take it literally I withdraw the literal interpretation, if not the image that I implied.

Sir William Clark *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. A full withdrawal would settle the matter.

Mr. Hattersley: Gladly.

Mr. Rees: I shall not attempt to match the indignation of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), except to remind him and the House that in 1978, when he was a member of it, the Labour Cabinet accepted the recommendation of the Top Salaries Review Body for salary increases of 35 per cent. for the grades covered. I hope that I can deal more coolly with the matter than the right hon. Gentleman, with his highly charged questions.

The problem with wages councils is different, and, therefore, our responses have been different. In some cases the recommendations of wages councils have made it more difficult, not easier, for young people to find jobs, and that is the problem that we are addressing.

In this case—I come to the right hon. Gentleman's last point—the question relates to recruiting and retaining people of high quality. Obviously the existing holders of those offices are of the highest quality, and no implied criticism is contained in the Prime Minister's second justification. We must ensure the right quality of successors.

If the right hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to study the report, especially paragraph 67, he would have found that comparability was not the predominant influence on the review body. Indeed, it said that if it had based its recommendations purely on the comparability principle, it would have recommended much higher figures.

On the question of high levels of taxation, the right hon. Gentleman did not pay attention to our debates on the Finance Bill; otherwise he would recall that we have directed most attention to the thresholds, which have been increased by 20 per cent. in real terms since we came to power in 1979.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the number of people involved in the recommendations amount to 2,000, and that in considering a reward the numbers involved must always be borne in mind? Will he further confirm that, if we appoint review bodies, it does not make sense to ignore what they say? Is it not a fact that we accepted the review body's recommendations on nurses' pay, although pay was staged? Are not these recommendations also staged in recognition of the need for restraint in this matter? Will he further confirm that in the Prime Minister's answer to my question a great deal of stress is placed on individual merit and performance, that the awards are being made in that context, and that we want increasingly to move in that direction?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is right, in that slightly more than 1,800 people are involved. The increased cost will be absorbed in the running costs total, so the cash limits will not be breached. He is also right in what he says about accepting the report. When the review body was set up in 1971, together with the review bodies for the armed forces, doctors and dentists, my noble Friend Lord Carr announced that the Government would not modify the recommendations unless there were clear and compelling reasons. We have made some slight modifications in this case. Nevertheless, we continue to adhere to the principle announced by my noble Friend.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): In view of the opposition expressed to the increases in top salaries, does the Chief Secretary expect similar opposition to inappropriate increases in Members' salaries, which would add another 650 to the total of 2,000?

Mr. Rees: I do not wish to anticipate anything that might be done with regard to Members' salaries, and I accept no ministerial responsibility for them.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): If, as my right hon. and learned Friend claims, the report is not based upon comparability, is it not important that we should be sure on what basis the awards are being made? Therefore, is not an important consideration the question of relative justice between groups?

Mr. Rees: Relative justice between groups is highly subjective. I am not sure which groups my hon. Friend has in mind. The part of the report that commended itself most to the Government dealt with the recruitment and retention of people of the right quality to fulfil tasks of the greatest responsibility in the service of the Crown.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Is it not especially offensive that such whacking increases should be given to civil servants who have been instructed by the Government to resist the partial restoration of standards for nurses and teachers? Will the Government proceed at once, on the basis of the top salaries report, to restore the standards which nurses had under Halsbury and which teachers had under Houghton?

Mr. Rees: The right hon. Gentleman forgets what has happened to the nurses under this Administration. Their salaries have increased by 90 per cent. in cash terms and by 20 per cent. in real terms. Also, if the right hon. Gentleman searches his conscience, he may be uneasy about what the Labour Government did for the teachers.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that all Conservative Members support the Government's desire to reduce inflation? However, does he understand that this award will push the loyalty of many Conservatives in our constituencies a very long way? Did not the Prime Minister suggest that Members of Parliament and others at the top of the salary scale should be restrained and should give a lead to the rest of the country? The Government must realise that there will be considerable criticism of this award, when we are offering only 6 per cent. to teachers and have given only a small increase to nurses.

Mr. Rees: Of course, I note my hon. Friend's concern and that of his constituents. However, I have no doubt that he will explain to his constituents the difference between those in the public service to which these recommendations relate and Members of the House, who are responsible for fixing their own salaries. That is not true of the heads of the Civil Service or the armed forces.

May I emphasise the position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who said that he would welcome a restructuring of teachers' salaries, with special emphasis on the position of head teachers.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Does the Chief Secretary accept that the people who will get these massive increases in salary are the people who have had massive tax concessions from the Government since they came into office in 1979? Is it not a further example of the Government's insensitivity, and their determination to clobber the poor, whether they be nurses, teachers or the young unemployed, and to mollycoddle the rich? Is it any wonder that many Conservative voters and Members are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the massive injustices perpetrated by the Government?

Mr. Rees: I may be unable to persuade the hon. Gentleman, but I could persuade the majority of hon. Members to accept that tax rates of 98 per cent. and 83 per cent. can hardly be regarded as just, or as assisting our fellow countrymen. We put those injustices right, and we have also directed resources to raising the starting point for tax, which has benefited those for whom the hon. Gentleman affects concern.

Since the hon. Gentleman has again asked about nurses' pay, may I repeat that if nurses' pay had stayed at the real level inherited by the Government in 1979 the pay of a staff nurse on the maximum rate would now be £2,000 less. That is a measure of our concern for the nurses, which is greater than that of the Labour party.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the real issue here is the retention of the right calibre of civil servants so that they can carry out the duties for which they are responsible? Is he aware that it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit top grade accountants to the National Audit Office? Will he remind the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that he was wrong to suggest that I am a spokesman for the Government?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend has made several effective points, and has made his position clear. May I refer the House to the last sentence of paragraph 39 of the report, which states:

"Good quality cannot be obtained on the cheap in a competitive market place which, increasingly, is an international one for the best management talent."

Mr. Clement Freud (Isle of Ely): Why is the Chief Secretary so worried about losing the best and brightest civil servants and so cavalier about losing the best and brightest teachers and nurses?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard my answer to a supplementary question from my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has made it clear that he would welcome a restructuring of teachers' salaries, with special emphasis on the position of head teachers. We wish to ensure that people with responsibility and with special talents in the teaching profession, as elsewhere, are properly rewarded.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Can my right hon. and learned Friend explain the ambivalent attitude of Opposition Members, who appear to advocate the rate for the job for some groups but not for others? How and where do they draw the line? Do they base their calculations on responsibility, on salary or on political expediency?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend has exposed the synthetic indignation of the Opposition and their complete failure to grasp the reality of the present position.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): If, as the Chief Secretary says, the intention of this grotesque distortion in salary scales is to retain the right calibre of people, why is it that some under-secretaries will receive only 5·1 per cent. increases, while their bosses will receive 46 per cent. increases? Are the under-secretaries not of the right calibre?

Mr. Rees: I have not suggested that. Of course, they will be encouraged by the glittering prospects available to them if they stay in the service.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain to the House how often the top salaries of those involved have been held back because of the political guilt kick, which we have heard expressed by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)? Will he make it plain that these increases will make up for increases that were funked, wrongly, in the past?

Mr. Rees: My hon. and learned Friend is right. We have had about 22 reports from the body, and it makes a more extensive review every three years. Without notice of my hon. and learned Friend's question, I cannot say exactly what the Labour Government's decision was on each occasion, but I repeat that, in 1978—I give them full credit for it—they did not flinch from increasing salaries in line with the body's recommendations.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Chief Secretary aware that this action will engender massive resentment and disgust in the country, not confined to supporters of the Opposition, especially when it has come from a Government led by a Prime Minister who had the gall to quote the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi when entering No. 10 Downing street? Does he agree that this will be a signal to the nurses, the teachers and to others struggling to obtain a decent wage not to pay the slightest attention to any of the Government's sermons on wage restraint?

Mr. Rees: This conclusion of the Government will excite indignation only if the wilful misrepresentations of the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) and the Opposition parties go uncorrected.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is it not true that there is never a popular time to make necessary increases of this kind and that it is characteristic of the Opposition parties that their indignation is always bogus, their grasp of reality is always tenuous and their appeal to envy and class hatred is constant?

Mr. Rees: My hon. and learned Friend has accurately sized up the approach of the Opposition parties to this problem.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): What message has the Chief Secretary for those in the north-east, 250,000 of whom have been unemployed since 1979 and 450,000 of whom live below the decency threshold level of the Council of Europe? Is the message for those people that if Thatcherism is not working for them it is not working either for those top people who need to be recruited into the Civil Service by such massive pay increases? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying that, if they do not have these increases, they will leave the country?

Mr. Rees: I suspect that the people for whom the hon. Gentleman professes to speak will appreciate that it is better to have a high quality Civil Service and high quality armed forces than to have their position constantly eroded by the envy, malice and misunderstanding of the Opposition.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, unlike, for example, the hon. Member for Middlesborough (Mr. Bell), the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) or me, the people who are receiving these increases are unable to earn large sums of money in addition to their salaries? While it may be unoriginal, is it not always true that the poor are not helped by attacking the rich? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Labour party, the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party have given notice to anyone with talent and ability that he need not expect his talent and ability to be rewarded by any future Government in which any of those parties has any part to play?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend has succinctly summed up the message that goes out every time that the Labour party cares to disclose its policies, which it does very rarely. The other parties are so thinly represented here at the moment that I would not care to speculate on their position.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Chief Secretary aware that, in view of the expected Government reshuffle, his statement today may be the last one that he will make on behalf of the Government?

Is it not fair to say that the Government are not beset by communication problems and presentational difficulties? The point is that the Government are determined to look after those at the very top. Having allocated tax cuts to the top 6 per cent. in society, they have the nerve to hand out these massive pay increases to top civil servants and all the rest, none of whom works in an economic unit of production, as opposed to pensioners who have been offered about 7 per cent., nurses who have been offered 7 per cent. coupled with the threat to take some of it back, and local authority manual workers who were offered 4 per

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cent. last year and probably will be offered the same again this year. All these groups in society are deliberately hammered by this Government so that they can better look after their own class. It is time that the Chief Secretary, when he loses his job in the autumn, took the whole caboodle of the Tory Front bench with him. The best thing that this Government can do is resign and get out of the way.

Mr. Rees: I should not expect the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to understand the scale of responsibilities carried by the people for whom the review body has made these recommendations.

Mr. Michael Howard (Folkestone and Hythe): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that exceptional ability, exceptional responsibility and exceptional effort should be accorded exceptional reward? Is not this proposition recognised universally in all the most successful economies? Is it not the case that the greater the extent to which it becomes recognised here, the greater are our prospects of establishing ourselves amongst the most successful economies, to the benefit of all our people?

Mr. Rees: I accept entirely the principles enunciated by my hon. and learned Friend. Would that the Opposition had the same clear-sighted appreciation of what the country requires.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Chief Secretary give consideration to the feeling in Scotland, especially amongst the teachers, who have been arguing for more than a year for the creation of an independent salaries review body? Unfortunately, there is no Scottish Minister present to advise the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Scottish teachers have been arguing for such an independent review body to evaluate their position in society, only to see these rewards being given by the Government to highly paid people. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman try to evaluate the resentment in Scottish schools and Scottish education and the damage that the Government are doing?

Mr. Rees: I shall not trespass on what is a particularly Scottish problem, although I doubt whether it is a particularly Scottish problem. However, I remind the House that the loss of relative value in teachers' pay occurred between 1975 and 1979 after the Houghton award had stoked up inflation.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that I am one who supports a proper wage rise for teachers and that I am also one who was paid the Houghton award of 1974? I was in the profession between 1974 and 1979 and saw that pay award eroded by a Labour Government and a Lib-Lab Government of which the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was a member. We were much worse off then than teachers are now. I also remember Mrs. Castle saying to teachers in an early dispute with the Labour Government for higher pay, "Good luck to you," but she was in the Cabinet which refused us an increase. What hypocrisy! Will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the gross hypocrisy and absurd position of the Labour and Liberal parties on teachers' pay?

Mr. Rees: It is beyond me to comment effectively on the hypocrisy of the Labour party. However, I am glad that my hon. Friend, speaking from first-hand experience, has set the record right.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman regret that his engagements last night did not allow him to be present to hear my Adjournment debate during which I put forward a case for a very seriously ill man who twice applied——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a bit wide of the Top Salaries Review Body's recommendations.

Mr. Clarke: My point is that this man's claim was rejected by some of the people who today are to be given these massive increases. Will the Chief Secretary accept that people are sick and tired of government by the establishment for the establishment and of the arrogance of intellect coupled with the brutality of power?

Mr. Rees: I am sorry that I did not have the privilege of hearing the hon. Gentleman's intervention last night. I shall study the record in *Hansard*, though I doubt whether that problem was the responsibility of any of the civil servants or members of the armed forces for whom these recommendations have been made.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend not be deterred by the hysteria on the Opposition Front Bench and elsewhere from putting, as he has done, the case for high salaries for high responsibilities in the public service? However, will he please think again about his surprising assertion that, because Members of Parliament can fix their own wages, they are in a different category? If the Government had accepted the independent recommendations two years ago of the same investigator, that problem would not have arisen.

Mr. Rees: I take note of what my hon. Friend says. I think that I should be going a little wide of the subject if I were drawn into commenting on the salaries of hon. Members.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is the Chief Secretary seriously asking the public to believe that increases for permanent secretaries of between 32 per cent. and 46 per cent. are necessary to stem the fall in their morale and to stop civil servants and others feeling like parasites? Does not he understand that many in the Civil Service, especially in the lower ranks, have low morale and feel like parasites because the Prime Minister and her Government have never ceased denigrating public service ever since they assumed power? Why do the Government think that they can have teachers and nurses on the cheap? Why is it necessary for the poor to accept wage cuts to make them work harder whilst the rich must always have more to make them work harder?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman seems to be a little confused. We have deep appreciation of the dedication and contribution of civil servants and the armed forces. They should be properly rewarded, and I hope that, particularly after this, they will so regard it. Our record on the Civil Service stands the closest possible examination, and I am happy to rebut the hon. Gentleman's distortions.

The hon. Gentleman returned to the point about teachers' pay. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has emphasised, we would be delighted to see restructuring to give emphasis to special skills and responsibilities.

As to the case of nurses, the hon. Gentleman had better study *Hansard* tomorrow. I have set out not once but three times how our record stands the closest possible comparison with that of the Labour Government. The cash increase for nurses has been about 94 per cent. and the real increase about 20 per cent. Every nurse and staff nurse would be far worse off if the levels of pay for that dedicated profession that we have inherited from the Labour Government had been perpetuated.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question and I have an obligation to protect the Northern Ireland business. I propose to allow questions to continue for a further five minutes and then we must move on.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. and learned Friend will have noticed that, almost to a man, Opposition Members have advocated upward comparability. Does he recognise that there are Conservative Members who believe that the way to control the inflation with which the Labour party, when in power, nearly destroyed the country is through restraint, and that restraint must apply to top salaries as well as to others?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend will have noticed that we have not implemented the recommendations in full. He is right to remind the House that the standard of living and savings of most sectors of our community were eroded to an incomparable degree by the inflation that prevailed under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose—[Interruption.]*

This is not a bit of fun, although it may be funny to the Tories. Is the Minister prepared to tell the 4 million unemployed, the 1 million homeless, the 600,000 waiting for hospital treatment, the old-age pensioners and the young unemployed that it is they who will be making the sacrifices to pay for these £500 a week increases?

Mr. Rees: To set the record right, in case anybody should be misled by the hon. Gentleman's misunderstanding of the facts, I point out that the cash involved in a full year will be £9 million, and this year it will be £4 million. I emphasise again that this will be absorbed into the running costs and cash limits of the Department concerned.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the pay review body is impartial, and that its findings are based on a careful evaluation of the facts before it?

Mr. Rees: It is a completely impartial body and it has never been suggested, even by Labour Members, that it is not.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The two-faced actions this week by the class-ridden Tory Government show one thing. On Wednesday, they tell half a million youngsters, some of whom are on £29·70 a week, that they are pricing themselves out of jobs. On Thursday their friends in high places, the ones they share clubs and restaurants with, and went to school with, and into whose families they married, who are served by those youngsters in hotels and restaurants and shops are told that they can have a rise of £460 a week. Is not that a clear sign of a class-ridden Government that should be swept from office?

Mr. Rees: I do not know the hon. Gentleman's definition of a class-ridden Government, but I suggest that he studies the differentials in the Soviet Union.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend share my sense of relief that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) does not intend to participate in the massacre of the first-born? Will he confirm that the Government are already having difficulties in recruiting judges and potential senior civil servants?

Mr. Rees: I know that the House will not regard my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) as having Herodian sentiments in this or in other parts of public sector activity. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the central point, which is dealt with at various points in the review body's recommendations, that there is difficulty in recruiting in certain sectors, and certainly difficulty in retaining people at various grades. I am sure that the House will join in believing that we should have high quality armed services, and a high quality public service generally.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Does the Chief Secretary have any real conception of how yesterday's decision will be greeted by those young people for whom this Government offer no employment prospects, a reduction in supplementary benefit and destruction of the wages council provisions giving them a minimum level of protection? How will he persuade them that we live in one nation?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman either does not understand or wilfully misunderstands the Government's intentions. If he had listened closely to the careful case for reform of the wages councils, he might be able to explain to young people that it will enhance rather than diminish their chances of finding work. He might also remind them of the considerable resources devoted at Budget time to increased training and various job creation schemes.

Mr. Adley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are running short of time. What does the hon. Gentleman wish to say?

Mr. Adley: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but I intend to pursue this matter. The hon. Gentleman deliberately used, in a loud voice, the word "hypocrite" to describe my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that, in this highly charged situation, hon. Members will moderate their language.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is it not the case that, when the Labour party and the alliance were trying to score cheap political points over the appointment of Mr. Peter Levene, they fully recognised the serious problem of senior civil servants drifting into the private sector? Is there not much humbug among Opposition Members? Only a month ago, in the defence debates, leaders of both parties were calling on the Government to do more to stop the drift of officers into the private sector.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is right. The Labour party has never realised that there is an open international

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market for talent. If the country is to be well administered, and if our prospects are to be maintained at a high level, it is important that we should recruit, retain and motivate the highest quality people to serve in the armed forces and Civil Service.

Mr. Hattersley: The Chief Secretary will have heard criticism of the Government's proposals from both sides of the House, and most eloquently from the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and others of his hon. Friends, both now and at about 9.30 this morning. As the feelings on both sides of the House are so strong, does he understand that it will be intolerable if these decisions are implemented before they are debated in the House of Commons; and when they are debated we hope that the Prime Minister will have the courage to come to defend them herself?

Mr. Rees: I make it clear that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is concerned with these matters, but she has a meeting with a visiting Head of State this morning. The possibility of a debate is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the usual channels.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed that this morning—and Friday mornings are not notable for a strong attendance in the Chamber—more than 30 hon. Members on both sides of the House have tried to put questions on the statement. Undoubtedly there would have been more had the statement been made on a normal working day. There might even have been a spokesman from the SDP present.

I need your advice and help, Mr. Speaker. Is it not clear that there is a need for a full debate on this package of pay proposals, particularly as the Government are about to add a Cabinet Minister to all those who are aboad this high-wage gravy train? As only five more working days are left before we go into recess until the end of October, will you, on behalf of the House, use your authority to convey to the Prime Minister not only our deep concern but our strong feeling that the Government should not be allowed to evade a full debate in prime time?

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that that matter is not in my hands. The Adjournment motion is due to be considered next week. Whether we adjourn for the summer recess is in the hands of the House.

Business of the House

11.40 am

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short statement about the business on Tuesday 23 July.

In addition, at the end there will now be a motion on the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1985.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will be grateful to the Lord Privy Seal for making a statement to the House on the Lord Chancellor's salary order for which, in marked contrast to the Prime Minister's written reply on top salaries generally last night, time has been found for debate next week. I have only one question. Is the 16·7 per cent. increase to £77,000 per annum in the Lord Chancellor's salary due to the fear that the present incumbent will be tempted to leave his post for more lucrative offers, or is it due to the inability to attract suitable candidates from other Government levels to take his place?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman's question is of such seriousness and substance that it requires a debate rather than a mere question and answer session across the Table. Parliament is being invited to consider the measure because it needs parliamentary approval.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): May I say how pleased I am that we are to have a debate on Tuesday, because it will allow Government Back-Benchers to say that, although we understand the reasons for accepting the Top Salary Review Body recommendations, we believe that the timing is inept and that the Government are not demonstrating that the burden of moderate salary increases should be shared by everyone?

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for giving me advance notice that we shall experience a lively 90 minutes on Tuesday.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Since the Leader of the House is infinitely more sensitive to feelings in the country and the House than the Chief Secretary, who has fled the Chamber, may I ask him whether he appreciates the genuine sense of moral outrage caused by a salary system over which the Government preside that allows people such as the Lord Chancellor to be paid more than £40 per hour — more than some adult workers are paid per week? The Government have forced people to accept such low wage levels.

Mr. Biffen: That is a good populist point, but not in the context of moral outrage.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept my thanks and congratulations on providing the opportunity to debate the Lord Chancellor's salary increase—and perhaps others—next week? Does he accept that there is deep concern about the issues discussed this morning on both sides of the House, because such rises go against the need to control public expenditure and are a poor example to those of us who are trying to persuade prison officers, the police and teachers to accept sensible and moderate pay awards? Secondly, does he agree that such rises do not set the example that leaders have set before and which the Prime Minister is at present

setting? Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is concern and will he further accept that I welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues next week?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says. He will realise that the change of business covers a relatively narrow issue in relation to the Lord Chancellor. He is right to imply that the wider issues can feature in the Consolidated Fund debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Some Opposition Members wishing to ask a question were called earlier so if I call them now they must confine their remarks to the Lord Chancellor's salary order.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I wonder whether I can help to sort the matter out. Earlier we were told that one of the reasons why the top people, including the Lord Chancellor, need a pay increase is to keep them in their jobs. Perhaps I have not listened to everything that has been said, but I have not heard that the Lord Chancellor is threatening to pack in his job because he cannot get a proper pay rise. We were under the impression that the Lord Chancellor is being kept in his job because the Government are frightened to face a by-election if they have to put somebody else in his job. If that is so are not the Government lining the Lord Chancellor's pockets to save themselves from a by-election which would prove to be another disaster for the Minister?

Mr. Biffen: I understood from the hon. Gentleman's preamble that his comments were by way of assistance. I shall have to reflect considerably before I embrace that assistance.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): When we decide whether to increase the Lord Chancellor's salary next week will it be on the basis that his morale is low, that he is in danger of leaving his post or that we are not paying him enough compared with what he might receive outside?

Mr. Biffen: I shall be happy to give my considered reflections on those direct questions in the debate. In the meantime, I shall have time to acquaint the Lord Chancellor with my hon. Friend's comment so that he can give me some advice.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): How does the Lord Chancellor's rise square with the Government's assertion that people cannot have wage rises because they price themselves out of jobs? How can a rise of thousands of pounds for the Lord Chancellor be squared with that principle when youngsters who are earning £29·70 a week are not even allowed a few pence extra?

Mr. Biffen: Earlier, the hon. Gentleman said something from a sedentary position about corporals being paid the same as field marshals. The hon. Gentleman is quiet about that now. In any society, particularly in relation to public office, differentials are accepted and certain premiums are paid for responsibilities. We must face up to the challenge implicit in the Top Salaries Review Body report. We cannot run away from them.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): While I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement may I ask him to ensure that when we debate the motion on the Lord Chancellor's salary our attention is drawn to the fact that the politics of jealousy, which has given rise to the squeals from the Opposition today, went out with the 1970s? Will he confirm that the majority of people will welcome the rise for the Lord Chancellor and others on the ground that it creates opportunities for their children?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure whether the debate on Tuesday will resolve that issue, but I agree that orchestrated envy has been endemic in politics from the beginning.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Will the Leader of the House reflect on what he said about differentials? Many groups of workers have fallen out of the pecking order scale. Does the Leader of the House accept that the Government should consider what has been said today because they seem to fail to understand that, when ordinary people read in the paper about these great increases for some sections of the community, when skilled engineers, for instance, whose differentials have been eroded——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the business statement is about the Lord Chancellor's salary.

Mr. McKelvey: I was talking about the proposed increase in the Lord Chancellor's salary. I think that on reflection the House might refuse to grant that increase.

Mr. Biffen: This matter can be resolved on Tuesday night. I wonder whether the orchestrated indignation we now hear was evident at all when hon. Members read the written answer on 4 July 1978 which stated:

"The increases now recommended by the Review Body over salaries currently in payment are on average 35 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1978; Vol. 953 c. 98.]

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on.

Gas (Northern Ireland)

11.51 am

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I beg to move,

That the draft Gas (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.

Those who have had to consider this topic in recent months are well aware that the future of the Northern Ireland gas industry has given rise to argument and debate in the Province for many years. Hon. Members may feel that those arguments should be rehearsed again today, but I ask that we do not lose sight of the simple fact that the instrument that is now before the House is made necessary by the fact that only one of Northern Ireland's gas undertakings—and that in private hands, the Portadown undertaking — considers it can continue in business without Government subsidy. This subsidy has rapidly increased from £2 million a year between 1974 and 1980 to £10 million a year between 1980 and 1984, and today it stands at £12 million.

Listening to recent criticism of the draft order, the disinterested layman could be forgiven for assuming that it expressly commanded the closure of the Province's gas industry, overriding the wishes of all those involved in it who wanted to maintain it. That is not the case. In every instance, the decision to close was taken by the gas undertaker alone and was based on a recognition that remaining in operation was not a commercially sensible proposition.

The Government simply said that increasing the subsidy more and more, in the manner of the economics of Passchendaele, would have to come to an end. Once closure decisions were taken, the order became essential, first, to relieve such undertakers of their statutory obligation to supply, and, secondly, to allow the Government to fund an orderly and planned rundown of each undertakings operations.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister referred to an increase in subsidy from £2 million to £12 million — a £10 million increase. He will no doubt point out in due course that the number of workers affected by the order in the gas industry totals at least 1,000 in Belfast and several hundreds elsewhere.

Does he not find it slightly ironic that he should be making such remarks only minutes after one of his colleagues in the Cabinet said that the Government could afford £9 million to increase the salaries of fewer than 2,000 people in the judiciary, the Civil Service and the armed forces? He is now saying that they cannot afford a a similar sum to secure for a further year the equivalent number of jobs in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: I thought that we had finished with that issue and were now dealing with the draft order. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's feelings on the subject and I do not minimise them. Today, however, we must look coldly at the gas industry, and later in my remarks I shall deal with the question of jobs.

It is not simply a question of losing jobs in one industry. By employing coal — it and liquid petroleum already account for 50 per cent. of central heating installations in Northern Ireland—it is hoped, because of the number of people involved in distribution and so on, that there will be more jobs than there are at present. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in expressing that hope.

I have a responsibility to see that the £4 billion available to Northern Ireland is spent to the advantage of the people, and no hon. Member will disagree with me in saying that. We are prepared, as we are already doing, to put money into transferring one generating station over to coal. We believe that to do so is more economic and will save money for the Province because it will make it cheaper to generate electricity. We are also prepared to put money into lignite and to take other financial steps which, in the long run, will be to the advantage of the mass of the population of Northern Ireland. I am therefore grateful to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) for intervening, because he has given me an opportunity to state the position.

For the benefit of hon. Members who may be unfamiliar with the problems of the gas industry of the Province, I should point out that in the last 10 years Governments of both complexions — this can be demonstrated by many quotations from many debates— have sought to tackle the industry's fundamental problem of soaring costs due to its oil-based feedstock and the additional difficulties caused by its fragmented and declining structure.

In May 1976, our predecessors in office—a Labour Government—commissioned the British Gas Corporation to determine the scope for resolving those problems, and the then Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Concannon), for whom we have a high regard, quoted the corporation's report when he said:

"As a whole, the industry has a poor image in the view of its customers and is becoming increasingly uncompetitive with other fuels."—[*Official Report, Northern Ireland Committee*, 6 July 1977; c. 2.]

That was eight years ago.

In its report, the British Gas Corporation — I have that report with me and I am sure that other hon. Members have studied it—looked at all possibilities offering the prospect of viability. Among the options considered was the possibility of a gas pipeline from Great Britain. On the basis of the corporation's report, the Government concluded that, as with a number of areas on the British mainland covering at least 15 per cent. of households, a direct pipeline was not an economic proposition. That remains the position today.

I remind the House that 15 per cent. of households in Great Britain are not on natural gas, although most of them would like to be. That is because they are not within 25 yards of a main pipeline, or—I say this from memory— they are not using more than 25,000 therms over a given period. It was accepted in 1975 that undertakings would at some stage be obliged to close unless further demand was placed on the industry.

Mr. Nellist: Does the Minister mean 25 miles rather than 25 yards?

Dr. Boyson: So far as I know, it is 25 yards, but I am always open to correction. On this occasion, speaking in a gas mantle position, I believe that I am right.

Hope for the industry was rekindled, however, when in 1980 the prospect of a natural gas supply from the Republic of Ireland became a possibility. It was an option which we pursued for the industry with determination, and in October 1983 agreement in principle on a supply of gas from the Kinsale field to Northern Ireland was reached between the British and Irish Governments.

Following the signing of the agreement in October 1983, but preceding the conclusion of a contract for supply

—it was only a memorandum of understanding—two critical developments took place which utterly changed the Kinsale project's prospect of viability. First, the long-term trend in heavy fuel oil prices, which was the integral component in determining the purchase price of Kinsale gas, was reassessed. Expert advice on fuel oil prices was that, over the long term, prices would remain much higher than had been anticipated. Heavy fuel oil prices are, of course, subject to large short-term fluctuations, but these are allowed for in our assessment of the long-term forecast.

The price has come down. At Christmas 1984 it was much higher than when the decision was made in the previous September by my predecessor. In March this year it was the same as it was then. It has since dropped. I have a graph showing the price increases in heavy fuel oil, and it shows tremendous increases in recent years. The graph showing the situation from 1976—I shall be glad to circulate it to any hon. Members who are interested—shows the increase to have continued well beyond the rate of inflation.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): I understood the Minister to say that after October 1983 the Government took expert advice about the trends in heavy fuel oil prices. Is he saying that they did not take expert advice before they signed the memorandum of agreement?

Dr. Boyson: The Government take advice all the time. Indeed, one can suffer from the amount of advice that is received.

Mr. Archer: Now answer my question.

Dr. Boyson: I shall answer the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but he must be patient. He knows as well as I do that we get nothing but advice all the time. Ministers have the task of sorting out which advice is valid and which is invalid in the context of the matters with which they are dealing. My answer, therefore, is that the Government did take advice. I grant that the Labour party, when in office, did the same. Advice is continually coming in. It became more and more apparent that in the long term the cost of heavy fuel oil was more likely to increase than decrease. There was a secondary factor, however, which led us to consider what the fuel oil price would be—the fact that demand for gas in Northern Ireland was collapsing or, at any rate, was falling at a rate that was not expected.

We commissioned a very detailed study from Deloitte, Haskins and Sells to help plan the natural gas network at that time. I have the report here. Even allowing for a wide margin of error, the report of those studies presented an estimated total demand for gas about one third less than the previous forecast produced by Coopers and Lybrand in 1983. In one year the fall in the demand for gas was such that there would have been only two thirds of that demand by the time the pipelines had been laid and natural gas provided to the Province.

Further discussions with the Irish Government failed to secure agreement on a revised price, and evidence from other sources confirmed our amended forecast of demand. In an attempt to resolve the problem, we examined various adjustments to the project, such as reduced area of supply, but none of those proved viable.

We were faced with the stark alternatives of proceeding with an uneconomic project, which would continue to make heavy calls on Northern Ireland's limited public expenditure resources, or withdrawing from it entirely. The decision to abandon the enterprise was unpalatable, unpopular and regrettable in many ways, but I believe that any responsible and honest Government would have made that decision on the information then available. The information is basically the same today as it was when my predecessor made his decision at the beginning of September last year.

The Kinsale project had appeared to offer the industry's only prospect of a secure future. In reaching the conclusion that it was not a commercially viable proposition, the Government reaffirmed the decision taken in July 1979 that there could be no more subsidy for gas undertakings in the absence of any hope of their attaining viability. The Government had been moving towards that decision for about five years previously, and they made it perfectly clear in September last year.

The decision was not taken lightly. It was grounded in a recognition that we could not afford to spend £12 million a year—and it is self-increasing—on something which would contribute only 2 per cent. of Northern Ireland's energy supply. I repeat that 98 per cent. of the energy of Northern Ireland comes from other sources. Indeed, if all the energy of the Province were to be subsidised at the same rate, it would cost £600 million in subsidy—between one sixth and one seventh of the whole of the Northern Ireland block.

The subsidy represents £120 per consumer every year, or 70p for every therm of gas sold. Last year, even with that level of support, the Belfast undertaking alone lost about 10,000 customers, or one in seven. Subsidy of that order must, of course, come out of Northern Ireland's overall allocation. What we spend on a declining gas industry has to be offset by savings in some other area of public expenditure in the Province—for example, health or education.

In announcing the withdrawal of subsidy, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler), invited representations about the future of the gas industry in Northern Ireland from the various interests involved. The Government were prepared to consider seriously any option proposed, on the sole condition that it offered the firm prospect of a viable industry without the continuation of an indefinite subsidy towards the price of gas. That was then the bottom line, and it was again the bottom line in a similar statement that I made in April this year.

In response, a joint working group from the industry announced that it was developing a revised Kinsale gas scheme which it proposed to offer as an alternative to the abandoned project. It has been alleged that we were not disposed to examine that proposal fairly. The reality, of course, is that we allowed the accumulation of another six months of deficit support, at £1 million per month, while the joint working group's scheme took shape. We said, "You can do it, but you must convince us that it will be viable without Government subsidy." When the scheme was finally produced, it was subjected to a thorough appraisal. That appraisal found the scheme to be seriously flawed, for reasons to which I shall come later.

Some hon. Members have suggested that we deliberately avoided conveying our reservations to the scheme's sponsors who, we are told, were "shattered" when I made my announcement to them on Good Friday. Incidentally, Good Friday is a working day in Northern

[Dr. Boyson]

Ireland. We are talking about the Northern Ireland gas industry, not the one in Great Britain, and hon. Members should understand that. I told the sponsors that the Government could not accept their rescue plan for the industry.

The suggestion from hon. Members rather ignores the appraisal process which actually took place. The rescue plan was analysed by the Department's advisers, who then expressed their reservations in person and in detail to the consultants employed by the joint working group. Between five and nine meetings were held, and I have been provided with the dates. The reservations were severe and centred on the methods of analysis which has been used and the demand projections therby produced. Accordingly, the consultants were urged to inform their clients. Against that background, hon. Members will find it less than convincing to be told that the Government's rejection of their plan came as a total shock to the sponsors.

Our appraisal of the rescue plan uncovered a number of major difficulties, but fundamental to the reasons for its rejection was its failure to address that problem of a gas purchase price linked to heavy fuel oil and its dependence on gas capturing a huge share of the market at a high price relative to other fuels that could be bought.

It is generally implied by our opponents that some sort of accommodation on price could have been reached with the Republic of Ireland Government. That suggestion is based on nothing more than wishful thinking, as is hown by an examination of the evidence point by point.

Speaking in the Irish Parliament on 11 June, the Republic's Minister for Energy said:

"Deputy Reynolds and myself were in accord with our decision not to reduce our price to the British and there has not been a change in that case."

Further comments from Mr. Spring, as reported on 10 July in the *Irish Times*, regarding the Republic's policy on gas prices in general, show that there has been no change in its approach. That, of course, is the prerogative of the Irish Government, and I respect their judgment, as they will respect our determination not to become locked into a project which is not viable for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archer: Did the United Kingdom Government ever invite the Irish Government to reconsider that matter?

Dr. Boyson: Conversations on price were held, and they ended when the Irish Government were not prepared to compromise on it. Conversations have not been held since then because there is no sign that the Irish Government have changed their mind.

Last September we made a decision on the information that we had, when there was no suggestion that there would be a lowering of the price, and that decision still stands. We gave them six months in which to produce a viable scheme. We do not believe that it can be a viable scheme. Private enterprise obviously does not believe that it is a viable scheme; otherwise it would back it. The corporations presumably do not believe that it is a viable scheme, or they would back it with their money. Everybody comes to us to provide the money and the guarantees. We are always regarded as the banker of last resort.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Is the Minister suggesting that a price was offered to our Government on a take-it-or-leave-it basis? Is the Minister aware that the negotiations were taking place with the greatest horse traders in the world, who would have been offering gas at the highest possible price that they could obtain for it but who would possibly have accepted a much lower price?

Dr. Boyson: The hon Member has raised an important point. Conversations continued until September last year, when a decision was taken that, unless we could be shown that the scheme was viable, the talks would end. We were prepared to be proved wrong by somebody showing that it could be done more economically. Conversations have not been held since then because it was clear that the price we were then offered was linked with the price of heavy fuel oil. That meant that it was no cheaper than taking heavy fuel oil.

In April this year we said that we were not convinced of the viability of the scheme, and I am even less convinced now. It is the economics of "Alice in Wonderland" to believe that the scheme that was put to us is viable. It came from interests and workers in the gas industry who were not putting in their own money. I am not attacking them for that, but they were not having to cover the money. The bill would have been left with the Government. The more we spend in that direction, the less we can spend in areas where we know we can save money for the Province. We can help with the energy price of electricity and lignite. We cannot spend a pound twice.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): How can the Minister describe as "Alice in Wonderland" the proposals which Coopers and Lybrand and the consultancy report justify in economic and financial terms? How can he use that term to describe the work of those two bodies?

Dr. Boyson: Politicians on each side of the House are elected to make decisions on the information that is put to them. That is why we are here. I have considersble respect for the hon Gentleman. I do not know how one can increase sales at a price that is between 30 and 50 per cent. more than coal. That would mean gas taking 50 per cent. of the central heating market compared with its present 3 per cent. share of the market. I think that no one outside the House would believe that either.

Mr. McCusker: What about Coopers and Lybrand?

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman should ask Coopers and Lybrand, not me. We have made the decision. I am answering the hon. Gentleman perfectly frankly; I am not running away from the question. It was an honest question and the hon. Gentleman is getting an honest reply. I appreciate that there are strong feelings inside and outside the House about the matter. That is why I am putting my case so firmly and strongly.

I shall now spell out in more detail what I was saying about demand in my quick and no doubt correct reply, because I have now lived with the gas industry for about eight or nine months, day by day and step by step.

On demand, the rescue plan requires that gas should capture a tenfold increase in sales at a price which, at the minimum, is about 30 per cent. above the price of coal. For example, that would mean gas taking 50 per cent. of an enlarged central heating market in contrast with its 3 per cent. share of today's market. The plan's supporters have endeavoured to deflect their arguments with calls for the release of the Government's internal market studies, but the fact remains that the scheme requires us to accept

an estimate for demand that is 50 per cent. higher than any other source has ever estimated. Every time we have had a report, the figures have been different. Presumably the only reason why reports can be sold is that the results are different every time. However, after reading the reports one has to make a decision on their validity.

Any person in my position or that of my predecessor could see that demand was falling faster than had been expected. That was the logic of the argument that was put to us at the time.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister accept that when there was no confidence about future supply at reasonable prices and continuing discussion and publicity in relation to the possible closure of the gas industry, it was perfectly normal for people not to choose to use or depend on gas?

Dr. Boyson: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. People were getting out of gas so fast that they literally would have had to be won back to the possibility of natural gas. That is one point about the amended plan. It would have been a long time before natural gas was introduced. People thought that it was a dying industry — it was already dying on its feet. Therefore, they decided not to use gas. They were making a judgment that we eventually had to make. With the information that they received, those people preferred other fuels.

Mr. Archer: I think that the Minister has missed the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs). There is no point in saying that earlier surveys gave a different result about market prospects if at earlier stages prospective candidates for the market had not been offered gas on those conditions and at those prices.

Dr. Boyson: One of the attributes of most politicians is the misunderstanding of a question. In this case, however, I tried to understand the question. We assessed demand as it was at the time, and it was less than before. The right hon. and learned Member is right. The hope of natural gas being introduced in three or four years with the new pipeline and resulting in increased demand, is not one that I share. That is not something that I can prove or disprove. The decision was made on the balance of the facts, and the facts all pointed the same way.

I was trying to spell out all the paraphernalia and information that we were given before we reached our decision. I do not propose to go into all the other doubts that emerged. I mentioned them in the Northern Ireland Committee. Those doubts emerged from our examination regarding the plan's under-estimates of capital cost and optimistic assumptions of productivity. The plan's sponsors know what those doubts are and that, sadly, we find them persuasive. In brief, an investment analysis of the plan's costs and returns showed a large cumulative deficit over the 20-year period of supply. The bottom line was that we were not convinced that that was viable. We thought that it would be a running sore in the finances of the Province.

Notwithstanding the plan's non-viability, the Government were encouraged to invest no more than £4 million to allow its implemention, and that was contrasted with the much greater sums required to assist the industry's closure. That argument is bogus. It assumes that substantial funding would be available from the European Community, but ignores the problem of additionality and the fundamental requirement that projects needing EC assistance must be viable in their own right.

Similarly, the Government are accused of unfairness for daring to include the element of the guarantee that they are required to give in calculating the overall cost of the plan. It is elementary common sense to anticipate the £70 million cost of those guarantees to the taxpayer, as we would have to meet them fully if the scheme did not succeed. We did not expect it to succeed at the time. An individual would not take on a guarantee for anybody without realising that it might be called in. It is real money when it is called in.

It is not a question of spending £4 million or £70 million to keep the industry going, compared with £97 million to close it. We do not believe that the £4 million or the £70 million, would keep it going. We would have to spend £4 million, then £70 million, and then the £97 million in addition. As far as we are concerned, that is pouring good money after bad.

At this stage I wish to allude briefly to several points that were raised during the Northern Ireland Committee debate, which I believe require some comment. First, concern was expressed that a wider European gas network is being planned which would link the gas system in the Republic of Ireland to that of Great Britain. I assure hon. Members that, as far as we know, no such link is envisaged at present. There has been talk about the gas industry for so long, but no concrete plan is on the table. The Government will, of course, regularly review the scope for wider interconnections of various European gas systems, but in order for such projects to be realised they must be economically viable and fulfil a commercial need.

Hon. Members may have seen speculation this week about private sector interest in the funding of new gas supply arrangements in the Province. I applaud every attempt to enhance the role of private capital in the Province's industry, and the gas industry is no exception. Obviously, the Government would not prevent private investment in any plan to revive the existing undertaking or to set up a new gas industry as long as genuine private investment was involved without recourse to Government guarantees and protection. The Government cannot invest taxpayers' money in a project in which we no longer have confidence. If such people want to put their money in, we would not stop them, but it is no good their coming to us for bottom line guarantees.

Of all the issues raised regarding the abandonment of the Kinsale project and the subsequent rejection of the rescue plan proposals, none is more important than job losses arising from closure decisions by undertakings. No one on either side of the House has a monopoly of concern on that matter. I regarded the impact on jobs as the prime reason for affording the rescue plan the extra six to eight months to see whether it could bring forward a viable scheme. However, simply wishing to preserve jobs is not a feasible basis for the success of any industry.

In recent years, the desire to maintain employment in the Province's gas undertakings has persuaded Governments of both colours to provide ever-increasing subsidies only to see the industry's decline continue relentlessly. Also, as I stressed in the Northern Ireland Committee debate, the jobs factor is not a simple issue. Closure would mean the loss of 1,000 jobs. One recognises that, and nobody is satisfied about it. The April plan would save 400 jobs. Those jobs could be saved only if trade was taken away from coal or other energy resources, all of which are labour-intensive industries.

[Dr. Boyson]

As I have said, time will tell, but I should not be surprised if the increased use of solid fuel and liquid petroleum gas, both of which are labour-intensive in distribution, results in at least as many, if not more, jobs in the long run. The Government will attempt to minimise hardship by underwriting payment of redundancy terms up to those agreed in the British Gas Corporation. In addition, certain employees participating in the local government superannuation scheme will be eligible for early retirement benefit. Incidentally, Kilroot power station, when converted to solid fuel, will at its peak employ 500 people. It will also employ more people than before inside the generating station.

All but one of the Province's gas undertakings have decided to close and a number have expressed their wish to do so without delay. However, 10 of the 12 undertakings opting for closure have statutory obligations to supply, the removal of which is not provided for in any existing legislation. I have already made it clear to the House that every month of subsidy costs the taxpayer another £1 million. For that reason, I consider it essential to provide those undertakings which wish to close quickly with the legal authority to do so as soon as possible. Following consideration of the points raised in Committee, I concluded that we should lay the draft order before the House without delay.

Those hon. Members who attended the Northern Ireland Committee debate on the order will be aware that I said on that occasion that, following representations made during the consultation period on the order, I was examining the possibility of removing certain provisions contained in the published proposal. That examination, with information from Belfast power station and elsewhere, persuaded me that the deletion of those provisions would not affect the orderly rundown of any gas undertaking wishing to close or the effective control of public expenditure on assistance during closure. Accordingly, the draft order reflects those amendments. Those hon. Members requiring notification of such changes have been duly informed by me in correspondence.

I propose now to refer briefly to the provisions of the order. Articles 1 and 2 are the customary clauses relating to the title and interpretation. I do not think that anyone can argue about those.

Article 3 permits gas undertakers in Northern Ireland to enter into a voluntary agreement with the Department to facilitate their rundown process when closure decisions have been taken.

Article 4 removes from such undertakers statutory and contractual obligations to supply.

Article 5 is a reserve power of direction providing the Department of Economic Development with power to direct aspects of the rundown process where this is considered essential.

Article 6 provides the Government with authority to offer direct financial support to undertakers allowing them to continue to operate while an orderly rundown is in progress. Support is also necessary to help undertakings to meet the various costs associated with actual closure, including the discharging of outstanding financial liabilities.

Article 7 establishes incidental legal provisions regarding rundown and provides for the legal wind-up of undertakings following closure.

Article 8 enables the development of a gas conversion assistance scheme. Since the proposal for the draft order was published, I have been able to announce details of ths scheme. I shall not go through them now as they are public knowledge.

Article 9 requires that gas consumers be given notice of any action arising from the order which will affect them.

Article 10 provides for the repeal of redundant provisions in related legislation.

Through the mechanism of the order, the Government propose to take the initial steps in the provision of substantial public funds to permit the orderly rundown and closure of those gas undertakings which opt for that course of action. In so doing we are attempting to ensure that the closure process in every case will cause minimum harship to consumers and employees alike. I remind the House that the provision of such support is not a legal obligation on the Government. It is not a nationalised industry, and they are not Government gas undertakings.

It would have been simple, and certainly much less costly, to inform the owners of the undertakings — private or local authority—that the Government had no further role to play in financing closure costs. We should be legally within our obligations simply to turn off the tap, because they are not nationalised undertakings. We have not done that, because we were concerned that there should be an orderly rundown. We were also concerned for the employees, and especially for the customers. The thousands of consumers who have already converted to other fuels have done so at their own expense. The only ones needing to be paid for are those who remain. In fact, meeting the clean air legislation was far more costly for individuals than the closure of the gas industry will be. I offer that comment in passing, for my own satisfaction and perhaps for yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is sad, but not entirely surprising, that some of those who failed to demonstrate the financial logic of their own proposals for the industry should then proceed to disparage the Government's estimate of the cost of closure support. I do not say that every figure is absolutely correct, but we have taken advice from British Gas, and the figures that we have given are our best estimate of what rundown and disconnection will cost.

I find particularly objectionable the attempts of some of our opponents—by this I do not mean anyone in the House — to distort and play down the extent of assistance available under the gas conversion assistance scheme. Such tactics merely alarm gas consumers, many of whom are elderly and in no position to verify the facts.

I have also sought advice on another important factor — the effect on the consumer not just of the disconnection of appliances but of the cost of alternative fuels. I have some interesting figures, which I will circulate if hon. Members wish, suggesting that the running costs will in every case be lower than they would be if the existing gas supply system were continued. With coal, the same amount of heat costs half the price. In other words, many people should be warmer after conversion. Other factors, such as safety, are equally important.

The scope of the order is intentionally wide so that we can react to problems as they arise. In life, the problems that one expects never happen, but the ones that one does

not expect become matters of great concern. That has been my experience, at any rate. I believe, therefore, that it is right to cast the provisions in broad terms.

A question was asked about the appeals system. There is nothing in the order to prevent the introduction of an appeals system. We realise that there is concern about the handicapped and that they must be provided for. The draft order is open for discussion. If it is felt that something ought to be done, the order is drafted in such a way as to allow that to happen. It is not drafted in a narrow way. I have already given an undertaking to consider the feasibility of an appeals system. We are examining how this can be introduced without crippling the rundown while being fair to customers.

Mr. Archer: If this were primary legislation applicable to any other part of the United Kingdom, these matters could be considered in Committee and amendments introduced on Report. The hon. Gentleman is asking the House to give him a blank cheque, with no guarantees attached to it.

Dr. Boyson: The constitution of Northern Ireland is a matter of continuing concern. I do not intend to put forward views on the future constitution of Northern Ireland, even if I had them, or even if I should be influential in putting forward those views. All I can say is that legislation is dealt with in a different way in Northern Ireland.

There is sadness in Northern Ireland that many of the Province's gas undertakings have reached the end. But that sadness is combined with a widespread realism that closure of those undertakings is simply the long-delayed outcome of a commercially untenable position. In a few quarters, that realism is abandoned in favour of an apparently obligatory denunciation of Government's failure to work miracles, accompanied by a ritual demand for increased public subsidies. But continually to shore up gas undertakings in an effort to insulate them against commercial realities is to fly in the face of a positive energy strategy for the Province. That strategy is now taking shape with coal generation of electricity replacing oil, while, in the longer term, the development of lignite offers our best hope of reasonable energy prices.

In the meantime, it is incumbent on us to accept that where gas undertakings are unable to survive without subsidy they should be allowed to close in a planned and orderly manner. The draft order seeks to facilitate that process. I commend it to the House.

12.32 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): The speeches of the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, are always characterised by courtesy and good humour, but we must not allow that to conceal what is happening. We are playing out what the Government no doubt hope will be the final chapter in this sorry story of doctrinaire intransigence, of arrogance in office, of the closed ear and the closed mind and of complete contempt for the procedures of the House. It is the logical and perhaps inevitable product of a Government led by a Prime Minister who boasts that she is not for turning and of a Government who dismiss moderation as "wet".

Let me remind the House of the principal chapter headings in the story. Prior to the autumn of 1984, the people of Northern Ireland believed that natural gas would be available to them as one of the options for household fuel and industrial energy. It was to be provided from the Kinsale field pursuant to a memorandum of agreement, of which the Minister of State has just reminded us, that was entered into by the two Governments in October 1983.

On 6 September 1984, the then Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, announced that the United Kingdom Government were not proposing to implement the agreement. For reasons which have already been explained and which we explored in Committee on 26 June, the Government did not believe that gas could be provided without a subsidy. As the Minister of State has again explained so clearly, the Government applied to this matter their general philosophy that any human activity which does not show a financial profit is not worth doing. So the Minister of State said that the Government would not continue to provide a subsidy and that this would have obvious implications for the future of the gas industry and for those whose jobs are dependent upon it. But he must have realised that the gas industry could not, with any pretensions to democracy or to fairness, be killed off without the opportunity for consultation, so he said that the Government would be glad to receive representations about the future of the industry from the various interests involved. The gas industry took the Government at their word and established a joint working group representing employers and trade unions. Each side was keen to do whatever was necessary to serve the industry.

The group produced a report setting out a scheme that was, admittedly, more modest than the original project. In the first phase it would have made gas available to Belfast and Newry, with the prospect of a wider market later. It would not have saved all the 1,000 jobs that were to be lost in the gas industry, but it would have saved 400, with a prospect of more jobs at a later stage. It offered 90 per cent. of the market envisaged in the original plan, at rather less than half the cost. It would have required some initial financial outlay by the Government, but over 20 years it would have shown a surplus of £159 million. So it met the Government's declared objective of ending the subsidy.

The plan was submitted to two firms of consultants of the highest repute and they endorsed the assumptions, the calculations and the conclusions of the report. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) posed in Committee the reasonable question, "If Coopers and Lybrand is wholly reliable when it produces reports for the Government, what character change does it undergo when it produces reports for the gas industry?" The hon. Gentleman repeated that question today and again received no reply. The Government lose their enthusiasm for the work of Coopers and Lybrand when it produces a report for anyone else, and declare its reports to be Alice-in-Wonderland efforts.

The industry submitted the report to the Minister of State. It did not assume that he would necessarily accept the report in its totality and without question. It envisaged that he might wish to meet the working group and ask questions to test its conclusions and to explore further some parts of the plan. The industry did not envisage that the Minister would simply delegate to a few officials the task of meeting a few members of the working group, and leave it at that. When the Minister invited members of the working group to meet him on Good Friday, they attended prepared to embark on the sort of discussion which is the life blood of consultation and, indeed, of the whole democratic process.

[Mr. Peter Archer]

Despite what the Minister had said, members of the working group were amazed when he told them that there was nothing to discuss and that he had decided to reject the report without any discussion or any opportunity for further consultation.

As the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) pointed out in Committee, there were those who suspected that, no matter how persuasive the report, how careful the research and how compelling the conclusions, the Government's mind was already closed because the decision had already been taken beyond the possibility of further consideration.

The Minister has assured the House that the Government meant what they said when they invited consultation in October 1983. But it is hardly surprising that people have been led to ask why, if the Minister was not prepared even to discuss these matters with the working group, the Government invited representations. Why encourage the industry to take the trouble and expense of sponsoring a careful and well-researched report?

That question occurred to more people when the Minister of State, in giving evidence to the Assembly, said:

"In any case, the decision was not made now. As I have said clearly, it was made on 6 September."

So the book had been closed before the industry even dipped its pen in the ink. It was all a charade.

The working group was not the only recipient of such cavalier treatment. The Minister has confirmed that the announcement was made on Good Friday, the day after the House had risen for the Easter recess. It was a working day in Northern Ireland, but not for the House. On the previous day Northern Ireland Ministers were answering questions in the House, and hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies were in the Chamber. If the House could not have been informed of the decision in answer to a question, there was no reason why a statement should not have been made. Not one word was breathed about the Government's intention until the next day — after the House had risen. The Northern Ireland Assembly received similar treatment. It was deprived of an opportunity to express a view because it was no longer sitting.

Some of us made representations to the Government. I wrote to the Secretary of State asking him to receive a deputation from the industry as the closure of an entire industry was a matter that merited the decision of the Secretary of State. He replied:

"I do not see that a meeting with the Working Group to go over this ground would serve any useful purpose".

In fairness, when I invited the Minister to convene the Northern Ireland Committee to discuss the matter, he agreed to do so and brought the proposed draft order before that Committee. I assumed, as no doubt did the other members of the Committee, that he genuinely wished to hear the views of right hon. and hon. Members. He heard them. After the Minister spoke, there were eight contributions, each of which was critical of the Government's proposals, each of which asked questions that demanded answers and each of which begged the Government to think again. At the end of the debate, the Committee divided and the Government were defeated by 18 votes to 10. Every party represented on that Committee, with the exception of the Conservatives, voted in the negative.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): And spoke.

Mr. Archer: As the hon. Gentleman says, every party was represented among those who spoke.

Mr. Hume: Except the Conservatives.

Mr. Archer: Yes, and the Social Democratic party. If the Minister wanted to know the views of the Committee, he had them as clearly as they could be expressed. The Committee opposed the closure of the gas industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) said that those who attended the Committee had other calls on their time to which they might well have responded if they had believed that the Committee was simply an academic exercise and had no prospect of influencing events.

The Government proceeded as though the Committee had never existed. The Minister was kind enough to write to some of us a few days ago saying that the Government proposed to delete two proposals from the draft order. Those deletions were in the Government's mind before the Committee sat — the Minister referred to them in his original speech in Committee. Nothing said in Committee induced any change in the Government's plans. Indeed, the Lord President said the following day, 27 June, in reply to a question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that the decision of the Committee was

"a technical vote which has no significance". — [*Official Report*, 27 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 1079.]

It was not technical at all. It was a considered opinion of the Committee on the merits of the argument. The Government's behaviour simply reinforces what I have already said. To members of the Government, the vote of a Committee of the House has no significance. So much in 1985 for the mother of Parliaments and the descendants of Pym and Hampden.

Lest anybody might have been so misguided as to have contemplated for a moment, in the face of all of that evidence, that the Government could consider it possible that they may be wrong and that, within those holes in the sand, ministerial heads were equipped with ears to hear, on 5 July, the Minister of State issued a statement reiterating that the Government had no plans to reopen examination of the project.

We might have thought that, in those circumstances, the Government would at least have retained sensitivity enough to pretend that they were treating seriously all the representations, the questions, the expressions of opinion and the pleas to think again. But for the present system by which Northern Ireland is governed, a step of such importance would have required primary legislation, with days in Committee and on Report. We might have thought that the Government would at least have accorded the matter a day's debate when hon Members could arrange to attend and make their views known. We might have expected that at least, as a cosmetic exercise, but the Government do not consider it necessary even to go through the motions of taking it seriously. They introduce this business on a Friday late in July when, as they must have known, hon Members are under pressure to be in their constituencies. Such is the importance that they attach to the closure of a complete industry, depriving the

people of Northern Ireland of a fuel that is available in every other country in Europe, and consigning to the dole queue people who have given their loyalty and their lives to the industry. To them, the Government have devoted part of a day's business on a Friday. Later today the Government's Lobby fodder will undoubtedly troop obediently into the Lobby indicated by the Government Whips unquestioningly, uncomprehending, and without having spoken. We shall have witnessed the destruction of an industry by executive action. It is the ultimate in political hubris. I am tempted to point out that hubris is inevitably followed by nemesis.

In Committee we looked at the reasons for rejecting the report, which the Minister condescended to give after his announcement of the death sentence. We attempted to show that they were based on a complete failure to read and understand the report. I shall not repeat those reasons in detail, but, lest some hon. Members have not had the opportunity to read the report of our proceedings, I shall list them briefly.

First, the Minister said that the price that the Republic is proposing to charge for gas was based on the fluctuating price of heavy fuel oil, and was uneconomic. In September 1984 that price was 36·4p per therm. The working group's report was based on an anticipated price of 34p per therm, and the profit of £157 million was calculated on that price. Today the price is 28p per therm—6p per therm less than that on which the report was based. The consultants who considered the report tested the working group's proposals against a theoretical price of 40p per therm, and confirmed that the project would still show a profit.

A further question posed both in Committee and today by the hon. Member for Upper Bann remains unanswered. If the Government were troubled that the price of heavy fuel oil tends to fluctuate—that was known to them when they signed the agreement in October 1983—why did they sign the agreement? Today the Minister confirmed that no conversations had taken place with the Government of the Republic since September 1984. So the matter was never aired again, and the Republic was never invited to reconsider it. Nothing about the present price of gas can provide any reason for reneging on the agreement, much less for rejecting the Committee's report.

Secondly, the Minister said that the report overestimated the potential market. Experience of a similar plan in Dublin confirms that the report's estimate was, if anything, unduly moderate. The Minister appears to have based his views on the survey, to which he referred today—I assume that it is the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells survey—and which has been made available to him. We cannot comment on it because he has refused to make it available to anyone else. Suffice it to say that he has reasons, that we know not of. Today the Minister said that earlier reports had yielded a result less optimistic than that of the Committee, but the survey sought to find out who would be likely to buy gas at the prices and conditions proposed in the report. No earlier survey could research into that.

Thirdly, in Committee the Minister criticised the report because it included no estimate for reinforcing the transmission systems and no provision for leakages. He has not mentioned that today, and it simply is not the case. If the Minister reads the report, he will see that both matters are dealt with, and that the appropriate costs are taken into account. The Minister may disagree with the figures, but how anyone who has read the report can say that there are no such figures is a mystery which admits of no further comment.

Fourthly, the Minister said that the productivity levels envisaged in the report were higher than the present levels in the British gas industry. That comment was made the subject of a devastating analysis in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar, who has long experience as a management consultant. To compare two productivity figures in two different geographical areas, without taking into account the different circumstances, the installation sizes or the equipment used, can only be described, as my hon. Friend said, as superficial, unsophisticated and unscientific. In particular it fails to take into account the fact that the Government are trying to compare an industry which is concerned with generation and distribution with one which is concerned almost entirely with distribution. That is not comparing like with like. The fact is that the productivity figures in Northern Ireland have traditionally been higher than the figures for the whole of Britain.

Finally, the Minister's figures on funding related, as he conceded today, to £70 million which the Government were not being asked to provide in cash, but only to make available by way of a guarantee for an independent loan. I have not dwelt on the detail of these matters. Perhaps we have not fully understood what the Government said about some of them, but they have been ventilated on several occasions, most recently in Committee on 26 June, and until today, none has been answered. The Minister's speech today did not carry any of the arguments a step further. At the very least, those matters merit further discussion, not a rejection of the project out of hand without exploring what has been said.

Even if the proposal in the working group's report is rejected, that is not the end of the matter. In Committee, the Minister was asked about alternative ways to save the industry. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) asked about proposals from Europe to integrate the national gas grid. The Minister said today that he knows of no such proposals, but perhaps we could have been told a few more of the facts, if only out of courtesy to the hon. Gentleman who raised the matter.

I asked the Minister about the proposals being explored by Lloyds merchant bank. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor I received an answer, but in the 29 June edition of *The Oilman* there was a report that Lloyds' was exploring two possibilities: a company to convey gas from the border and distribute it to existing undertakings, or a company that would take over the complete network. A Lloyds' spokesman was quoted as saying:

"The amount of the initial investment would be relatively small beer. What is really important is that a competent operator should run the system and make it profitable."

The Minister said today that nothing prevents Lloyds from putting together a scheme for private investment, but he must know that if the industry could be saved, his action today is likely to drive consumers away from the industry before it can be saved. We are simply asking for a breathing space so that these matters can be ventilated.

Mr. Nellist: It seems, not only to the Opposition but to many workers in Northern Ireland, that that is precisely what the Minister intends. The message that he is giving today, and his actions during the past six months, are designed to drive consumers away from gas so that he can say proudly, "I must have been right, because everyone is

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deserting the industry." Therefore, by that self-fulfilling logic, he can argue that the industry should have been closed.

Mr. Archer: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's conclusion. His point is reinforced by the fact that, on the day in September when the announcement was made, people were going round tearing down posters which invited consumers to switch to gas. Whatever was the Government's intention, they cannot be surprised by the fact that many people have come to that conclusion.

The Opposition invite the House to reject the motion on the ground that the avowed purpose of the order—to make provision for the assassination of the gas industry—is misconceived. There is no case for closing the industry. But even if there were such a case, the order simply will not do. If consumers are to be deprived of the option, they will need financial assistance, as the Minister recognised today, to transfer from gas to another fuel. As he said, article 8 of the order provides for financial assistance to consumers. But that article empowers the Department to make a scheme for compensation. It is the provisions of that scheme that are being left to the discretion of the Department. It is under no obligation to bring that scheme before the House. Its only obligation, once it has decided what is in it, is to make it known. So the House is being asked to sign a blank cheque or, more accurately, a blank receipt on behalf of consumers for compensation which may not be forthcoming.

Again, in Committee, we sought to explore what the Government had in mind by way of compensation. Again we received no answers. The Government are proposing to spend £97 million to kill off the industry. In their own argument, they are declining to devote money to saving it. That sum of £97 million does not include the loss in revenue to the Government because people will not be in work and paying income tax, and the vast sum of money consequent upon consigning 1,000 unemployed workers to the dole queue, as my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) pointed out in Committee, that is in place of a subsidy which, according to the Minister, is £12 million a year. If the Government were prepared to continue that £12 million a year, all this could have been saved.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) posed a very reasonable question. If the Government are prepared to spend the money which has been mentioned this morning to increase top salaries by the proportions which have been discussed, £12 million a year does not seem unreasonable to save an entire industry for the consumers and workers of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): It is the equivalent of half a dozen field marshals.

Mr. Archer: Half a dozen field marshals, as my hon. Friend says, although if the field marshals do not receive the increase they may feel so dissatisfied with their jobs that they decide to go somewhere else.

We have seen no breakdown of that figure of £97 million. We have only the information that we have been able to drag from the Government by way of correspondence with the working group, or by questions in the Assembly and in this House.

The explanatory document described the £97 million as the cost of the rundown of the industry over a three-year period. The Housing Executive envisages running down the industry over a five-year period. Have the Government taken account of that? Are the three years' costs to be spread over the five years, or are there some more costs about which we have not heard?

I do not propose to rehearse in detail all the matters that we raised in Committee, but I refer briefly to three, about which we are still awaiting answers. If, as appears, the Government are proposing to allocate £200,000 for sealing off gas pipes, how does that compare with an estimate for the same purpose provided to the working group by British Gas of £3 million, especially if it was British Gas which advised the Government on this?

I wonder whether I know the answer. Is it that British Gas would regard it as dangerous, ugly and slipshod simply to blank off the pipes and leave them and the equipment where they happen to be—even in the way of the alternative installation and even if they are taking up space in rooms which will be further limited by the new equipment for alternative fuels? That seems to be what the Minister is proposing. In a written answer to me on 18 June he said:

> "In disconnecting consumers from supply it is not the existing practice. . . to remove pipes and fittings on private property once they have been purged and made safe." — *[Official Report,* 18 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 99.]

Of course it is not. That is an expense which normally falls on the consumer. But we are speaking of compensating consumers for the expense that falls on them by reason of the Government's decision to deprive them of gas. If they want their pipes and installations taken away, they must pay for it themselves out of any savings they may have or, if they are young, vigorous and skilled, they may do it themselves.

The working group was told that the Government proposed to allocate £20 million to the conversion assistance scheme for what the Government assessed as 80,000 houses, although some of us thought that the figure was higher. How does that compare with the estimate of the Housing Executive, which proposes to spend the same sum on conversions in 10,700 houses which are heated by gas and 6,000 which cook by gas? Is the answer that the Government will offer the consumer no choice of an alternative fuel but base the cost on the cheapest alternative, even if it is quite unsuitable to the consumer?

The House will be grateful to Age Concern for the careful and well-researched note with which it has provided us. It shows that, whereas households in Northern Ireland that are headed by younger people tend to use domestic fuels other than gas, 55 per cent. of households headed by people of 60 and over depend on gas. So it is the elderly and those in middle age who will be most concerned by the provisions that we are discussing. It is also households in the lower economy groups that are most likely to be dependent upon gas. The lowest cost alternative is likely in most cases to be bottled gas, so the elderly will be required to lift about containers of bottled gas and will be at risk of running out of fuel, sometimes at inconvenient times, when the next delivery is not due, and frequently in the winter.

Thirdly, is it envisaged that the conversion costs to be made available to the domestic consumer will include the cost of redecoration? One would have expected that the answer would be yes. If conversion is forced on people,

they should be compensated for the cost of redecoration. But when I asked the Secretary of State about this, the reply was:

"In the absence of detailed information on existing gas appliances and individual assessments of the impact of conversion on each dwelling, it is not possible to provide any estimate of the cost of redecoration." — [*Official Report*, 18 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 99.]

If it is not known to the Government, and they cannot even make an estimate, that raises the question whether this item has been included in the figures with which we have been provided. If it has not been included, must we add something to the Government's figures for the provision for compensation and for the cost of closing the industry, or do the Government not propose to compensate householders for redecoration?

In Committee, the hon. Member for Antrim, East pointed out that in many homes, conversion to a different fuel would entail rebuilding entire flues to take solid fuel. The Committee wished to know what the Government proposed about that. Had the cost of that been included in existing figures, is it an additional item that we must have in mind, or do the Government not propose to meet the cost which is falling on householders?

It is not only the consumers who have reasons for anxiety. What of those who face redundancy? No doubt they will receive the statutory minimum entitlement under the redundancy fund, but it would be monstrous to close an industry with no other provision for those who are being deprived of their livelihood. The Department says that it proposes to provide £12 million for redundancy payments and outstanding debts. I understand that outstanding debts amount to £11 million and that appears to mean that the Government are proposing £1 million for redundancy payments above the statutory minimum, to be shared among 1,000 employees. That averages £1,000 per employee. Is that all that the Government are proposing, because there will inevitably be those who will contrast that sum for the price of lifetime's employment with the Government's proposals for top salaries?

Our anxiety was not alleviated when we saw a copy of the letter to Mr. Fell of the Department of Economic Development from Mr. McClements, the director of the Northern Ireland Economic Council, dated 28 June. He mentioned that in May 1980, the Department of Commerce estimated that the amount of public expenditure entailed by any closure of the gas industry, at 1980 prices, would be £101·78 million. That is nearly £4 million more than the Government's estimate in 1985, at 1985 prices, and the estimate was based on only 50 per cent. compensation for domestic conversion costs. If the Secretary of State now expects to do the job at 1985 prices for £97 million, what corners does he expect to cut?

Let me try once again. It is no disgrace for a Minister to listen to what is said to him. It is no disgrace for him to declare that, in the light of what he has heard, he has thought again. We would not hold it against the Minister if he changed his mind. Rather, we would congratulate him openly and publicly on having the courage and imagination to respond to the democratic process. We want only to save the Minister from making a ghastly mistake for which future generations will not forgive him. But if he brushes aside our arguments, as he brushed aside all our earlier arguments, we shall register our protest in the Division Lobby, notwithstanding the Government arranging the business at a most inconvenient time, because we will have no part in this mean, sordid and shameful business.

1.5 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Like the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), I think that the Minister probably hopes that this is the last act in the Northern Ireland gas drama—some might say farce. I doubt it. The events that we have been discussing for the past seven or eight years will come back to haunt the Government one day. That explains why the Minister took half an hour to introduce the order and 10 minutes to deal with its provisions.

When considering how to approach the debate, I thought that the Minister would probably try to play cute and stick strictly to the order, expecting the Chair to save him if hon. Members strayed beyond the strict limits. It struck me that the Minister was doing what many of his predecessors have done—trying once again to justify the decision. He was almost trying to convince himself that he was right.

I do not want to rehash arguments used since 1977. The Minister has heard them all before and I have heard all the answers. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West said that the self-fulfilling prophecy element in the debate had existed for only seven or eight months. It has existed for eight years.

The Minister seemed to ridicule the Northern Ireland gas industry for being unable to keep its prices competitive, for losing customers and for having low morale. That is like saying to a man condemned to death in 1977 and put in death row, "Why are you losing the colour in your cheeks?" It is like saying after a year, "Why have you not the same enthusiasm you had a couple of years ago?" The Northern Ireland gas industry has been under sentence of death for seven or eight years.

Publicity has been almost 100 per cent. adverse except for a few months when the industry was given hope that it might be saved by natural gas from the Irish Republic. I fought the case in the early years and I realise that the publicity that I gave to the industry to make my case contributed to the industry's decline. By highlighting the problems the industry was subjected to news coverage which deterred people from using gas or from renewing their equipment.

Northern Ireland does not have the best gas and we have not been able to use the modern equipment that is available on the mainland. Northern Ireland gas consumers do not realise what natural gas would mean for them. I did not realise the potential myself until I visited an Ideal Homes exhibition about five years ago. I suddenly realised that the new gas industry was in a different world. Our equipment has been modernised to some extent to give us choice, but we have nothing comparable to the equipment on the mainland.

All those factors have militated against the industry from day one, and that is the cause of the steady drain of consumers. It is not good enough for the Minister continually to trot out statistics and say that the industry is not worth saving because it has not had self-motivation and has not held on to its consumers. However, I will not go over the arguments again.

Like the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West, I am concerned about the effect of the order on the handicapped, the elderly and poor people. Will the

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compensation arrangements be adequate, not only for conversion but for redecoration and so on? We are aware from constituencies throughout the country that the present levels of assistance offered, for example, by the Housing Executive, for redecoration after rewiring and other improvements are inadequate.

It is not possible to redecorate a room nowadays for between £50 and £70. The costs involved, particularly following the conversion of which we are speaking, can be considerable, especially for people who, in many instances, may have just finished redecorating their homes as a consequence of schemes of modernisation by the Housing Executive. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind our plea in that respect.

The safety aspect of what we are doing also concerns me. In 1977-78, before many people had bought their own homes and were in Housing Executive property in Northern Ireland, the industry was confronted with problems caused by people who, because of the price of gas, did their own conversions. They converted from gas to solid fuel—I am speaking particularly of cases which arose in Ballymena — and because the flues were designed for gas they were a danger when solid fuel appliances were attached to them, yet that happened in many cases.

Steps were taken at that time to rectify the situation and to avoid it recurring, but since then many of those homes have become privately owned. If an owner installs a solid fuel heater, will he be in breach of some regulation? Will monitoring be done to ensure that someone who, perhaps inadvertently, embarks on a conversion—because it is the cheapest way for him to obtain an alternative source of fuel—will not be put at risk? What if that person's neighbour is still a Housing Executive tenant and the conversion done by the private owner endangers not only his life and home but those of his neighbour?

. There are grave safety aspects of this issue which, perhaps because we have been concerned with major matters, we may have overlooked. For example, what will happen to the redundant gas system? If I own property and large pipes run beneath it, and later those abandoned pipes are flooded, what guarantee shall I have that the flooding will not undermine the foundations of my home and that gas pockets will not eventually gather there? What guarantee shall I have concerning subsidence, explosions and other dangers that could occur in the future?

Are the Government washing their hands of such issues? Will all responsibility pass to the occupier or tenant? Many people in, for example, Belfast own property which will be substantially undermined by gas pipes. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the dangers and difficulties of which I have spoken will not arise.

Like the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West, I should like to know how the Government have arrived at the reduction in the price of closure from November 1980 to June 1985. How is it that the total public expenditure cost in 1980 can be £100 million and in March 1985 £97 million? We must have an answer to that question, particularly when we consider that the costs in 1980 were based on 50 per cent. compensation, for 50 per cent. compensation must be less than even the lowest cost alternatives when conversion is done. In a period when costs must have risen by 30 per cent. or 40 per cent., how can the Minister tell us that the cost of closure has been reduced from £100 million to £97 million?

The right hon. and learned Member referred to what came out of his question of 18 June 1985, when the Minister gave £20 million as the cost of the gas conversion assistance scheme, rising by a further £4 million for full compensation for industry and commerce, plus £9·75 million for the conversion of public buildings. Thus it would appear that between March and June 1985 the estimated cost of conversion fell from £50 million to £30 million. During a period when costs were increasing, how could there be a reduction of that amount?

These matters are very important, for at the end of the day, as many people suspect, we may find that the cost of closing the industry is not £100 million but closer to £150 million. There is no doubt that then the justification that the Minister gave us this morning—he spent half an hour on it—will be trotted out to explain to some Select Committee of the House, "Ah, but we did it all in good faith. Here are the reasons. We had no alternative. We were faced with the economics of Passchendaele, and with 'Alice in Wonderland' economics as deployed by Coopers and Lybrand".

Northern Ireland Members know how embarrassing it was to be confronted with the consequences of decisions made by others in regard to companies such as Lear Fan and De Lorean when we had no say in the matter. We have a collective guilt about the losses involved in those two companies. Are we to have another collective guilt about the £150 million used to kill our gas industry?

Mr. Beggs: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as the guesstimate may be so far away from reality, the real cost of closure of the industry could at long last possibly justify a pipeline?

Mr. McCusker: There is no doubt about that.

I have with me the transcript of an interview conducted on RTE this morning with a Mr. Michael Smyth of Lloyds Bank. Several questions were put to him, no doubt sparked off by the reports emanating from the gas industry yesterday about the extra cost of closure. He was asked:

"Can it be made not only to break even but to make a profit?"

He replied:

"I must emphasise that we haven't finished our studies yet . . . There is that possibility."

He was asked:

"Government says closing the whole thing down is going to cost £97 million. Could you make it work with that?"

He replied:

"No problem at all. If you could offer that to a potential investor, I think there would be a queue of them at the door."

I am not suggesting that the Minister should now make a gift of £100 million to anyone who comes forward with a scheme to save the Northern Ireland gas industry, but if there is the possibility of some private investment, and if Lloyds Bank is interested in putting up some money, should not the Minister give serious consideration to providing a fraction of what it will cost to close the industry? If there would be a queue at the door for £97 million, there would still be a few people queueing for £30 million, £40 million or £50 million.

Would it not be a better use of public funds to use the money for that purpose rather than to spend £150 million to close the industry and put 1,000 people on the dole? I think it would, many people in Northern Ireland think it

would, and the industry certainly thinks it would. Coopers and Lybrand thinks it would. A representative from Lloyds Bank thinks it would. Why does not the Minister?

1.20 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I feel that I must commiserate with the Minister of State in his unenviable task of steering the order through the House. With his customary flair and dedication, he has pursued the task with vigour and determination. It has not been his fault that he has had the misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and is now saddled with the job of making the case for killing off our gas industry, which, in the past, has produced profits that built our beautiful city hall in Belfast. It provided cheap energy for the domestic needs of thousands of our citizens. It was responsible for industry that developed from as far back as the industrial revolution. In those days, we used coal as our base fuel. Many of us remember the coke-burning furnaces, the tar, the creosote, the coal oil and many more by-products that supported other large sections of our population.

I congratulate the Minister on making such a formidable case for closure. His powers of persuasion and reasoning, together with the figures and statistics that he quoted, would leave no doubt in most people's minds that there is now no case for gas in Northern Ireland. However, I am sorry to say that, although I have the greatest admiration and respect for the Minister, I cannot support the order because I believe implicitly that a gas supply could have been provided at a cost less than that of closing the industry and that the reason for closure must have political roots.

The wording of article 6 of the order leaves much to be desired. It gives me the impression that the Department is not being fair and honest with the gas undertakers in its commitment. Statements such as:

"The Department may . . . make payments . . . at such times and on such terms and conditions as the Department may, with the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel, determine."

appear to be a trifle ambiguous or even devious, according to the interpretation that one may draw from such statements. Similarly, paragraph (2) is little better. It states:

"Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the terms and conditions on which a payment is made under that paragraph may include terms and conditions as to the repayment by the gas undertaker to the Department of any part of any such payment in such circumstances as may be specified by the Department."

One could be forgiven for asking just what those terms and conditions are. There is not an inkling in the order as to what is in the Minister's mind. I am sure that the gas undertakers will be wondering just what is involved for them in running down the industry. The Government should be much more explicit in framing such paragraphs if one is not to think that there will be some abdication of responsibility on their part.

I support the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) when he expresses concern about article 8 on financial assistance to consumers. I am pleased that the Government state categorically in paragraph (1) that they will

"make a scheme . . . towards the replacement or adaptation of gas appliances where such replacement or adaptation is necessitated by the cessation or expected cessation of the supply of gas".

However, I am certainly not at all happy with paragraph (2), which states that a scheme may

"prescribe the persons to whom financial assistance shall be paid".

I hope that everyone who is inconvenienced by being deprived of his gas supply will be considered eligible for compensation.

I am also concerned about paragraph (2)*(b)*, which states that the scheme may

"provide that no financial assistance shall be paid in such cases or in such circumstances as may be specified in the scheme".

I am most unhappy that when the supply is terminated, people may not have a legitimate claim against the Government, assuming that no debts are due to the undertaking under the terms of paragraph (2)*(c)*.

On compensation in general, the Minister will know that the gas industry joint working group publication based on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive paper on the cost of conversion shows that the Government's plans for compensation are inadequate. For example, the cost of replacement of heating and cooking facilities is estimated at £60 million but the Government intend to pay only £20 million in compensation, leaving two thirds of the cost to be met by consumers. The report shows that it will cost £24 million to carry out the Housing Executive's conversion programme, but no provision is made for that extra money, so the housebuilding and renovation programme will be hit. The housing associations are unlikely to find money elsewhere as they are funded on only four specific projects, so if they have only the equivalent of the Government compensation they will not be able to treat their tenants as the Housing Executive can treat its tenants. The Housing Executive's programme is expected to last for between four and five years, two years longer than the Government expect, so two additional years' subsidy will be needed for operational deficit. That probably represents a further £25 million on top of the Government's estimate.

My constituency has the highest proportion of elderly people in relation to the population. I am most concerned about those senior citizens, many of whom are frail and confused. The majority of them use gas, so closure will mean that they face major upheaval through no fault of their own. The ramifications of the compensation scheme have not yet been defined, but I hope that those with arrears of payment will be treated sympathetically.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West dwelt at some length on the least cost compensation clause. This provides that if a serviceable electric cooker socket does not already exist, the least cost option, at least for pensioners, will be bottled gas. The other options are solid fuel and oil, which present bulk storage problems. No allowance is made for the present or future ability of elderly people to cope with the replacement fuel. There are bottle gas delivery services but some lifting of heavy containers by pensioners is unavoidable. There is also the risk of interruption of deliveries, leaving pensioners without fuel in hard weather, when they are most vulnerable. Solid fuel involves similar lifting problems and there is a risk of hypothermia if there is a delay in lighting fires.

I have already expressed concern to the Under-Secretary of State responsible for housing matters, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), about the difficulties faced by pensioners in clearing grates and lifting solid fuel. In many parts of my constituency able-bodied

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volunteers ensure that fires are lit and maintained for pensioners, especially in the winter months, but more consideration must be given to ensuring that the most appropriate fuel supply is provided for pensioners. Serious consideration should also be given to providing compensation for the inevitable redecoration that will have to be carried out because of the changeover from gas to an alternative fuel.

Mr. Mikardo: There will be an additional loss, for which compensation ought to be paid. If gas piping remains in position while apparatus for another form of heating has to be installed, there will be a loss of space. People will lose a bit of their living room. I should want compensation if I had to lose a bit of my not very large living room.

Mr. Walker: I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he agrees with me that compensation ought to be provided for the inevitable redecoration because of the changeover from gas to an alternative form of fuel. Elderly people face difficulty in redecorating their homes. It is only right that money should be provided to enable redecoration to be carried out.

A full consultative and advisory service ought to be made available to pensioners so that they know that financial assistance is available. I should like large-print publicity to be provided so that pensioners can be made aware of the procedures. I should also like there to be home visits from advisers approved by the Government. It is imperative that all the voluntary agencies should be kept fully informed of the developments so that they, too, can subscribe to the welfare of this very deserving section of the population.

1.33 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, intends, virtually at the stroke of a pen, to initiate the closure of an industry in Northern Ireland which will lead directly to the loss of a minimum of 1,200 jobs. In recent weeks and months his decisions have closed down the most viable alternative—the Kinsale gas project—and sounded the death knell for those who work in the industry and for the consumers whom those workers serve. He seems to be looking for a new reputation. He is becoming known as the MacGregor of Northern Ireland.

All we heard about this morning and during various Question Times, in which I have participated, since November of last year was the uneconomic nature of the gas industry. Images are being introduced which mirror or parallel those which MacGregor provided for the coal industry. Just as there was the same falsity in the arguments of MacGregor and the Secretary of State for Energy about the real costs of the closure programme—the loss of 70 pits and 70,000 jobs—so the real cost of the closure of this industry is being masked by the Minister of State.

Some reports, including those which have been mentioned this morning and during the Northern Ireland Committee proceedings on 26 June, put the closure costs at about £97 million. From a phone call that I had about an hour ago, I understand that a report, which may have included Government involvement and which was leaked on Wednesday of this week, puts the cost of the closure programme at about £140 million. We have heard that the figure will be higher than that. Whatever it may be—£97 million, £140 million, or more—that is far more than the cost of maintaining a viable industry, particularly when one takes into account the additional cost of unemployment, social security, lost tax revenue, national insurance and the wealth that is created by having people in work rather than languishing in the dole queues.

The Minister of State referred to the gas industry extracting subsidies from the Government that have risen from £2 million a year to £12 million—a difference of £10 million a year. I intervened at that point, and I refer again to what I said then. The supreme irony, four hours after points of order and two and a half hours after a statement, is that £9 million or £10 million is to be given this year to fewer than 2,000 people: the top people in the judiciary, the Civil Service and the armed forces, many of whom went to the same schools, eat at the same restaurants and belong to the same clubs as members of this Tory Cabinet. Those people are getting £9 million in wage rises, yet the Government are not prepared to spend a similar sum to give another 12 months' employment to workers in the Northern Ireland gas industry.

The Minister spoke about consumers deserting the gas industry. He said that about 10,000—one in seven—no longer use gas for cooking or heating. But if gas in Northern Ireland cost the same per therm as gas in Britain instead of, in some cases, three or four times as much, consumers would not have transferred from gas. Indeed, more consumers would be relying on that source of energy.

The Government ought to arrange parity in what working people pay for their energy sources, whether they live in Northern Ireland or in Great Britain. If the cost of gas in Northern Ireland had been reduced to the United Kingdom average, I am sure that those 10,000 consumers would still be using gas.

Working people must note the cost of the closure of the gas industry to the 100,000 or so households who rely on gas for cooking or heating. There will be a particular burden on the low income groups—the low paid, the unemployed and the elderly. We have heard eloquent testimony of the problems that will be created if an alternative fuel such as bottle gas is the only option offered to elderly people.

The Minister's estimates of the compensation costs to consumers work out at about £200 per household. That has to cover the provision of a new fuel, redecoration of the property and, in many cases, the even greater expense of rebuilding flues and brickwork. All that is supposed to be done for £200.

The only specific example given in Committee of a similar transformation was offered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). There is no point looking in the crystal ball when we can read the history book, and it is no good predicting how cheap conversion will be when we have evidence that that will not be so.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive withdrew gas supplies from an estate because the gas appliances were out of date. The cost to the executive of the changeover in those 129 houses was £250,000—£1,938 per house, or 10 times the Minister's prediction of conversion costs.

If the figures from that example are applied to the 100,000 households that will be converted if the Minister

gets away with his plan to close the gas industry, we are talking not about £20 million for redecoration, rebuilding and so on, but £200 million — over twice the most quoted estimate of the total cost of the closure of the gas industry. Who will pay that? The cost will be put on rents, rates and taxes. It will be taken out of the pockets of working people.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be wrong if the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had to allocate funds for improvements out of its existing budget when there are so many urgent housing needs in Northern Ireland? Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that we should be told how much is being allocated to the NIHE for home conversions?

Mr. Nellist: I agree. It cannot be denied that housing in Northern Ireland is among the worst in Europe, and its condition bears no relation to the religious divide. It is easy to find houses on the Shanklin road or the Falls road without basic amenities, such as inside toilets, baths and hot and cold running water. There are areas where the proportion of such houses might be 60 per cent. Any attempt by the Government to offset against Northern Ireland Housing Executive expenditure the cost of the transformation from gas to another fuel would be deplorable and should be resisted by people who live in the areas concerned, members of the Northern Ireland Public Services Association who work for the Housing Executive and by the trade union movement in Northern Ireland. The executive's money should be used to raise the standard of housing in Northern Ireland to the highest possible level.

In the past six years, Northern Ireland has been savaged by Tory policies. Output in the north of Ireland has been reduced by 14 per cent. and industrial employment has fallen by 30 per cent. Northern Ireland is now virtually an industrial desert.

Mr. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): When will the hon. Gentleman condemn the IRA?

Mr. Nellist: I am coming to that, if the hon. Gentleman can contain himself. If the hon. Gentleman has attended debates during the past two years while I have been an hon. Member, he will know that, on issues such as Sri Lanka, Ministers and the Government have tried to throw terrorism at me. I am a Socialist, whether it be on the green or orange side of the divide and the hon. Gentleman will have heard me condemn all sectarian or paramilitary groups trying to change the situation in Northern Ireland by methods of individual terror, the bomb and the bullet. They do no good to working people in any part of the country.

The official unemployment rate in Northern Ireland is now 21 per cent. — more than 120,000, half of whom live in the city of Belfast. An extra 1,000 redundancies and the closure of the gas industry are a tremendous burden to put on working people in that area. If we consider the real level of unemployment, counting people on youth training schemes, people aged over 60 and women who are not counted—the calculation that we have to make in Great Britain to establish the real unemployment figure under this Government—we discover that there are 160,000 or 170,000 unemployed. What guarantee will there be—I notice there is nothing in the order—to working people in the gas industry that, having closed the industry, the Government will offer them alternative work? What will the Minister tell them? Will he emulate the words of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and suggest that they get on their bikes? To which area of the North are they supposed to go? Do they go to Strabane, where unemployment for men is 53·9 per cent.? Do they go to Derry, where it is 38·6 per cent.? Do they go to Coleraine, where it is 32·2 per cent.? Do they go to Enniskillen, where it is 33·2 per cent.? Under this Government, mass unemployment is endemic in Northern Ireland. A further 1,200 job losses as a result of the closure of this industry will be another nail in the coffin of working people in the North.

I advise, through the channel of the House of Commons, that trade unions in the gas industry should offer no co-operation in the massacre of that industry. They should offer no co-operation with the Government. They should step up the campaign involving workers and their families and take it from workers in the gas industry to other industries where jobs will be affected by the Government's plan. Various newspapers have mentioned the threat to those for example like Hughes Tools, bakeries and engineering plants whose livelihoods might be threatened by the closure. Those workers should be welded together in a campaign to oppose the plan.

As we are debating an order which expresses one point of view — that the gas industry in Northern Ireland should be dismantled — I am entitled to put another. I suggest that those workers consider stepping up the campaign for the nationalisation of the gas industry in the North and for its control to be put in the hands of a board of directors on which the majority of votes come from the trade unions and the stewards' committees in the industry and the trade union movement. *[Interruption.]* If Tory Members — there are now two or three of them, but there were not many when we started the debate — want to put up a case in favour of closing the industry, if they want to justify another 1,200 people in Northern Ireland going on the dole and if they want to come clean with the working class in Northern Ireland, they can do so when I sit down.

I emphasise the need for control and management by workers. The single most important lesson to learn from the farces of De Lorean and Lear Fan is that one cannot control what one does not own. Working people in Northern Ireland — indeed, anywhere in the United Kingdom — should own and control the industry in which they create the wealth, which is then stolen by the Government.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): How could the workers have controlled Lear Fan, bearing in mind that the problems there were largely related to engineering and technical difficulties, which they could not have solved?

Mr. Nellist: In the hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you do not find that question too wide of the mark, I shall reply briefly. I have a far higher regard for the technical, political and industrial skills of our working people than of any Tory Member. Four years ago the Lucas work force faced the prospect of 4,000 redundancies. It called together all the stewards, who then called meetings of every section of the industry, and an alternative plan was drafted. It stated that instead of being sacked for not producing sights for nuclear bombers, the workers could produce kidney machines, road and rail transport equipment, heat pumps, long life batteries and so on. I am

[Mr. Nellist]

convinced that if the workers had been given a say in Lear Fan, they could have come up with alternative products, which would have been more useful to the working class, using their engineering skills, their techniques, the tooling and materials, instead of being thrown on the dole.

We need to oppose the order in the House with a vote and outside it. The trade unionists and their families in the North should link up with other trade union organisations and mount a messive campaign of opposition.

I make no apology for finishing on this point. A Labour party must be built up in Northern Ireland to put forward plans for publicly owned and co-ordinated energy industries, decent houses, jobs and high living standards. I hope that from that campaign of opposition—the linking of trade unionists, members of joint shop stewards' committees, community organisations, trade councils and tenants' organisations—a Labour party can be built to oppose all the economic, industrial and political decisions of the Tory Government.

Clearly, during the past 15 years, the working classes have suffered most from sectarianism and the orange-green divisions. But not one major strike or struggle, whether involving civil servants, fire fighters, teachers, health workers or miners, has been broken by sectarianism. The hope for working class unity lies with the trade unions and working class organisations. I hope that the campaign will strengthen the quest to form a Labour party in the North.

I hope that the Government are defeated on the proposed closure of the gas industry in Northern Ireland, and thrown from office once and for all.

1.47 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I shall remain on safer ground by supporting entirely the speeches of my colleagues from Northern Ireland. I cannot endorse all the observations of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). We certainly have serious unemployment. If ordinary people could resolve their problems, they would, but the unemployed, who are sufficiently intelligent and as capable as anyone else, have not been able to resolve our problems. We depend on maintaining existing industries with Government support and by encouraging investment and new manufactured products.

Since the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) became Minister of State, he has earned a reputation for being energetic, hard-working, straightforward, direct, helpful and constructive in relation to the needs of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, his good record has been tarnished by his decision to close the Northern Ireland gas industry. To some extent, I blame the officials who advise him for that. The speed of the rejection of the rescue plan for the gas industry has caused the Minister to be considered as the Government's hatchet man, responsible for axing 1,000 jobs and finally killing an industry that has been strangled by the indecision of successive Governments, who supported it financially but who instilled inadequate confidence in consumers. That contributed to customer loss of confidence in ever having reasonably priced gas supplies, so they started to drift away from gas.

The decision not to provide gas from the British gas grid sentenced the Northern Ireland gas industry to decline and to dependence on a subsidy which, as the Minister said, increased annually without any hope of the industry becoming viable. The 80,000 gas customers left in Northern Ireland have been badly let down. Northern Ireland will soon be the only part of the United Kingdom that cannot share in benefiting from the nation's gas reserves and all the advantages that flow from the availability of natural gas. Their choice for heating will be restricted largely to LPG, with which the elderly find it difficult to cope, electricity or solid fuel.

Many well-informed people believe that all the signs point to the existence of oil and gas reserves off the coast of Northern Ireland. Will the Minister assure the House that the Government have placed no obstacles in the way of exploration? Have they given positive encouragement to those who wish to explore for offshore oil and gas reserves from which Northern Ireland could benefit?

In evidence to the Economic Development Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Minister said:

"To lay down piping for natural gas which the Republic of Ireland would sell to us at a price equivalent to that of heavy fuel oil is to be on a loser before one starts."

That must show clearly—to those who wish to see it—that the Kinsale gas deal was a red herring from beginning to end. However, it served as a useful distraction from the proposal to build a pipeline to the mainland had the Government been willing to link Northern Ireland to mainland supplies. Have the Government seriously considered a pipeline across the north channel from Scotland? Does the Minister know whether applications have been made for EC finance to assist this possible project? What is the current estimated cost of running a gas pipeline from Northern Ireland to the mainland?

Will the Minister assure the House that, in the event of substantial gas discoveries off Northern Ireland, money will be made available to provide a new distribution network and to establish a modern, viable gas industry?

I share the concern expressed this morning about job losses, and I welcome the time that was given for further consideration and consultation, although it did not turn out to be very satisfactory as the consultation was felt not to be all that meaningful.

I am also concerned about the level of compensation and about the timing of the rundown and closure. Knowing as I do the somewhat haphazard way in which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive organises work programmes, I shall be concerned to ensure that pensioners are not left without heating and cooking facilities in the middle of winter by a badly organised rundown and closure.

I congratulate the gas industry joint working group on its efforts to save the industry, but my colleagues and I are not convinced that the Government gave it the consideration that it deserved. I trust that the guesstimate —I used that word earlier because it is a rather rough estimate of closure costs—will be adequate to meet the real cost of the industry's closure and the cost of replacing and reinstating property to domestic consumers.

I am not satisfied with the level of compensation available to industrial users. They, too, have been obliged to incur new expenditure for which they have not planned. It has been forced on them by the Government's decision to end subsidy to the gas undertakings.

I hope that the Minister will assure the House that his Department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive will work together very closely to protect the consumers especially the aged and handicapped.

I am also concerned about the obvious lack of interest of Government supporters in the real problem that we face and the absence of contributions, apart from haggling and interruptions, by the small number of them in attendance today. There was not a word from any of them in the Northern Ireland Committee, although we can almost predict how the vote will go at the end of this debate.

I remain opposed to the closing down of the Northern Ireland gas industry.

1.58 pm

Dr. Boyson: The problem of the rundown of the gas industry has been with us for 10 years. At some stage a Government had to make up their mind. This Government did. After years of wobbling, a decision was made. However distressing it may be, that decision had to be made.

None of those who voted against the proposal before the Northern Ireland Committee and none of those who voted it down in the Northern Ireland Assembly carry any responsibility for Government policy. Obviously it was possible for them to vote against our proposal because they were not responsible for the budget. Their action was one of those freaks of freedom which occur from time to time and which people enjoy. But it must be recognised that, had the positions of the parties been reversed, a Labour Government would have made the same proposal.

We have heard a great deal about compensation and the estimate of £97 million. That is the best estimate that we have. It was brought to us by the British Gas Corporation, which has the greatest experience in these matters and believes that the figure will be about that.

I was asked about the breakdown of the figures. Some £12 million is for the deficit support for 1984-85. We have to prop up the industry while it runs down, just as it has been propped up year after year. One of the problems has been that it has needed a bigger prop every year. Ten years ago, the gas industry needed £2 million a year to support it, but now it needs £12 million a year. One could imagine what the figures would be if we continued supporting it. Some £120 per household is spent in subsidy, and if all the energy sources in Northern Ireland were subsidised at the level of the gas industry, £600 million of subsidy would be paid.

In 1987-88, the closure support will require £20 million for conversion, including £18·5 million to the Housing Executive. The operation deficit, the termination costs such as works closures, purging and the rest will cost about £12 million. The whole cost adds up to £97 million.

I was asked why figures are different. In many cases, the figures for compensation have decreased because the number of houses that will have to be compensated has decreased with the years. It decreased by one eighth in the past year alone. Most people have covered the cost themselves.

It is worth reminding the House that this is not a nationalised industry and there is no legal obligation on the Government to give compensation. The gas industry is run by private concerns. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) may be horrified to learn that we are giving compensation to customers of private concerns that cannot make a profit. I do not want to affect his political purity.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister says that we are talking about private, not nationalised, concerns, but the order is designed to remove a statutory duty from those private companies for the supply of gas. Therefore, it strangles the industry and the Minister is acting in the same way as MacGregor in the coal industry.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman is obviously a seeker after truth and desires to hold to the truth in every way. We are not closing the gas industry; it is closing itself because we have said that it must run on its own money. If we followed the hon. Gentleman's theory, we would prop up everything in the country, including private industry. The hon. Gentleman is opposed to private industry, but he wants this subsidy to continue. I do not doubt his political morality, or even his fervour, but I am astonished, and some of his supporters may be astonished when I bring it to their attention, to hear that he wants continued compensation for private industry that cannot make a profit. He is advocating not the nationalisation of these concerns, but their continuation, although they are not making a profit and are run by private directors.

The hon. Gentleman is obviously a political thinker, so he should think about these things. He should remember that there are 13 concerns involved in the gas industry. We know that 13 is not a lucky number. It is not a football team or a rugby team. Nobody likes 13, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman has been misled by the number. Perhaps the number 13 has put a spell on him.

Four of the concerns are private and nine are run by corporations. The only one of the 13 that is continuing because it can still make a profit is a private firm. The hon. Gentleman should think about that. The workers will lose their jobs because the concerns run by corporations cannot make a profit. In one concern, their jobs are being saved because the private firm is making a profit.

I am concerned about unemployment, as we all are. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) may laugh. I do not accept that there is a morality on Labour Benches that does not exist on this side of the House. I have great respect for the hon. Member, but he must have more breadth of vision.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) spoke about compensation. I know what his area is like, and I have walked through it with him. We shall do all that we can through voluntary organisations, pamphlets with large print for old people, and other important devices that must not be neglected to make sure that the consumers know what we are doing and what their opportunities are. When the closure notices are issued it is important for hon. Members, who have close contact with their constituents, to keep in touch with the Department and the gas undertakings to ensure that the job is done properly and that people do not fall out because they do not understand what is going on.

We are following British Gas practices on safety to provide for a safe and orderly rundown of gas supplies to consumers. When new appliances are installed, they will be made safe wherever they are. I can assure the hon. Members for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), Belfast, North and Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) about that. The grants are intended to cover the cost of all essential work associated with the installation on the basis of the least cost alternative. We do not want people to believe that they are receiving compensation. I do not want to mislead the House about that.

We are following the practice used for the clean air scheme which was a more difficult scheme for the ordinary

[Dr. Boyson]

householder. We are paying for installations on the basis of the least cost alternative. In Committee hon. Members asked about the handicapped. The least cost alternative must be workable for the individual. It would be no use installing equipment which an old couple, for example, could not work. Decisions will be based on human need.

The question of the right of appeal was raised in Committee. I said that I would see what we could do, and we are looking into the issue. I shall retain contact with hon. Members about that.

I worked with Age Concern closely when I was a Minister in the Department of Health and Social Security. In its material it does not consider the figures which I am about to give to the House. At issue is how much, with the alternative system, heat and lighting will cost compared with the present system. The figures are good news. Central heating run on town gas for a terraced house costs £553 a year. Similar central heating using coal costs £289 per annum. That is why people have converted to coal in the last few years. Coal central heating costs only half as much.

Mr. Beggs: The Minister gives us the best figures available, but when people convert to a new system it takes time to adjust and to control how much energy they need to provide the heating that they want. One can turn off a gas fire, but one might have to keep a fire burning 24 hours a day.

Dr. Boyson: I share the faith in the ordinary people expressed by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East. I grew up in Lancashire where coal was used to heat our homes and I am sure that, as then, people will use their heating sensibly. Sometimes the ordinary person can cope better than the officials who try to advise them. I could give similar figures for cooking and other heating, but in the long term it will be cheaper for people to convert to other fuels.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Will the Minister take note of the statment by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) in Committee that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive estimates that it would cost £20 million to deal with conversions for only 10,700 homes with gas heating? Are those figures correct?

Dr. Boyson: I shall not, because of shortage of time, go into the detailed costs, but I will write to the hon. Gentleman within a few days. So many statistics have been given that I prefer to look into the matter to make sure that my reply is accurate.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East questioned me about housing. I would not like hon. Members to go away for the weekend without realising how much money the Government have put into housing in Northern Ireland. About £500 million a year has gone to that sector and a vast number of homes have been completed. I agree that more remains to be done, but I should not like it to be thought that the Government had not taken action on that front. The Labour party, when in office, did what it could to provide homes, and the programme has been accelerated since we come to power. Housing has been one of our three priorities and whole areas of Belfast and Londonderry have been rebuilt.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: I will not give way because time is short. Anyway, the hon. Gentleman must not keep asking questions before I have answered his earlier questions. For example, he questioned me about jobs, but I do not think that he correctly followed what I said. Nobody wants more unemployment—at any rate, nobody I know wants to see more people out of work—and, although this action will mean 1,000 people losing their jobs in the gas industry, jobs will be provided in relation to alternative fuels, and similar men and women will take up those jobs.

It is likely that more jobs will be available because the distribution of coal has a strong labour content, and the same applies to liquid petroleum gas. The odds are that in the long term in the Province there will not be fewer jobs. We are shutting down gas, not to save jobs, but to enable the money that is being used in that sector to be used for lignite and coal, so securing cheaper fuel for the Province. I assure the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East that we are as concerned as he is about unemployment. He has no monopoly of virtue on that issue.

Mr. Nellist: I do not expect to convince the Minister about the loss of jobs and the lack of alternative employment. I am anxious to press him, however, on the question of redecoration, the replacement of flues and brickwork to cater for new fuels and housing costs generally. He says that £20 million is available for conversion. It has been estimated by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the cost of conversion will be £1,938 per household. For 80,000 to 100,000 households, we are talking of £160 million to £200 million. If the costs of conversion exceed £20 million, will the money that the Government at present provide for housing be diverted from repairs and renovation to conversion, or will new money be provided?

Dr. Boyson: I pointed out that the estimates, prepared by the British Gas Corporation, were the best available to us. The conversion will take place and the cost will come from the grants that we give for this to the housing areas. There is no question of the money coming from somewhere else. If we are wrong about the cost, we shall have to spend more money on it. The position is as straightforward as that.

We have said nothing about decorations. I have made perfectly clear what will be covered. Indeed, the clean air legislation did not include redecoration and so on. We have talked about putting in the cheapest alternative fuel that can be used, and if a new chimney is needed it must be provided. However, it does not mean taking out gas pipes and so on. That is the arrangement and that is what happens in this country, under the clean air legislation and similar provisions.

I have made the position clear. We shall cover all the costs of putting in the alternative fuel, but—I repeat that there is no difference between what we are doing in this respect and what happened with the clean air legislation—redecorations and the rest are not covered. In other words, we are following practice—*[Interruption.]* People may desire more, but we have made the position clear from the beginning.

We have been frank about all of this and the facts have been written down. If people cannot read the words, I cannot go round providing everbody with spectacles. There is no trick involved, no messing about, and we could not have been more frank.

Any Government subsidising every gas consumer at the rate of £120 a house, and facing an escalation of cost of gas from a £10 million a year subsidy to £12 million a year—equivalent to £600 million if all the energy in the Province is subsidised in the same way—would have made the decision that we have made. Any Opposition Member who does not believe that should look at himself in the mirror.

We have faced reality in a responsible way. We are providing money for the transfer of Kilroot to coal which will save £25 million a year, because it will be cheaper than the alternative heavy fuel. Similarly, we are backing lignite. That will create jobs. Let us have more jobs in Northern Ireland. No one will be more pleased than myself if we get them.

I commend the order to my right hon and hon. Friends and trust that the House will approve it.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 110, Noes 35.

Division No. 295] **[2.15 pm**

AYES

Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brumwell, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Major, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Murphy, Christopher
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Parris, Matthew
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'shire)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, John
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Clarke, Thomas
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Deakins, Eric
Dobson, Frank
Dubs, Alfred
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Godman, Dr Norman
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
McCusker, Harold
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Gas (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th July, be approved.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 23rd July, the Motion in the name of Mr. David Steel relating to the Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules (Cmnd. 9539) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until half-past Eleven o'clock or for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later. *—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Voluntary-Aided and Church Schools

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

2.25 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the funding of voluntary-aided and church schools and especially the problems of two schools in north Oxfordshire, the Blessed George Napier school and Bishop Carpenter school. I am also grateful for the support today of other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Minister for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris).

As I was educated at a Quaker school run by a religious minority, I am well aware of the contribution that religious and church schools make to the richness of education in this country. I have no doubt that Conservatives have a continuing commitment to seeing church schools flourish as a purposeful demonstration of our desire not only that parents should have the widest possible choice in the education of their children but that they should be able to see their children educated in such a way as to encourage regard for Christian values and to instil self-discipline, courtesy and respect for others, and I know of my hon. Friend the Minister's support for church schools.

Church-aided schools depend for funding of building projects on three sources — the relevant church authorities, the local education authority and central Government. Before any building or improvement project can go ahead, the support of all three sources is required. In north Oxfordshire, we seem to be experiencing difficulty in getting money allocated from central Government to provide for necessary improvements at two local schools.

The Blessed George Napier school in Banbury is a Roman Catholic secondary school for children throughout north Oxfordshire. It sets high standards, it is a popular school and it is not suffering from falling rolls. The local population of Roman Catholic children wishing to attend the school is likely to remain stable at least until the turn of the century.

In 1968, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science approved the enlargement of the school by about 150 places and the number of pupils duly increased by about that number. It has not been possible, however, to carry out the building works necessitated by that increase in numbers. The school urgently needs upgrading to meet the standards laid down by the Department of Education and Science guidelines, and I ask for nothing more than that the necessary funds be made available to enable the school to meet the standards set by the Department itself.

There is an urgent need for additional classrooms, accommodation for the sixth form and increased space for science, crafts and art. The need for that work to be carried out without delay is obvious. Architects' plans have been prepared and costings made. The Roman Catholic diocesan authorities are anxious that the work should be carried out as soon as possible. Oxfordshire county council is also anxious that the work should be carried out as soon as possible. In truth, I know that the Department of Education and Science recognises that the case is well made, as officials from the Department who visited the Blessed George Napier school on 27 March readily conceded the need for that work to be carried out.

Yet no money is forthcoming from the Department. Why? The reason is that money has been made available only for schools in areas of population growth or for schemes that are intended to remove surplus school places. It is claimed that this project, the Blessed George Napier, does not fall into either category, so money has not been made available.

I simply make the following brief points to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science and to the House. If these criteria continue to be applied rigorously, funds will never be available for school building works, however urgent they may be, in areas of stable population. In any event, Banbury as a town has a consistently increasing population and is one of the main areas of intended population growth——

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Mr. Baldry: —in the Oxfordshire structure plan. Furthermore, the building works at Blessed George Napier are needed in any event to accommodate and increase in the school's population that was agreed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science as long ago as 1968. I urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to see whether money can be made available for this project now, and certainly to make funds available for Blessed George Napier from the 1986-87 programme for voluntary-aided schools. I would also put this question to the House. Whatever this project might cost now, how much more will it cost the community by being delayed?

Bishop Carpenter school at North Newington near Banbury is a primary school which presents a similar problem. Bishop Carpenter is a voluntary-aided, Church of England primary school. It has about 95 pupils who are drawn from a number of nearby villages. It has a high overall reputation, and a number of parents express a clear preference to send their children to this Church of England school.

For a considerable number of years, the governors of the school have wanted to improve its buildings. While structurally sound, it is an old Victorian school with very limited space which, not surprisingly, restricts teaching and other school activities. Some of the facilities, such as the lavatories, are positively primitive. The teaching area available and the hard playing area are both well below that which is recommended nationally. As the school has no hall, there is very little opportunity for physical exercise and drama productions, and meals have to be taken in the classrooms. The headmaster has nowhere private to interview parents, and the staff have nowhere of their own.

This school is seeking to serve the best educational needs of the local community but its buildings are desperately in need of improvement. The church now has the necessary funds. This project is at the top of the Church of England's diocesan priorities for Oxfordshire. The county council is prepared to meet its share of the necessary funds. Likewise, the project is at the top of the county's application for moneys for church-aided schools. In short, wheher or not these urgent building works can go ahead is dependent on central Government.

For a number of years now, Oxfordshire county council has applied to the Department of Education and Science for such funds as may be necessary to tackle this work.

Year by year, these funds have not been forthcoming, and consequently year by year the project has slipped. Year by year the present facilities continue to deteriorate. The parents and governors have drawn up plans to improve the school that will retain all the best features of the present building while ensuring proper facilities for a mixed, three-class primary school.

To fulfil the needs of an active, living village school with high educational standards and a high reputation in the community would, I should have thought, be exactly the sort of objective that the Department of Education and Science would want to meet. Simply to look at this matter local education authority by local education authority inevitably means that well-deserving individual projects are neglected within those local education authorities which overall may have falling rolls, even though some schools within an LEA, such as Bishop Carpenter, may have expanding numbers, in less than adequate conditions, because parents have chosen to send their children there.

I very much hope that the Department of Education and Science will be able to make available as soon as possible the necessary money for its share of the work on Bishop Carpenter school.

2.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on his success in obtaining the debate and on the way in which he presented his case so fully and forcefully. I am grateful for the presence of my hon. Friends the Members for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) who both share the Government's concern that the controlled and aided sector should be maintained and supported.

Before turning to the detailed points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, I should like briefly to set the scene by saying something about the role of voluntary schools within our maintained system of education. There are about 25,000 maintained primary and secondary schools in England—maintained in the sense that local education authorities meet their day-to-day running expenses. The majority of these were also provided by the authorities and are known as county schools. However, a substantial minority — just over 8,000 or about a third — of maintained schools were provided by voluntary bodies, principally the churches. These are the voluntary schools.

There are three types of voluntary school. The most numerous are aided schools of which there are about 4,500. Certain capital and external repair work remains the responsibility of the governors of aided schools, for which they are generally entitled to 85 per cent. grant from the Department. In view of that stake in the continued financing of such schools, the foundation concerned has a majority on the governing body, which has significant powers in maintaining the school's distinctive ethos. Secondly, there is the historically closed class of about 100 special agreement schools which, for most purposes, can be regarded as aided schools.

Thirdly, there are about 3,500 controlled schools. For present financial purposes, these are similar to county schools where all recurrent and capital costs are met by the maintaining authority. In view of the initial provision of premises, though, the foundation has a substantial minority on the governing body, which has certain powers to preserve a distinctive ethos for the school.

The great majority of voluntary schools have been provided by the churches, for historical reasons, principally by the Anglican and Roman Catholics. Religious affiliation is not a prerequisite, though, and there are several non-denominational schools.

These voluntary schools were brought into the maintained sector by the dual system of county and voluntary schools created by the Education Act 1944. The Government have said on a number of occasions, and I am glad to repeat it, that they are wholly committed to the dual system. We welcome the diversity that voluntary schools bring to the maintained sector, which enables a wider range of parental preferences to be met.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury spoke eloquently about the case for major building projects at two aided schools in Oxfordshire—the Blessed George Napier Roman Catholic comprehensive school, Banbury and the Bishop Carpenter Church of England primary school, North Newington. Neither has yet found its way into the necessary building programme. Funds for such projects are not, of course, unlimited. One of the main aims of the Government's economic policy is a permanent and sustained reduction in the rate of inflation, because only in that way can we generate the wealth needed to pay for services. Central to that policy is a continuing limitation of public expenditure both by central and local government; education cannot be exempt from the need for restraint.

The available resources have therefore to be allocated carefully to priority projects. Let me explain how we set about that. Each summer, the Department invites local education authorities to submit details of capital expenditure plans for their county and voluntary schools in the following year. In aggregate, those plans inevitably exceed what the country can afford. We are therefore faced with difficult decisions in the face of conflicting priorities. In that process, our priorities have been, first, to meet commitments arising from projects started under allocations made in previous years. This accounts for a large part of the resources available. Account has then to be taken of new projects needed to enable authorities to make sufficient provision for the children in their areas. In areas of population growth calling for more places in local schools, a high priority is given for an appropriate capital allocation whether for new schools or extensions to existing ones. In recent years, we have always been able to meet the bids for such projects.

In addition, when statutory proposals have been published for the removal of surplus places and approved by my right hon. Friend, and when these include a related capital project, we have generally been able to provide a capital allocation so that the work can go ahead to fulfil the new duty created by the Education Act 1980 that the proposers—the governors in the case of an aided school —must implement an approved proposal. Allowance has then to be made for urgent minor capital projects. Only then can consideration be given to improvement projects which, although they may be worth while in themselves, are less pressing than the other categories that I have outlined.

The level of committed expenditure on aided school projects anticipated for 1985-86 is higher than our plans had allowed for. This was for a number of reasons. For

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

example, costs have in some cases risen more than expected, initial estimates may have proved to be too low and work may have gone ahead faster than planned. Even though the provision for all work at aided schools was set at £50·1 million — compared to the outturn of £44·8 million in 1984-85—this has put severe pressure on the new work that could be programmed for 1985-86. Governors' plans for work at aided schools, by contrast, totalled over £90 million. Priority had to be given to projects that were statutorily necessary—that is, basic need projects or projects required to implement proposals approved under the 1980 Act.

In its bid for the 1985-86 programme, Oxfordshire listed three major aided school projects. In priority order, these were the St. Augustine's Roman Catholic/Church of England secondary school and then the two my hon. Friend has mentioned — Bishop Carpenter and the Blessed George Napier.

My hon. Friend suggested that we do not consider individual projects when making capital allocations. He will realise from what I have said that we examine carefully each project which comes to us so that we can decide whether it comes into one of the priority categories. The St. Augustine's project, to which the local education authority gave first priority, came within one of the priority categories and it was then authorised to start. In the light of the representations made this afternoon and in earlier correspondence by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, I readily acknowledge the desirability of the other two projects. I can assure him that there is no lack of awareness of local views on the need for these projects. The fact remains, however, that neither of them could be classified as the high priority needed for inclusion in this year's programme. It will be of little consolation to my hon. Friends, but many other similar worthwhile projects had to be excluded this year. Indeed, many areas had no major projects selected for a start this year.

I might add that, as a normal part of our management of resources, we keep a shortlist of projects that we would be prepared to authorise to start this year if resources became available through the delay or cancellation of a project elsewhere. The project at the Blessed George Napier school has been added to that list but, as my hon. Friends will understand, even if resources are so released, much depends on an assessment of the relative priorities of those projects on the list. Clearly, I can offer no guarantee that any shortlisted project will be able to go ahead this year, let alone those under discussion.

Failing that, my hon. Friend would obviously like me to give some assurances about the inclusion of either project in the programme for 1986-87. Much as I would like to help him, I cannot. All I can say is that, if, in response to the annual invitation made last month, Oxfordshire puts them forward again—as seems most likely — they will be very carefully considered. That consideration will obviously have to be informed by the overall level of resources available and take account of the merits of competing projects in Oxfordshire and elsewhere.

I am, of course, available at any time. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury will appreciate that I cannot go any further at this stage, but I congratulate him on so clearly placing before the House his constituents' needs and interests.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 22 July 1985

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (TROWSE BRIDGE) BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

POOLE BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Rail Services

1. **Mr. Snape** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to assume direct responsibility for section 20 rail services in the event of one or more constituent district councils declining to participate in joint board arrangements in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Bill.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): It will be for joint authority PTAs to decide what local rail services they want to support. District councils may apply to me to secede but, before giving my agreement, I would want to be satisfied that acceptable arrangements could be made for local rail services.

Mr. Snape: Is the Secretary of State aware that, in the February 1985 edition of *Modern Railways*, in an interview between the editor and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the latter was reported as saying that the district councils would not be allowed to secede with regard to section 20 arrangements? Will the right hon. Gentleman have a chat with his hon. Friend to resolve that difficulty? Does he agree that his hon. Friend's original view is much more sensible, because to try to operate such services is likely to be difficult, to say the least, if one constituent authority secedes?

Mr. Ridley: I am always chatting with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have a chat with the editor, too, to make sure that it is even on both sides. We would not wish a district council to be able to get out of its obligations under section 20 by secession, but there could be cases in which there are no obligations lying on that particular district council. We must judge each case on its merits.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Is the Secretary of State aware of how much concern is being expressed by British Rail on this subject? It is not sure about its future, particularly in rail operations such as the Tyne and Wear metro. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us an idea of the time scale, and at least guarantee that payments will be made until such time as the metropolitan authorities have disappeared and the district councils have taken over and are sure of their position?

Mr. Ridley: There is no suggestion of changing section 20 grants, either now or after abolition comes into effect. It will be for the secessor authorties, in the form of joint boards, to consider whether they wish to continue with them. As long as they continue with them, the grants will remain backed up by the section 20 payments from the Government. Therefore, there is no immediate threat. I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that secession itself will not take place until some time after abolition. Therefore, his fears need not be taken too seriously.

Dr. Marek: Will the provision of local rail services go up or down as a result of the changes?

Mr. Ridley: I am not in the business of making forecasts as to what local authorities will do. If I had been able to forecast what local authorities would do over the past six years, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I would have got it terribly wrong, not believing that some of them could be so stupid.

London Docklands

2. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will report progress on construction of the light railway in the London docklands.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The project is well up to schedule. We expect the railway to be in full operation by mid-1987—on time and within budget.

Mr. Chapman: Does my hon. Friend agree that this form of new infrastructure, taken together with the Government's proposals for the regeneration of the London docklands, is the best form of capital investment? Will she give an undertaking that, if and when application is made for more grants to complete stage 2 of this exciting new enterprise, the Government will consider such a proposal most sympathetically?

Mrs. Chalker: I agree with my hon. Friend. The London Docklands Development Corporation, together with its partners, is doing an excellent job. I assure my hon. Friend that, although we have not yet received any proposal for a further stage of the docklands light railway, if such a proposal is received it will be given the best possible consideration.

Mr. Cartwright: In view of the importance of providing good public transport links to the proposed STOLport in the Royal group of docks, will the Minister assure us that any proposal to extend the light railway to serve the STOLport will be favourably considered?

Mrs. Chalker: That was the essence of my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman). I have received no such proposal, and therefore cannot know whether it will include an extension in the direction of the proposed STOLport. Any proposal for an extension will be carefully considered in the light of the important regeneration of docklands.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend take steps to ensure that what my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping

Barnet (Mr. Chapman) described as an exciting new venture will not lead to further delays on the Fenchurch street line?

Mrs. Chalker: As an old habitué of the Fenchurch street line, I know exactly what my hon. Friend means. I shall certainly see what more can be done, in conjunction with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, about the Fenchurch street line, on which so many people suffer.

Mr. Simon Hughes: In the past the Minister has accepted that south-east London is under-served. As the light railway is only for north of the river, will the Minister give an assurance about the possible extension of the Bakerloo line, whether above or below ground, from Elephant and Castle, through Bricklayers Arms and South Bermondsey, to Surrey docks and, perhaps, the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and Thamesmead, which will have the largest growing population in London in the next 10 years?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman paints a grandiose picture. I assure him that any sensible cost-effective proposal will be fully considered.

Vehicle Excise Duty

3. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect of the campaign run by his Department to reduce motor vehicle licence evasion; and what is the latest estimate of the percentage of cars on the roads on which the appropriate licence duty has not been paid.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): Last year more than 290,000 vehicle excise duty evaders were prosecuted or settled out of court—10 per cent. more than in 1983. The number of offenders dealt with should be even higher this year as a result of further measures now being taken. The most recent survey of evasion estimated that about 3·5 per cent. of cars and light goods vehicles in use on the road are unlicensed.

Mr. Taylor: Despite my hon. Friend's energetic efforts, the amount of evasion still imposes a horrendous loss on the Treasury. Has he closed his mind to the possibility of raising the revenue through additional tax on petrol? Is he satisfied that local authorities have adequate powers to remove untaxed cars from the roads?

Mr. Spicer: We are certainly not complacent about the level of evasion, which, as my hon. Friend, who has taken a great deal of interest in the matter, said, results in about a £90 million loss of revenue. My hon. Friend made two suggestions. Changing to a different form of taxation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In changing the form of taxation many issues are at stake, one of which is clearly evasion. The Government have no plans to abolish VED now, and will do so only if the benefits from it are greater than the disadvantages. In regard to the suggestion to strengthen local authorities' powers to tow away unlicensed vehicles, such as they have in the case of abandoned vehicles, I point out that there are many practical difficulties. For example, in some cases the licence disc has merely fallen from the windscreen. However, we have not ruled out all possibilities of some form of controlled impounding.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Minister aware that many of us recall the former Labour Member, Mr. Arthur Lewis challenging the Secretary of State's predecessors to go out with him on to the streets of London where he would demonstrate that more than one third of the licences were out of date? Without casting any aspersions on Londoners as against other United Kingdom citizens, does that not show evasion of that taxation on a massive scale? What does the Minister intend to do to correct that?

Mr. Spicer: The problem is not exclusive to London. We are glad that the Bill, which is strengthing the Government's powers in Scotland and allows for evasion to be prosecuted with only one witness, is now before the other place. It is a national problem and we are dealing with it nationally.

Mr. Eggar: Since evasion is a matter for my hon. Friend, should he not urge the Treasury to replace VED by extra tax on petrol?

Mr. Spicer: There are conflicting views about whether VED should be replaced by a different form of taxation. There are arguments for and against it, as my Department recognises.

National Bus Company

4. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the National Bus Company; and what subjects were discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet the chairman of the NBC, when we discuss a number of subjects of mutual interest.

Mr. Pike: When Ministers met the chairman, did they consider the NBC's withdrawal from the National Council for the Omnibus Industry, which has stood the test of time since 1947? Does he recognise that that withdrawal has caused considerable industrial unrest in the industry and tends to prove what many Opposition Members have been saying: that, to make the Transport Bill work, the Government will deregulate the working conditions of employees in that industry?

Mr. Mitchell: That is entirely a matter for the management of the industry. It is not for the Government to interfere, and we were not responsible for asking the NBC to take this step.

Mr. Rathbone: In his discussions with the chairman, has my hon. Friend mentioned the future of British Transport Advertising? He will be aware that many people in the poster industry are keen that that organisation should be run more competitively, and would be only too willing to assist in so doing?

Mr. Mitchell: I have discussed this matter with the chairman of the NBC and with representatives of British Rail. Discussions are continuing on the possibility of a management buy-out, and I do not wish to say anything further now.

Mr. Stott: The Minister will be aware of the great anxiety felt by NBC employees about their pension rights. He will also be aware that his long and detailed answers to amendments which were tabled by me and by my hon. Friends in Committee have in no way assuaged their anxiety. It is time that the Minister reconsidered the

matter. Does he accept that there is still time to recognise the genuine concerns of those employees, whose pension rights are being put at risk by his Bill? As a consequence of that, is he now prepared to amend the Bill in the other place to meet their legitimate demands?

Mr. Mitchell: The National Bus Company asked for a Government guarantee in respect of the pension funds, but the company does not provide such a guarantee, only a renounceable covenant. A renounceable covenant cannot be equated with a Government guarantee, or even an NBC guarantee. However, with the chairman of the NBC, we have been considering ways of ensuring the continuation of those pension rights even more than we do now. One option is for an insurance company to take over the fund. Those discussions are continuing, and I do not wish to prejudice them by going further.

Driving Test

5. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to revise the motoring skills tested in the driving test.

Mrs. Chalker: This morning my right hon. Friend informed the Chairman of the Select Committee on Transport of our response to his report on road safety. I hope that he has received it. As I have been asked this direct question, I should tell the House that my right hon. Friend has said that he is unable to accept the Committee's proposals for an extended driving test.

Mr. Bruinvels: On behalf of all hon. Members, may I say that that reply is unsatisfactory, bearing in mind the fact that some people who drive cars risk their lives and those of others after only half an hour of instruction and a driving test? Does she agree that night-time driving and driving at speed—possibly on dual carriageways or even on some motorways—should be added to the driving test? Does she accept that it is no good instructing examiners in new rules about how to examine people's driving and then to forget the essential fact that those people must be properly trained to drive?

Mrs. Chalker: I must ask my hon. Friend to consider the practicalities of the matter and to study it in some detail. In summer, it is not feasible to train people or test them in night driving. In winter, it would require massive examiner overtime and would involve a higher fee for the person taking the driving test. As for dual carriageway driving, I should tell my hon. Friend that fewer than half the network of test centres are within reach of dual carriageways, and even fewer are within reach of motorways. We should consider the response more fully before we go any further.

Mr. Bagier: I thank the hon. Lady for her attempts to get the report to me on time. I have not had time to look at it. There will be some disappointment in the Committee that she has not been able to accept its recommendations. Is she aware that the safety aspect of driving examiners' tests was one of the main considerations to which the Committee gave its thoughts? In that connection, is she satisfied with the quality of driving school instructors, who at present are not seen to be subject to the scrutiny to which they ought to be subject?

Mrs. Chalker: I have been seeking contact with the hon. Gentleman all morning, and I am sorry that he has only just received the response from my right hon. Friend. I fully agree with him about the importance of safety and agree with many of the things that his Committee said in the report. I also agree that we need to improve the quality of driving instruction. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) brought in a Bill, which is now an Act, which is helping us to improve driving instruction. The requirements placed on driving instructors will improve instruction, and that will improve further the standard of driving on the roads.

Mr. Stephen Ross: I assure the Minister that any improvement in driving instruction will be welcomed. What is the Minister doing about shortening the waiting time for a driving test? There is an interminable delay before tests can take place, and the queue is growing longer. What is the Minister doing to speed things up?

Mrs. Chalker: We have been undertaking substantial recruitment to increase the number of driving examiners. Since 1984, 172 driving examiners have been recruited, and that gives us a net gain, taking into account retirements and those leaving, of 65. On all the best forecasts, we should have 1·85 million tests per annum. The actual turnout in 1984-85 was 1·94 million and we lost more than three weeks of full testing last winter because of the weather. We are recruiting as fast as we can in order to cut the waiting time.

Bus Services

6. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes to the Transport Bill 1985 he intends to propose following the Government response to the Transport Committee "Report on Buses".

Mr. Ridley: We have put forward a number of amendments to the Bill since the publication of the Transport Committee's report, including two points identified by the Committee: powers to enable local authorities to require operators to participate in concessionary fares schemes, and provisions to ensure that control over bus stations is not used to secure an unfair advantage in the provision of local bus services.

Mr. Hughes: Does that answer not show that the Minister is still suffering from the twin viruses of arrogance and contempt? The proposals which he has put forward do not begin to match up to the 15 specific recommendations of the Select Committee. Was it not nonsense for the Minister and his Department to proceed with the Bill before the Select Committee reported and then to ignore its recommendations except in two respects?

Mr. Ridley: Far from ignoring the recommendations of the Select Committee, I have disagreed with them. The hon. Gentleman will know that we published a White Paper in response to the Select Committee. In it we argued against the system of competitive franchising which the Committee, rather half-heartedly, proposed, and we put forward cogent reasons why that was not the right thing to do.

London Regional Transport

8. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress being made by London Regional Transport towards reducing costs and improving services.

Mr. Ridley: I am pleased to say that substantial progress is being made. As I reported in answer to my hon. Friend's question on 18 July, LRT expects to reduce unit costs by more than 2·5 per cent. in real terms in its first year. This is on top of substantial cost savings made during 1984-85 and puts LRT on course towards achieving its objective of halving revenue support between 1984-85 and 1987-88. LRT's initial trial of competitive tendering for bus services yielded cost savings of nearly 20 per cent., while mileage operated on the routes concerned will go up.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate LRT on its excellent first year of management and join me in deploring the GLC's putting up of further ratepayers' and taxpayers' money to its sidekick organisation Capital so that it might attack LRT? Will he also assure the House that fares will be kept at or below the level of inflation, a situation which will contrast strongly with the GLC's efforts in 1981, when it doubled fares?

Mr. Ridley: It is strange that my hon. Friend should refer to Capital. I have before me the leaflet which it published when the Bill was going through the House. It says that the Bill

"will mean fares having to go up by at least 25 per cent. and the probable end of the line for at least 33 stations and 34 bus routes."

Can we expect an apology from the GLC and from Capital admitting that that was scandalous scaremongering and that it has not happened?

Mr. Dobson: Will the Secretary of State say when he expects the policies of London Regional Transport to be as successful as those of London Transport under the GLC's "Fares Fair" policy? When does the right hon. Gentleman expect present policies to result in a 12 per cent. increased usage of buses and an 8 per cent. increased usage of the tube, and a reduction in the number of commuter cars coming into London?

Mr. Ridley: It has been a great success story. The GLC expected to increase revenue support to £245 million by 1987-88, whereas we are on target to achieving revenue support of only £95 million by that year. That shows the immense savings which have been made for the benefit of the taxpayer and not to the detriment of the passenger.

Mr. Tony Banks: I realise that the Secretary of State is not a frequent user of London's buses. Is he able to explain his definition of "efficiency", given that during the past 12 months one third of all London's bus routes have been cut or withdrawn? Will he also say whether, if London Regional Transport is able to make an operating surplus because of these cuts during the financial year, that will be used to reduce the precept or the fares?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman accuses me of not being a frequent user of the buses, but I accuse him of not bothering to turn up when most London Members go to get a proper briefing on these facts from London Regional Transport itself. If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to discover the facts from London Regional Transport this morning, he would have discovered that the increase in efficiency is even better than I predicted in Committee, and, further, that there has not been this one third reduction in bus routes but that there has been a plan only to reduce route mileage by 2 per cent., which is rather different from 33 per cent. That is the normal margin of error in the figures of the GLC, of which the hon. Gentleman has the dubious distinction of being chairman.

Road Traffic (London)

9. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the incidence of congestion attributable to coach traffic on roads in London for which he has responsibility.

Mrs. Chalker: The main problems of coach congestion in London are not on trunk roads but in the sensitive central area, where there is a shortage of proper parking space. I have impressed on the GLC the importance of tackling this effectively, and I am seeking to ensure that urgent action is taken for summer 1986.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that this building particularly is surrounded by roads filled with law-breaking tourist coaches? Does she recognise especially that Westminster bridge, particularly on the west side where glaringly obvious yellow "No Parking" lines are painted, is cluttered from one side to the other with coaches, ice cream vans and the rest, to the enormous cost and inconvenience of the travelling public? What does her Department intend to do about it?

Mrs. Chalker: I am aware of and share much of the concern about coach parking in London. It is a major problem, caused really when tourists arrive in London and their drivers have to park their coaches. Although we welcome the £10 billion that tourism brings, we have to take action. It is for the GLC to identify proper stopping and parking places on and off street. It is also important for the GLC to get on with doing that as quickly as possible. The Department has sought to help the GLC in a number of ways, and we shall be having further discussions this week. With other Government Departments, for the forthcoming season we are examining available land on which to park coaches when they have dropped their passengers.

Mr. Higgins: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is quite wrong that the law should not be enforced? Will she therefore have urgent discussions with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to ensure either that the parking restrictions are removed or that the police take action against those who break the law?

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. Friend knows, law enforcement is not a matter for me. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. However, rather than deterring those who bring important resources to this country, I believe that the Government, with the GLC, must find places for these coaches.

Mr. Dobson: The Government are abolishing the GLC.

Mrs. Chalker: It will remain responsible for the next eight months for parking in London. We must find a solution to the problem, which is growing even worse because of the influx of foreign tourists.

Mr. Dalyell: Are the Government helping British Rail with its imaginative scheme for parkways at places such as Iver? Could not British Rail also be provided with help in re-routeing trains from Scotland and the north through Willesden junction to the south coast?

Mrs. Chalker: Although I understand the hon. Gentleman's question, that is not a matter for me. We encourage park and ride schemes where they can

reasonably be accommodated. Additional park and ride schemes are being investigated, but they will not cope with the many tourist coaches that come to London bringing people to stay in London or to visit the many places of interest in the capital.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware of the prehistoric arrangements at Victoria bus station? Does she agree that for such conditions to exist in a tourist centre like London is completely unacceptable? Will she get the National Bus Company to sort it out immediately?

Mrs. Chalker: Given the amount of traffic that wishes to come to this area, somebody ought to think up an imaginative scheme for bus garaging, and I sincerely hope that that will happen. The National Bus Company has a problem not only with its own coaches but with other coaches in the area. We are well aware of the grave concern in Westminster. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I will be meeting the leader of Westminster city council this week about the matter.

Heavy Commercial Road Traffic

10. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward further proposals to restrict heavy commercial traffic to particular routes in rural areas.

Mrs. Chalker: County councils already have a variety of powers to handle heavy commercial traffic in ways appropriate for each locality, including rural areas.

Mr. Baker: From the Dispatch Box, will my hon. Friend enourage county councils to use their powers to introduce road humps or to direct commercial traffic by one route rather than another? Far too many commercial vehicles are still going down rural roads which were not built to take them.

Mrs. Chalker: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's question and refer him to paragraph 36 of the transport policy and programme circular of January 1985, where he will see that authorities are again urged to undertake work to alleviate the nuisance caused by lorries in residential areas. The circular shows just how that work can be done and also explains what has already been done in certain rural areas.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Minister accept that the statement by the Central Electricity Generating Board that it is moving a large amount of its coal traffic from rail to road will be unacceptable to highway authorities, and that environmentally such a move is very undesirable?

Mrs. Chalker: I do not think that I have read the statement to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but every local authority has the power to introduce sensible lorry controls. We are making further progress on lorry management by means of a joint project with the Civic Trust and three county councils to ensure the more economic functioning of lorries by means of low-cost measures. At the same time, we must establish a better understanding of how to keep lorries away from residential and rural areas where they do not need to go.

Mr. Adley: Further to the question put by my hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), will my hon. Friend please take on board the fact that some county councils are not using powers with which the House has provided them, be they for road humps or weight restrictions? For example, will my hon. Friend look at the road that passes through my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North from Ashby Heath to Shaftesbury? It is a classic example of a road that is used by a great deal of heavy traffic. The county council says that it is unsuitable for any of these restrictions, but it is patently just the sort of road that should be subject to those restrictions.

Mrs. Chalker: I should need prior knowledge of a road if I were to comment in the detail suggested by my hon. Friend. There have been initiatives on local lorry controls which can be implemented. I am sure that he will be encouraging his county council to restrict or, where necessare, ban lorries from roads with amenity problems. I think that that is the angle that my hon. Friend is getting at.

Mr. Snape: Will the hon. Lady commend to rural authorities the sorts of solutions adopted by the GLC in restricting heavy goods vehicles? Will she bear in mind that the Secretary of State, having been denounced once again for acting "improperly, unlawfully and irrationally", now has more form than the Kray brothers?

Mrs. Chalker: The answer to the first question is no. The second matter is sub judice.

London Regional Trasnport

11. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss his proposals for improving the quality of bus services in London.

Mr. Ridley: I meet the chairman of London Regional Transport at frequent intervals and our discussions cover a wide range of topics. LRT is taking positive steps to improve the quality of the bus services it provides, in accordance with the objectives it has been sent.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State accept the LRT view that the main threat to the quality of bus services in London comes from a combination of almost perpetual road works and the blocking of main roads by parked vehicles? If so, what encouragement can he give LRT that there will be any improvement of those problems in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Ridley: I know that in the hon. Gentleman's constituency there has been a deterioration of the service along the Rochester way relief road. I understand from LRT that the road works, which are being carried out by the GLC, are causing the problem. If the hon. Gentleman likes to raise the matter with the GLC, he may get an explanation of why that service in not functioning well.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this year I have had fewer complaints about buses than ever before?

Mr. Corbett: There are fewer buses, that is why.

Mr. Ridley: I hope that my hon. Friend will find that he has fewer complaints still next year.

M1 Repairs

13. **Mr. David Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the progress of the major repairs to the M1 south of Bedfordshire, which started on 2 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, the critical phase of the work was completed on 11 July, five days ahead of schedule, and there was little disruption to traffic either on the motorway itself or in the surrounding area during the works.

Mr. Madel: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is great appreciation in my constituency of the speed with which the employees of Balfour Beatty completed the work and the co-operation between her Department and the contractors? When further motorway repairs are necessary, will my hon. Friend ensure that there is another effective publicity campaign by her Department warning drivers of the need to take alternative routes, because that helped this time?

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said and for the excellent co-operation between all concerned in completing the work early.

We had to take special publicity measures in this case because of the very heavy loading of 120,000 vehicles per day on this stretch of the M1. Should repairs be needed on any other stretch of motorway that has such a heavy loading — only one is more heavily loaded — we shall consider such publicity measures. In general, if the public heed the lessons learnt from this example, I am sure that we shall be completing other schemes not only early, but without accident, which is important.

Mr. Stott: Will the Minister say whether it is normal practice for her Department to pay what can only be described as very large sums of public money to contractors who finish a job before time or on time?

Mrs. Chalker: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that we have started a system of lane rental, with the objective of saving costs to industry. That means that if contractors finish repair works early they get a bonus, but if they finish late they pay the Department a levy for each day over the target time. The company earned a substantial bonus, but industry is the net beneficiary by about £500,000 because that job was finished five days early. It was certainly worth the bonus which the company received.

London Regional Transport

15. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the progress towards the objectives set by the Government for the management of London Regional Transport in 1984.

Mr. Ridley: I refer my hon Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) earlier today.

Dr. Twinn: What initiatives have resulted from the increase in co-operation between LRT and BR?

Mr. Ridley: We have made considerable progress with the new capitalcard, with plans for improving interchanges between BR and LRT stations and with bringing together the standards for station maintenance and investment appraisal which the two organisations have performed differently. My hon. Friend will find that the benefits from the meetings will flow quickly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Hyde Park (Speakers' Corner)

42. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions is currently considering prosecutions against any persons alleged to have been responsible for persistent obstruction or abuse of speakers at Hyde park, London.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): Earlier this year the Metropolitan police sought the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions as to the institution of proceedings under the Public Meeting Act 1908 against persons responsible for disruption of proceedings at Speakers' Corner. The director took the view that these traditional gatherings which are not called together to transact business fell outside the scope of the 1908 Act. I agreed with that view and have invited the Home Secretary to consider the problems raised by this case. The police have since been provided with legal advice about their powers under the Royal and other Parks and Gardens Regulations 1977 and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment are monitoring the situation to see whether the provisions are sufficient to deal with the mischief.

Mr. Winnick: The Speakers' Corner is visited by many people from outside London. I note the Attorney-General's remarks, but is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that further action is needed to deal with those who persistently try to obstruct free speech by abuse and obscenities? Is he further aware that according to a report in *The London Standard* three weeks ago, one of the main offenders is the political secretary of the Kensington young conservatives? Is this not yet another illustration of the extremist element in the Tory party being determined to stop free speech?

The Attorney-General: Another of the bad hecklers is a Marxist, so the problem is fairly wide-ranging. Last Sunday the tougher approach by the police under the regulations was put into effect and two well-known hecklers, who have been behaving very badly indeed — not just obstructing, but seeking to bring meetings to an end — were told that they had to leave. They left quietly. The phrase that the chief inspector used was that it "worked like a charm."

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I commend what my right hon. and learned Friend has said, but is he aware that when I spoke on a young conservative platform at Speakers' Corner I was constantly subjected to abuse and obscenities but that I never complained to anyone?

The Attorney-General: The distinction is between ordinary heckling, which is part of the "fun", and heckling by a group of people scattered round the audience whose intention is to disrupt and bring the meeting to an end. That cannot be tolerated.

Duty Solicitor Scheme

43. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Attorney-General whether those who attend police stations voluntarily and the friends

and relatives of those held by the police under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will have access to the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The 1984 Act provides for those attending police stations voluntarily to be covered by the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme. The Lord Chancellor plans to make an announcement about the scheme very shortly.

Mr. Dubs: The Minister's answer is welcome in relation to those attending voluntarily, but may I press him further about the friends and relatives of those who have been either arrested or who are attending voluntarily? Would it not be helpful to the police and the accused if the scheme were extended to include those people?

The Solicitor-General: I undertake to ensure that my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor takes note of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I cannot say more than that today.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Solicitor-General agree that for this scheme to work properly it is necessary for a duty solicitor, when in attendance at a police station, to inspect the detained person's book, thus allowing him to verify who is or is not detained at the police station at that time?

The Solicitor-General: There are many detailed matters to be considered in the implementation of the scheme and they are the subject of current consultation and consideration.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Solicitor-General tell the House about the remuneration of solicitors under the scheme? In particular, in order to attract the very highest calibre of solicitors, do the Government intend to give solicitors a pay rise in line with that proposed for the Lord Chancellor?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman is in danger of forgetting that the Act under which the scheme will be introduced has for the first time brought police powers to detain without charge under a statutory absolute limitation and under judicial control. Those are great advances, and no Labour Home Secretary introduced a Bill to bring them about.

We certainly wish to ensure that the scheme provides maximum protection. We have difficult decisions to make, and we are in the middle of doing that.

Solicitors (Complaints)

44. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the recommendations of the Coopers and Lybrand report concerning complaints against solicitors.

The Attorney-General: The Law Society has now published the exposure draft of the report, together with a report of its steering committee and a statement by the council, as the basis for consultation. My noble Friend the Lord Chancellor will await the outcome of that consultation.

Mr. Maclennan: Do the Government accept the central recommendation that it would be desirable to have a single entry point for those with complaints against solicitors, and that the complaints should be made to a board independent of the Law Society?

The Attorney-General: We are awaiting the results of the consultation paper. We are concerned to maintain the independence of the profession, but we are equally clear that the public must be confident that complaints against solicitors are dealt with effectively. The Government have a completely open mind on the principle of an independent body.

Mr. John David Taylor: As there is even greater concern in Northern Ireland about misappropriation by members of the Law Society in the Province, will the Attorney-General ensure that his study extends to the solicitors' profession throughout the whole of the United Kingdom?

The Attorney-General: I am afraid that I cannot give that assurance, but I shall ensure that my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor is made aware of the right hon. Gentleman's anxieties.

Latent Damage

45. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Attorney-General what recent representations he has received concerning the introduction of legislation concerning latent damage.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend has not received any recent representations on this subject, but representations were made on 16 July 1985 on behalf of the construction industry to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction.

Mr. Chapman: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that there is great concern in all parts of the construction industry about the recommendations in the report of the Law Reform Committee? If the Government are minded to recommend putting on the statute book the recommendations in the report, will he give an assurance that he will consult the construction industry? This affects not only architects and builders who are concerned about the law relating to length of liability and latent defects, but local authorities and owners of buildings. Every section needs a satisfactory conclusion to these problems.

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend assiduously represents an industry and its problems which he knows well. He knows that on 18 June my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor stated that the Government had accepted the recommendations of the Law Reform Committee. When my hon. Friend last asked me this question on 13 May, I said that my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor would be very willing to see anybody from the industry who wished to consult him further, but that substantial consultation had already taken place. However, I certainly reaffirm the undertaking that I gave on behalf of my noble Friend.

Prevention of Corruption Act (Newspapers)

46. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Attorney-General on how many occasions the Prevention of Corruption Act has been used against a newspaper; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The relevant records do not distinguish between defendants by reference to their occupation or business. One prosecution of a newspaper company for corruption is at present pending, but I know of no previous cases of that kind.

Mr. Hamilton: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that when a newspaper exposes gross extravagance and waste in a Government Department such as the Ministry of Defence, it would be preferable and cheaper to eliminate the waste rather than take that newspaper to court?

The Attorney-General: The essence of the offence of corruption is the use of financial or other inducement to a person to subvert his loyalty to his principal, whether in the public or private sector. In regard to the hon. Gentleman's question, the means, not the end, is objectionable.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Philippines

47. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of overseas aid to the Philippines.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): In 1984 we provided £225,000 under our technical co-operation programme and £32,000 in loan disbursements under the aid and trade provision. Commonwealth Development Corporation loan disbursements totalled £3·55 million.

Mr. Clarke: Given that in 1983, 80 per cent. of the money available to the Philippines was spent on the Guthrie project, Mindanao, which turned out to be somewhat notorious in terms of abuses of human rights, land grabbing and so on, is the Minister watching carefully how the money is spent? May we be assured that no further such abuses have occurred?

Mr. Raison: We are watching carefully the progress of the project, about which, I appreciate, there have been difficulties. On the other hand, the latest reports show that it has brought considerable benefits, including a large increase in employment, an improvement in medical services, water and power supplies and, in other ways, has added to the prosperity of the area.

Mr. John David Taylor: When were the last democratic elections held in the Philippines, and when are the next expected to be held?

Mr. Raison: That does not arise on this question.

Sudan

48. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the latest details of assistance with food transportation given by European Community countries to Sudan.

Mr. Raison: We have provided over £3 million for the purchase of 100 trucks and the hire of 50 others, as well as the costs of a Save the Children Fund logistics team in western Sudan. Together with Belgium, Denmark, West Germany and the Community, we are participating in the airlift to western Sudan. In addition, we understand that both West Germany and Italy are providing trucks, and the Community, as well as helping to finance the airlift, is paying for truck hire and supporting the food aid block train scheme.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of reports coming out of the Sudan to the effect that the Sudanese authorities are blocking even offers of assistance to improve and, where necessary, restore the railway line link to the west? Will the maximum possible diplomatic pressure be put on the Sudanese Government by the British Government to make sure that the Sudanese accept such offers as are appropriate? What is to be the future of the ODA-sponsored Hercules aircraft?

Mr. Raison: I am extremely concerned about the railway link to the west. It is absolutely essential for the Sudanese to play their part in allowing the food trains to operate effectively, and we have made our views clear. The Hercules which we are sponsoring is due to carry on until the end of the month, and we shall continue it after that as the need continues.

Mr. Lester: I am pleased to learn from my right hon. Friend about the scale of the support in transport and trucks. What is the time scale between the declaring of support and the arrival of that support in the area, and the ability of such support to operate in the rainy season, especially in Darfur?

Mr. Raison: Is my hon. Friend referring to aircraft or general support?

Mr. Lester: I was referring to lorries.

Mr. Raison: Lorries can operate, although the rains make progress difficult. I regret the problems that have occurred with the railway, which make it all the more important that the lorries should operate effectively.

Mr. Corbett: I thank the Minister for what he has said about the money that has been made available for the Save the Children Fund. I ask him to give the House a commitment that the Hercules will remain in service for as long as they are needed?

Mr. Raison: There is one Hercules in Sudan as opposed to Ethiopia. I expect that Hercules to continue in operation after the end of the month while the need is there.

Mr. Cash: Will the Crown Agents be able to give some assistance in alleviating the rail problems in Sudan in the way in which they have been able to give such assistance over the past 100 years?

Mr. Raison: I think that it is possible that they might. The British Railways Board might also be able to assist. We have provided an expert consultant, who has been of great value in this respect. I have authorised the expenditure of £50,000 to provide radio communications and I have made it clear throughout that I attach enormous importance to the railway link. I shall take every constructive action that I can to help maintain it.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

49. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom contribution to the International Fund for Agricultural Development; and what proportion of United Kingdom bilateral aid is given for similar purposes.

Mr. Raison: The United Kingdom contributed £18 million to the initial funding and £12·9 million to the first replenishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. In 1984, approximately 19 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid was spent on renewable natural resources and related activities.

Mr. Deakins: In view of the importance of combating hunger, especially in Africa, over the next 20 or 30 years, will the Minister assure the House that an increasing proportion of our bilateral aid will go to long-term agricultural development in that unhappy continent?

Mr. Raison: I am anxious that a good proportion of our bilateral aid should go to agricultural development. Of all the aid of that sort that we give, that which takes the form of technical co-operation, training and expert advice is possibly the most important. It is not the most expensive aid and it is badly needed. I shall do all that I can to provide it.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Will my right hon. Friend consider making representations to Mr. Geldof and the organisers of Live Aid to give some of the money that they have collected to the IFAD and other important international organisations which my right hon. Friend has been unable to fund as he would like through the ODA?

Mr. Raison: I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. By and large, Mr. Geldof likes to go his own way rather than working through the Government. I suggest that my hon. Friend makes some representations. I am sure that his suggestion is well worth considering.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister agree that the huge commitment to repaying the interest on debt has a debilitating effect on recipient African states and aid to Africa generally? What does the right hon. Gentleman say about the comments of the Secretary of State for Energy about the possibility of waiving interest payments?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman should realise that we have remitted the aid debts of all the poorest countries. The latest countries with which I agreed to take this course were Ethiopia and Ghana. It is our general policy not to charge aid debts to the poorest countries. We give rather than lend.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that where he is satisfied that the most efficient instrument for aid can be a registered charity, such as Oxfam, that will be used as a channel for public funds so as to provide effective help, rather than operating on a Government-to-Government basis, where much more may be lost in administrative expense.

Mr. Raison: Much of our relief aid is channelled through the voluntary agencies. Over the past two years I have doubled the money that is made available to the voluntary agencies through the joint funding scheme.

Indian Subcontinent

50. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives the Overseas Development Administration, in co-operation with the British Council, has taken since June 1983 to extend the administration of education aid in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Raison: In co-operation with the British Council we have extended our technical co-operation education programmes in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh over the period in question. We have not however altered the administrative system.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Government's policy begin to offset the loss of opportunity for those from the subcontinent in higher and further education in Britain following the sharp increases in overseas student fees?

Mr. Raison: We have financed an increasing quantity of man-hours of training in Britain, which is of great value to those from overseas, and we have extended our scholarship schemes. I announced the addition of a new scholarship scheme only a few weeks ago.

Mr. Janner: Has the Minister had the opportunity to discuss this matter, and aid to India generally, with the Indian Foreign Secretary, Romesh Bhandari, who is presently in the United Kingdom? Is the Minister satisfied that the aid programme is contributing substantially to the improvement of relations between Britain and India, which has recently been most welcome and marked?

Mr. Raison: I have not discussed relations with Mr. Bhandari in the way that the hon. and learned Gentleman has asked, but we have close contact with Indian officials and I have no doubt that our aid programme is a vital part in our good relationship with India.

Agricultural Reform

51. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures his Department is taking to promote and sustain agricultural reform programmes in developing countries.

Mr. Raison: We promote and sustain the improvement of agriculture in developing countries through a wide range of measures. While reform through changes in policy, for example on producer prices and marketing, must ultimately be a matter for the domestic Government, in our discussions with Governments we stress the importance of policies likely to encourage food production.

Mr. Holland: The Minister will be aware that getting aid to the poorest people in the poorest countries is particularly relevant in agricultural development, which is an important part of the general debate on drought, aid and famine. The right hon. Gentleman has been foremost in the EEC in pressing for many things, but will he be foremost in pressing for the implementation of the Lomé proposals on agricultural development?

Mr. Raison: I shall be foremost in pressing on the EEC the importance to be attached to agricultural work in general, and I include in that small-scale agricultural work, which is of great importance.

Sir Peter Blaker: What study has my right hon. Friend made of the extent to which famine, and consquently drought, in developing countries is a consequence of deforestation? Has he any programmes to assist afforestation in those countries?

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend is right. Deforestation is a major problem. One of the objectives of the Lomé convention is to tackle that problem, and my Department supports a number of valuable forestry schemes.

Emergency Procedures

3.31 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Wigley: It concerns a private notice question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not discuss that.

Mr. Wigley: Is it not possible to raise a point of order on the procedure relating to private notice questions?

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Member knows the rules on that matter.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has been here a good many years and he must know that no point of order can arise out of that matter. He will have to find other ways to raise the issue that he has in mind.

Mr. Wigley: It is a point of order on a procedural matter, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take such points of order after the statement.

Ethiopia (Famine Relief)

3.32 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the relief of the Ethiopian famine. I visited Ethiopia from 16 to 19 July to assess the current famine and the need for further relief there. I revisited the feeding centres at Korem, which I saw last November, spent half a day at Assab port, went on an airdrop operation in an RAF Hercules, and had discussions with Ethiopian Ministers, the United Nations Co-ordinator, Mr. Kurt Jansson, the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner, and representatives of international and voluntary agencies.

The international relief effort, in which both the British Government and the British people have played an important part, has alleviated much of the worst suffering which we saw on our television screens in the latter part of 1984. Rain is now falling in many parts of Ethiopia, some crops have been planted, and livestock is beginning to recover. However, there are still large areas, notably Wollo and parts of Tigré and Eritrea, where the rains have been only intermittent or have yet to come at all. It will be several weeks before any reliable assessment of the probable 1985 harvest can be made. It will be several months before that harvest can be gathered. All to whom I spoke in Ethiopia agreed that even with the most favourable rains this year's harvest will be well below that of a normal year. It is essential, therefore, that the relief efforts are maintained into 1986.

What are the immediate priorities? The United Nations Co-ordinator estimates that with current stocks in Ethiopia and firm pledges of further deliveries, the overall food supply should be adequate for the rest of this year. At Assab, I saw the considerable flow of European Community food aid into Ethiopia—three ships were unloading food grain from the Community. Effective use is being made of the dumper trucks, grain conveyors and tarpaulins that we have provided and we shall be sending, in the next few days, a further supply of tarpaulins for use at Massawa and on relief trucks.

The overriding priority now is to improve food distribution. There are still not enough trucks available. The situation should soon improve significantly with the arrival of trucks pledged earlier. The United Nations Co-ordinator's assessment is that perhaps another 400 long-haul and short-haul trucks will still be required. It is of course essential that the Ethiopian Government make available all the trucks that they can.

As the House is aware, our major contribution to food distribution in Ethiopia has been the provision since 3 November last year of two RAF Hercules aircraft and their accompanying detachment, including a team from the Royal Corps of Transport. This operation has now airlifted well over 12,600 tonnes of grain and dropped a further 7,000 tonnes to places inaccessible by any other means of transport. It is an operation which, as I have seen for myself, calls for the highest professional skills and cool courage. It is admired by everyone in Ethiopia.

As I told the House last Monday, one of the purposes of my visit to Ethiopia was to judge whether we should maintain the decision that I announced on 10 June to withdraw our aircraft by 30 September. We had expected then that, by 30 September, the ending of the rains and the

build-up of trucks would enable food to be distributed more widely and efficiently by road. My visit has confirmed that road remains the most cost-effective way of moving large quantities of grain, but the build up of road transport has gone more slowly than expected. Areas inaccessible by road will continue to depend on food brought from outside until their own harvest is in, as we all hope it will be, at the end of the year. The Hercules also provide a much valued flexibility.

We have now been able to weigh up carefully the future of the Hercules operation, and to discuss it fully with the Ethiopian Government—who asked us to extend it—with the United Nations Co-ordinator and with other relief agencies. We have concluded that the aircraft will continue to be needed until the end of the year. We are therefore conveying to the Ethiopian Government our offer to keep the two aircraft and accompanying detachment on relief operations until the latter part of December.

This new commitment, together with the further 10,000 tonnes of food aid which we shall send when the ports are ready to handle it, demonstates the Government's continuing concern for the victims of the Ethiopian drought. Our contribution has been prompt—we helped the Save the Children Fund with its feeding centre in Korem early in 1983. It has been generous—£70 million of emergency aid since 1982—and it has been sustained. We shall continue to do all that we can.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The British and international public have responded magnificently to the Live Aid appeal and shown by their compassion and concern that they care about drought and famine. The Minister has just been in and out of Ethiopia. We know why he went, why he came back and why he made a statement today. It is substantially to follow the impact of the Live Aid appeal and to disguise the fact that the Government have failed to take key measures, having been warned about the drought in Ethiopia and Sudan time and again.

We warned in the spring of last year that there would be a tragedy of biblical proportions in that area unless the Government took pre-emptive action. They failed to take such action. The Minister told us that he went to Assab and Massawa, but the ports are the source of the problem. Food aid distribution is the key issue, as we have warned time and again. The trucks which the right hon. Gentleman has scheduled have not yet arrived, although we have warned time and again that trucks of that capacity are needed. We also warned that unless they were there earlier, many farming families would leave the land, go to drought and refugee centres and aggravate the problems.

We warned that there was not enough fuel in the Sudan. The Minister talks now as though the transport problem has only just occurred. We challenged the Government to match the real fuel needs in the Sudan and to send a tanker of fuel to Port Sudan so that the Sudanese could cope, not least with the problem caused by refugees from Eritrea and Tigré. We pressed the Government to put pressure on the Dergue Administration in Addis Ababa to call for safe passage for food aid. The Minister had nothing to say about the representations which he may or may not have made about that.

We are glad to hear the Minister's announcement that the Hercules programme will continue after September. So it should. A Government who say that they are anxious about cost-effectiveness, as the Minister did in his statement, will realise that the cost-effectiveness of providing food aid by Hercules is substantially greater than providing it by road transport, and massively more than providing it by rail transport. In, for example, the Sudan——

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: We do not normally have points of order in the middle of statements.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Has there been a change in our procedure? Do we have a ministerial statement followed by an Opposition statement, or do we have a ministerial statement followed by questions from Members of the House?

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows that the Front Bench has a certain discretion. However, Front-Bench Members are given the opportunity to rise in order to ask questions.

Mr. Holland: Will the Minister confirm that the Hercules will only supplement the food aid which, by road and rail transport, should have reached the drought areas already, and that the contributions that can be made—sadly, and despite the magnificent role played by the RAF—is likely to be marginal? The fact is—[HON. MEMBERS: "Questions."] Will the Minister confirm that he should have led the Live Aid response rather than followed it, and that he should have matched Live Aid and Band Aid pound for pound with net resources rather than shuffle the aid budget? Tragically, the contribution that is now being made by the Hercules alone is like crumbs from the table which will be out of the reach of many of those who are now suffering because of the culpable delays of the Government in recent months.

Mr. Raison: Frankly, I think that the hon. Gentleman's harangue is largely synthetic in its content. The Leader of the Opposition, who is now in Ethiopia, has apparently shown much more appreciation of what we are doing than has his henchman.

There is absolutely no doubt that we have made a major contribution towards the handling of traffic through the ports. Before the current crisis, we played a big part in improving the facilities in Port Sudan. In the port of Assab, as I have seen for myself, our conveyors, dumper trucks, tarpaulins and so on are doing a great deal to make that port capable of doing what it is doing—handling large quantities of grain.

I have discussed safe passage again with Mr. Jansson. It is an extremely difficult situation. He has made representations to the Ethiopian Government, but we must realise that there is a bitter civil war going on, and that neither side is likely to relinquish that war at present.

With regard to the Hercules only supplementing truck food aid, I have made clear what the role of the Hercules is, and what the role of the truck is. I have not concealed the fact that the trucks are the major part of the operation. I have told the House that the number of trucks is now building up well, but at the same time I believe that the Hercules has a role, which it carries out superbly, in supplementing the efforts of those trucks.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in contrast to the carping attitude of Opposition Members, Conservative Members are delighted with the content of his statement? Can he

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

enlighten us as to whether the extra cost of the Hercules project being extended will fall on the aid budget, or is it additional to his present budget? What representations did my hon. Friend make to the Ethiopian Government about the reported charges that they are making the entry of grain into ports, which charges are an affront to most people in this country?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I am also grateful to the Ministry of Defence for agreeing to continue to meet a half share of the costs of the Hercules. The half share amounts to about £750,000 per month. Throughout the operation, the Ministry of Defence has given every possible help.

I discussed port charges at length with the Ethiopian Government and the voluntary agencies. What is needed now is for the voluntary agencies to get together, make a clear statement of their position, talk to the United Nations Co-ordinator and then present their case in a co-ordinated and effective way to the Ethiopian Government. We shall certainly support that.

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): Does the Minister accept that, of course, there will be a warm welcome for the fact that the Hercules operation is to continue at least until the end of the year? However, is he aware that there is deep concern throughout the country, first, that not one extra penny has been added to the aid programme to meet the crisis; secondly, that that means that somewhere in the aid programme other people's desperate needs are not being assisted; and, thirdly, that in terms of the supply of trucks and transport there is a general view that, given the long advance notice of the needs, the Government have been dilatory and economical, and that they failed to do what they should have done at the time to meet those needs? Those trucks should have been ordered five months ago and already delivered, not waiting to be delivered.

Mr. Raison: I entirely reject the right hon. Lady's charges. It is not true that no additional money has been provided. As I said only a minute ago, the Ministry of Defence has been providing additional resources. With regard to the overseas aid budget, the bulk of what we have done has been funded from our contingency allowance, which exists exactly for this purpose. Secondly, we have used the food aid programme properly; that is, we have concentrated it on areas of famine and greatest need. As a result, we have been able to maintain an extremely effective quantity of emergency relief during the past few months without cutting our bilateral country programme.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that we are all pleased that hard-headed has not meant hard-hearted—most of us thought that it would not—and therefore we all welcome the continued use of the Hercules aircraft? Will he tell the House how he has been able to get on with helping the Ethiopian Government to come to realise that those in rebel areas must be fed, and not just those who support their awful regime?

Mr. Raison: The civil war makes for an extremely difficult problem in that respect. It is significant that the province of Eritrea has received the highest percentage of the food needs of any province. Moreover, we have made money available to international and voluntary agencies as another means of reaching people in the rebel areas.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I welcome the statement, so far as it goes. Does the Minister accept that the problems that are being encouraged by the Ethiopian regime make the point that diplomatic initiatives are crucial for the next phase of aid to that country? What talks have he and his right hon. and hon. Friends had with those whom the Government believe can bring pressure to bear on the Ethiopian regime?

Mr. Raison: I had careful talks with the Ethiopian regime while I was there, especially about the relief operation and the long term. I did not generally talk about the wider diplomatic position, but we follow events in Ethiopia closely. The work that we are doing now is in many ways enabling us to build a closer everyday relationship, but substantial long-term problems must still be settled. If we are to provide long-term relief aid, there must be a greater meeting of the minds than there has been in the past.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and reject completely the weasel words of the Opposition in reaction to it, but will he tell the House whether during his visit to Ethiopia he had the opportunity to bring home to the Ethiopian Government the strong feeling, not least in this House, about the plight of political prisoners, especially members of the former royal family, including women who have been held in prison for nearly 11 years without trial? Did he make that point forcefully?

Mr. Raison: Yes, I made exactly that point to a senior representative of the Ethiopian Government.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I join those who have welcomed the report as far as it goes, and it does not go far, but is the Minister not a little ashamed of his inadequate rejoinder to the recent report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, which demonstrated in detail and conclusively that by far the greatest part of the aid figures, which the right hon. Gentleman is fond of bandying about, consists not of new money but merely of recycled money?

Mr. Raison: I have already told the House that the money that we are spending on relief in Ethiopia and elsewhere is largely derived from the contingency reserve, which exists precisely to deal with contingencies and emergencies. It is backed up by a judicious and well-directed use of our food aid programme. Together with our share of the European Community contributions and the use of some of the shortfall that may occur at the end of an accounting year, we have been able to mount an effective response. In the last financial year we provided £95 million of relief aid. That is nothing to be ashamed of.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): When my right hon. Friend visited Ethiopia last week, did he get the impression that the Ethiopian Government were much more prepared to co-operate with donor nations and organisations in accepting and distributing the relief, and that that Government were doing all that could reasonably be expected of them, with their resources, to relieve the effects of the famine? If that was the case, as I fervently hope it was, is this not in marked contrast to the position last November, when my right hon. Friend previously visited Ethiopia?

Mr. Raison: I think that there has been such an improvement in the position. For example, the everyday

working relationship between the RAF team and its Ethiopian counterparts is very good. I would not deny the fact that substantial problems remain to be tackled. However, thanks in good measure to the wisdom of the United Nations Co-ordinator, Mr. Jansson, who is doing an outstanding job, our excellent ambassador and others, there is an effective day-to-day relationship on which I hope we can build.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What lies behind the elliptical sentence in the Minister's statement:

"It is of course essential that the Ethiopian Government make available all the trucks that they can."

Is this about the civil war? What is the position about spare parts for trucks?

Mr. Raison: There are other calls on Ethiopian trucks—after all, some normal life must continue—but the civil war is a factor. The lack of spare parts is at least as great a problem as the provision of new and additional trucks. The country is extremely short of spares, and Britain has done a great deal to provide them, especially for Land-Rovers, where we are most able to do so.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Reports reached us a short time ago that the Ethiopian Government were trying to get their railway system working again. As it is largely comprised of steam locomotives, what plans does my right hon. Friend have to encourage the thousands of steam buffs and engineers in Britain to go to Ethiopia and help to put the system in working order?

Mr. Raison: That is an attractive proposition, and I understand why people may be thinking along those lines. However, the immediate job must be done primarily by road transport, with the valuable complementary contribution of the RAF and other aircraft there.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): Is the Minister not ashamed that he must be propped up to make excuses for his Government's slashing of overseas aid by 18 per cent. since 1979? Is not the generosity of the British public in stark contrast to the meanness of the Government?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman does not understand that the British public provide the voluntary contribution and the Government's contribution through taxation. The British public have shown clearly their concern by subscribing large sums of money. I believe that the Government have every reason to be proud, not ashamed, of the high quality and effectiveness of our aid in Ethiopia, the Sudan and throughout our aid programme.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government can rightly be proud of the aid and assistance that they have given to Ethiopia? Have not the Government given the lead to the international community in their response to the Ethiopian crisis, and is it not also true that if the Ethiopian Government had used their resources as effectively as they might have done at the beginning the problem would not be as great as it is now?

Mr. Raison: Obviously, history has much to do with the present crisis, but I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. There is no doubt that the Government have given the lead in sending aircraft to Ethiopia—ours were the first to get there—and in concentrating effectively on the bottlenecks which are causing most difficulty.

• **Mr. Gavin Strang** (Edinburgh, East): Although I appreciate the Minister's report of his visit to Ethiopia, does he admit that the overseas aid budget has been cut in real terms since last year, and has been cut substantially since 1979? Is that not a scandal at a time when the human race faces its biggest disaster for many decades? Does he agree that that fact is widely appreciated by the British people?

Mr. Raison: There have been reductions in real terms in the aid programme as a result of our public expenditure policy. However, during the past three years we have fully maintained the programme in real terms.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Despite what Opposition Members have said, is my right hon. Friend aware that the good news that he has given to the House will be warmly welcomed? What practical help can be given to Ethiopian farmers now that the rains have started?

Mr. Raison: We have already provided help to farmers through the EEC, which is concentrating on the provision of seeds, and bilaterally in the provision of pesticides to deal with the army worm, which is causing great trouble. I have decided to send tools to help provide for the rehabilitation of agriculture.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): What precise part do the Government propose to play in meeting the shortage of trucks? The Minister put the shortfall at 400 long and short-haul trucks, in the words of the UN Co-ordinator. Will we provide the parts for these, or will we provide a proportion of the trucks?

Mr. Raison: There is a real problem here. The principal trucks being used in Ethiopia are Mercedes, Fiat and Volvo. The authorities there do not wish to add new varieties of truck, because of the great difficulty of servicing them and obtaining spare parts. For those reasons, small additional numbers of other makes are not what they want. We have decided to concentrate our efforts in areas where we can do most. As the House knows, our help includes providing aircraft and Land Rovers. Where we have provided additional Land Rovers, we have also provided a substantial quantity of spares. We have also sent out somebody from British Leyland, who is organising the RRC servicing and repair of Land Rovers. This has to be a co-ordinated effort in which each country does what is most effective, and that is the way in which we are proceeding.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over money given voluntarily by people to help citizens in need on the other side of the world than there will be over money which is taken in taxation and spent by Governments? When one talks about Government money, one is really talking about taxpayers' money, and it is much more meaningful when this is spent voluntarily, because in that case the heart goes out as well as the money.

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The voluntary contributions of the British people to this crisis have been wholly admirable.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Minister accept that every test of public opinion, including taxpayers' opinion, suggests that the Government should be contributing more? Will the Minister tell the House

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

why the Ministry of Defence is contributing only 50 per cent. of the costs of the Hercules, instead of a full 100 per cent.?

Mr. Raison: There is a deepening understanding of these problems on the part of the public, and I welcome that. The reason why the Ministry of Defence is contributing only 50 per cent. is that this is clearly not a defence operation. The Ministry has been extremely generous. Over the first three months it contributed the entire extra cost, and since then it has contributed half the extra cost, and will continue to do so. I am grateful to the Ministry of Defence for its generosity.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend prepared to tell us what level of aid the Soviet Union is giving to the starving people in Ethiopia?

Mr. Raison: Essentially, the Soviet Union's contribution has to be measured in arms, but it also has its Antonov aircraft, whose natural habitat seems to be the airstrip rather than the air.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Does the Minister agree that there is a direct relationship between lives saved and money sent to Ethiopia? As a consequence, does he agree that every penny that the Government take from concerts such as those organised by Live Aid and records like those made by Band Aid condemns some Ethiopians to death? Will the Minister join me in putting pressure on his colleagues and getting that message through to them? Every penny raised by voluntary and charitable organisations ought to be sent where it is meant to go, which is to Ethiopia, and not into the pockets of those who do not deserve it.

Mr. Raison: It is my understanding that the Customs and Excise Department displayed a sympathetic approach to the recent Live Aid concerts.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is sad that the £50 million raised worldwide by the excellent Live Aid concert is contrasted with the £200 million spent by the Ethiopian regime on its 10th anniversary celebrations? Has he seen any sign of a change in attitude by the Ethiopian regime towards its own expenditure?

Mr. Raison: I did not discuss celebrations and so on with the Ethiopian Government, but I had many discussions about longer-term matters. Among some members of the Ethiopian regime there is an attempt to concentrate on essentials, but the mystery, or the problem, about Ethiopia is what lies in the minds of those who ultimately hold power there.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When the Minister met many of the so-called top people in Africa—civil servants, heads of the armed forces and judges—did he say that he would have brought more money with him if Her Majesty's Government had not come across a clever little ruse of deducting VAT and otherwise taxing various other charitable efforts, resulting in their pocketing more money out of all the efforts of those trying to raise money for Ethiopia, and that, instead of taking it with him, he had left behind about £10 million to put into the pockets of judges, top civil servants and all the rest of the nobs in this country? How contemptible can anyone get?

Mr. Raison: I am happy to say that I made no such absurd observation during my visit.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): What was the response of the Ethiopian authorities to the Minister's complaint about the scandalous increases in port charges for food aid from the United Kingdom? As the right hon. Gentleman underlined in his statement that the advantages of the rain had not extended to Eritrea and Tigré, what additional proposals have our Government to assist those two provinces?

Mr. Raison: On that latter point, we provide food aid to voluntary agencies and international agencies, which are able to work in all parts of the country.

The port tax is a somewhat more complicated matter than has been portrayed. Food and relief supplies which go direct to the RRC appear to pay a lower rate of agency charge than other food or relief supplies. What is important is that the voluntary agencies get together and establish exactly what they are having to pay. If we can help them to make effective representations, I am willing to do so.

Top Salaries Award

4.2 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration—it is a matter of urgent public interest—namely,

"the implementation without the approval of the House of Commons of Report No. 22 of the Review of Top Salaries",

the implementation of which is of obvious and continuing detriment to good industrial relations in the public sector.

It is clear that the desire to debate the matter is not confined to one side of the House. On Friday, six Government supporters expressed their deep concern at the Government's decision and, since then, other Conservative Members have added their voices to the chorus of apprehension and disapproval. I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that were you to grant this application, it would be welcomed on both sides of the House.

Despite the position made very clear on Friday and repeated in quotations in newspapers over the weekend, it is obvious that the Government still do not realise the depth of feeling which has been engendered by last week's decisions — the decision on one day to scrap wages council protection for young workers and, on the next, for example, to increase the salary of the Secretary to the Cabinet by £23,750 a year.

To debate the Government's attitude on these matters would allow the House of Commons to reflect the outrage which is undoubtedly felt in the country and perhaps enable right hon. and hon. Members to fulfil their traditional function of changing the Government's mind on behalf of public opinion. Were we able to do that, it would be possible to remedy some of the damage which is already being done among workers in the public sector.

I give one example to justify the argument that House of Commons intervention is important now. As matters stand, the decision on the top salaries award will have a direct and detrimental effect on the prospects of further disruption in our schools next autumn. There is no doubt from the published statements that the teachers' unions, contemplating a settlement, have been moved away from conciliation and compromise by what was decided last Wednesday and Thursday.

Were we able to change the Government's mind by debate, we would have a chance to save the country from the Government's folly, to attempt to change the Prime Minister's mind and, and as a result, to avoid the disruption which is bound to follow if the Government continue this confrontational policy.

One other factor makes last Thursday's announcement unique. Other large pay awards have been made to top civil servants and the like, but on previous occasions those awards have been phased over two years or more. This year, the whole amount—46 per cent. or 35 per cent.—is to be paid within a period of nine months. That compression of the payment — the virtual instant payment of the whole award—has added enormously to the offence felt by lower paid workers, especially those in the public sector, some of whom earn only a fraction of the salary increases which the Government accepted last week for judges, senior civil servants and senior officers in the armed forces.

If we do not debate the whole subject — not the decision to increase the salary of one member of the Government, which we shall be able to debate tomorrow — the House will rise on Friday, the increases will be paid, and the bitterness will remain in the public service for years to come. Today, I ask for the opportunity for the House to change the Government's mind and avoid that bitterness. It is in that spirit that I beg to ask leave to move my motion.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the implementation without the approval of the House of Commons of Report No. 22 of the Review of Top Salaries."

I have listened with the greatest care to what the right hon. Gentleman has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or tomorrow.

I regret that I cannot find the matter that the right hon. Gentleman has raised meets the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Hattersley: I am very grateful, Mr. Speaker, for the careful consideration that I know that you have given to this matter during the day.

I understand fully the constraints under which you operate. Therefore, it is the duty of the Opposition to find other ways in which it can be raised. Thank you very much.

Police Training Manual

4.7 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the contents of the Public Order Tactical Operations Manual drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers and approved by the Home Office."

The manual provides for the training of the police in paramilitary operations, including instruction in methods of incapacitating demonstrators by the infliction of actual bodily harm or the use of police horses to canter into crowds and the tactical use of noise to instil fear, all of which are in clear breach of the law.

The existence of these tactics and parts of the manual from which they came were disclosed in the cross-examination by the defence in a recent trial in Sheffield. The trial came to an end when the prosecution withdrew all the charges against the accused before it had even completed the presentation of its own case, and the document was made publicly available only over the weekend.

The matter is specific in that it relates to one document containing instructions for the police that have never been published before and now only partially available and clearly and specifically provides for a major breach of the law by the police.

It is important because it is a manual that has clearly been in use throughout the miners' strike and elsewhere, and it throws a completely different light upon certain events which occurred during the strike.

It is urgent because, unless the House discusses it before the summer recess, the police in Britain may continue to be subject to orders that lead them to act illegally and violently against persons engaged in protests or demonstrations who have never been arrested or charged with any offence.

The document was apparently drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers—not an authorised or official body—after the disturbances that occurred in Brixton, Bristol and Toxteth in 1981, and the pages which were released during a recent trial made it clear that officers had been given instructions which laid them open to charges of assault. It is clear from the details that the manoeuvres, with short shields, long shields, horses and truncheons, that it recommends should be deployed are in clear contravention of the rules that have hitherto governed the actions of police forces.

The House will be familiar with the background of the case that I have in mind. It is now over. For the first time, therefore, it can be referred to in the House. Certain persons were charged with riot. Mr. Clements, the deputy chief constable of Yorkshire, said at the beginning of the trial that it was the most serious case of public disorder that he was aware of this century. In the middle of the trial the prosecution offered to drop all the charges if the accused would agree to be bound over to keep the peace. They refused to do so, because they were innocent. Police videos were shown to the jury. They showed that it was a peaceful demonstration until the cavalry charges. The BBC itself had transposed the film to show the missiles were thrown before the charges, whereas the police videos showed that the charges took place before the missiles were thrown.

This manual is a major development in police action. With the long summer ahead of us and with the responsibility of the Home Secretary absolutely manifest, his Department having approved the manual, I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to allow the Adjournment motion in order that the House can discuss the matter before the recess.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the contents of the Public Order Tactical Options Manual drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers."

I have listened with great care, and in no way do I underestimate what the right hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I have to give him the same answer as I gave to his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I do not consider the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House. However, I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will find other ways of bringing the matter before the House before we rise for the summer recess.

Mr. Benn: I am not questioning your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I am asking for your consent to do something which requires your consent. Hon. Members are unable to place documents in the Library of the House without the consent of the Speaker, though Ministers can.

Mr. Speaker: Is the right hon. Gentleman sure about that?

Mr. Benn: I have checked this, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that you should give your consent that the documents released at the trial relating to the police manual should be placed in the Library of the House so that they can be properly and formally published.

Mr. Speaker: If that is within my responsibility, it seems to me to be a very reasonable request.

Top Salaries Award

4.12 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask for your advice? As Speaker of the House, you will not have been aware of the fact that lively interest has been expressed this weekend by our constituents in a debate that is to take place tomorrow night for an hour and a half on the subject of the Lord Chancellor's salary. The cases that will be made by the two Front Benches will take at least 20 minutes each. This means that only about 45 minutes will be available to Back Benchers to make their points. Is there any way in which this debate can be changed from one that lasts for an hour and a half to a debate that lasts until any hour of the night so that hon. Members can express the opinions and feelings of their constituents?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not unaware of this matter, because I am also a constituency Member of Parliament. However, the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is patently a matter for his right hon. Friend the Chief Whip and the usual channels.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As we shall be breaking up later this week and there will be no opportunity for nearly three months to discuss a matter which, as you have implied, is causing a great deal of concern in our constituencies, is there not a responsibility upon the Leader of the House, who is present on the Government Front Bench, at least to tell the House that the Cabinet will consider allowing a debate that lasts for more than one and a half hours? The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is absolutely correct. If the Front Benches take up, and rightly so, the normal amount of time allotted to them, how many Back Benchers are likely to be called tomorrow—one, two, or three at the most? Is it not scandalous that, on top of what has happened, Back Benchers are to be deprived of the right to debate this matter for at least three months? The Leader of the House has a responsibility to ensure that we have sufficient time in which to debate this matter.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I appreciate that announcing the business on Friday meant that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) did not have the chance to raise the matter with me, albeit indirectly, until now. However, the day and time were chosen in the belief that they would be for the general convenience of the House. However, I am happy to have these matters looked at again, as Mr. Speaker has indicated, through the usual channels, but I do not want to hold out too many hopes to my hon. Friend.

Emergency Procedure

4.15 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It relates to matters of emergency and urgency. I do not want to ask a question that impugns the reason why a private notice question request may have been turned down. The fact that I made one this morning on a matter of considerable importance relating to a tribunal decision on the Welsh language is only one example of what may happen. When a matter of importance like this requires a decision to be taken by you, in conjunction with the Department that will have to answer the question, or otherwise, and you decide, in your wisdom, not to allow a private notice question to be asked

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now raising that matter which I have already said is out of order. Perhaps he would phrase his point of order in a different way.

Mr. Wigley: I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether it is possible, in these circumstances, for a reply on a private notice question refusal to be given before 12 midday so that the hon. Member who has raised the question can come to the House under Standing Order No. 10 and ask the House to consider, through you, whether the matter is of sufficient importance and urgency to merit an emergency debate. That is a reasonable point to put. It would facilitate the discussion of emergency matters, without hon. Members having to resort to the belt and braces procedure of putting in both a Standing Order No. 10 request and a private notice question simultaneously, thereby making work for you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that it has long been the practice of the House that to put in a private notice question backed up by a Standing Order No. 10 request is unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman, and every other hon. Member, must make his decision as to which of the two courses of action he prefers to adopt. I have nothing further to say, apart from this: there will be other opportunities this week when the matter can be aired by him.

Select Committee on Foreign Affairs

4.17 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Circumstances have come to your notice through a letter, which may or may not have reached you, which was written at 1.30 pm. I understand that the majority report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs was laid before the House this weekend and that it contains strong criticism of my behaviour. It implies serious steps relating to alleged defiance of the House of Commons; an alleged defiance of the wishes of the Committee.

It appears to me to be contrary to the traditions of the House and the relations between hon. Members for a Select Committee to criticise an hon. Member without asking that hon. Member either for a written explanation or providing him with the opportunity to give evidence before the Committee. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker: is it proper for a Select Committee of the House to make such charges, for such they appear to be, against a Member of this House, under pages 704 and 705 of "Erskine May", without even having asked that Member for an explanation, let alone having asked him to appear as a witness?

There was no leak until Ministers, for their own reasons which it would be improper to go into on this occasion, decided to charge Clive Ponting under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 and send him to the Old Bailey and to make public announcements, on a Saturday in August 1984, to that effect. I ask, very gently, whether we are in the position now of having kangaroo courts in the House of Commons.

This point of order is about the right of hon. Members to be heard before they are rebuked by a major report of a Select Committee. There are two sides to this story, and before the report was issued my side ought to have been heard. Nearly 20 years ago I was hauled before a senior Committee of the House on the subject of chemical and biological weapons and was reprimanded. Many people have doubted the justice of what happened then. On this occasion, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues, that I behaved properly and that it was Ministers who opened the Pandora's Box which led to the Ponting trial. May I ask you to rule on this matter when the papers become available to you?

Mr. Speaker: I say straightaway to the hon. Gentleman that the whole House will agree that no one here would doubt his honour. As to the matter that he raised, which is a serious one, the report has not yet been published. I have received the hon. Gentleman's letter, which enabled me to look into the matter, and I draw attention to the front page of the report from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, which says:

> "This Document is issued in advance on the strict understanding that no approach is made to any organisation or person about its contents before the time of publication."

Therefore, I have had no opportunity of seeing what the hon. Gentleman alleges and nor, I think, has any other hon. Member.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Somehow or other, by some alchemy, it has become the talk of the place. Certainly, the Chairman of the Select Committee did not consult me about it. When I arrived from Edinburgh this morning I was confronted by these questions, which I was supposed to answer.

Mr. Speaker: I have the greatest sympathy with the hon. Gentleman, but I cannot rule on the matter today. We must return to it on Wednesday, when the report is published.

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 9

ABATEMENT OF INVALIDITY ALLOWANCE, ETC., WHERE BENEFICIARY ENTITLED TO ADDITIONAL COMPONENT IN PENSION OR TO GUARANTEED MINIMUM PENSION

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 11, line 36, leave out "below" and insert

"of the Social Security Act 1975"

4.21 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take Lords amendment No. 2, in page 12, line 9, leave out "below" and insert

"of the Social Security Act 1975"

Mr. Newton: These are drafting amendments, which correct a mistake in the present wording.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 3, after clause 9, insert the following new clause — *Voluntary redundancy entitlement to unemployment benefit*—

" In section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975 (disqualifications for receipt of benefit), the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (3)—

"(3A) For the purposes of this section, a person who has been dismissed by his employer by reason of redundancy within the meaning of section 81(2) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 after volunteering or agreeing so to be dismissed shall not be deemed to have left his employment voluntarily."."

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take Lords amendment No. 9, in clause 29, page 27, line 10, at end insert—

"section (*Voluntary redundancy—entitlement to unemployment benefit*) ;"

Mr. Newton: This is more than a technical amendment, but I hope that it will command ready support on both sides of the House. It amends section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975 and has been proposed to maintain the Government's policy that people who are made redundant, even though they may have agreed to take voluntary redundancy, should not be regarded as having left employment voluntarily, which would mean that they would incur up to six weeks disqualification from unemployment benefit.

Until recently it was understood to be the case—and it was certainly the Government's intention—that people taking voluntary redundancy would not be disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit for up to six weeks. However, the chief adjudication officer, who is independent of Ministers—for once I have proof of that fact, which hon. Members have been known to doubt—issued new guidance based on recent case law suggesting that those who had volunteered for redundancy should normally be regarded as having left employment voluntarily, with the consequences that I have described.

That would have had serious implications for redundancy schemes in a number of industries, not least the mining industry, and was most unwelcome to the Government. Faced with that advice, which we could not overturn and for which we could not substitute Minister's views, we decided that the proper course was to change the law to make sure that it clearly achieved what Ministers wished to achieve.

Happily, we had before Parliament at the time that flexible instrument the Social Security Bill — it has proved to be an almost infinitely flexible instrument— and we took the opportunity to insert the amendment and amendment No. 9, which is consequential, to establish the position as we and, I believe, the whole House want it to be.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I welcome the amendment and the speed with which the Government have acted. I am only sorry that I have not been able to give the Minister more notice of a question that I wish to put to him. The circular that gives rise to the question has come to my notice in only the past few days.

Can the Minister tell us now—if he cannot, will he check the matter—whether the amendment covers all the cases raised in the circular, which refers not only to the case being changed by the amendment, but to similar action being taken where a claimant is participating in an early retirement scheme or has retired at the normal retiring age but had the option of remaining in the job?

I am as horrified by the assumption that people should be forced to stay on after the normal retirement age or risk losing unemployment benefit as I am by the chief adjudication officer's original proposal. Will the Minister confirm that he is under the impression that both areas are covered by the new clause and that, if not, the Government will consider my question with the same speed as they considered the earlier proposal?

Mr. Newton: There may be some misunderstanding here, but I shall check on the matter raised by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

However, I can make it clear that the amendment is related to voluntary redundancy and not to voluntary retirement, which is a different issue. Although the chief adjudication officer has issued fresh and clearer guidance on early retirement, it did not significantly change the position from what it was understood to be. I hope the hon. Lady will agree that a decision to remove oneself from the labour market early is not the same as a voluntary redundancy under an agreed redundancy scheme. The same considerations would not necessarily apply.

There may be some misunderstanding about those who retire early. If a person retires after he is entitled to the national insurance retirement benefit, that is a matter for him. If he has the relevant contribution record, we shall pay the national insurance retirement pension. The point at issue is whether people should be entitled to unemployment benefit.

A person who retires voluntarily, whether before or after retirement age, cannot be regarded as unemployed in the normal sense. If he retires after retirement age and has the relevant contribution record, he will be entitled to retirement pension, in which case he would not be entitled to unemployment benefit.

Mrs. Beckett: I confess that I had to read the circular several times before I could understand what it could be getting at. I do not see how it could be dealing with someone who retires after the normal pension age. Presumably it refers to people in jobs where the normal retirement age is earlier than, say, 65 for men.

We all know that people have been said to be retiring voluntarily when, in effect, they are taking redundancy. The two things are not interwoven in pay terms, but they become interwoven in moving people on from their jobs. Will the Minister consider my question?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly look at the matter raised by the hon. Lady, but I do not think that we face the difficulty that she suggests might exist.

There are provisions for those who retire on an occupational pension after the age of 60, but before 65. Those provisions govern their entitlement to unemployment benefit and the extent to which their occupational pension is taken into account against benefit. However, that is a different point from that raised by the hon. Lady.

I think that the position is fair and that it is right to maintain a distinction between voluntary redundancy and voluntary retirement. However, I shall crawl over the circular and over the hon. Lady's words to make sure that she does not have a valid point—she has been right before—and that I am right to offer her reassurances.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

UP-RATING BENEFITS

Lords amendment: No. 4, after clause 14, insert the following new Clause—

" .—(1) The words "in the month of June" shall be ommitted from subsection (1) of sections 125 and 126A of the Social Security Act 1975 (annual reviews of benefits for purposes of up-rating).

(2) The following subsection shall be substituted for subsection (4A) of section 125—

"(4A) A review under this section or section 126A below shall cover a period of not more than twelve months beginning immediately after the end of the period covered by the last review under the relevant section."."

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this we may discuss Lords amendment No. 38, in schedule 6, page 69, line 26, column 3, at end insert—

"In section 125(1), the words "in the month of June".

In section 126A(1), the words "in the month of June"."

4.30 pm

Mr. Newton: The amendments make it possible for the Government to align the social security uprating year, which currently runs from November to November, with the year which applies to tax, rent and rates—April to April. The Government have given notice of that intention.

There were two possibilities. One was to have a 16-month gap between upratings, from November to April. We did not find that prospect attractive, so we decided to adopt the obvious alternative—to have two upratings in the 16-month period. We intend to make social security upratings in November 1985, July 1986 and April 1987.

We need to amend the Bill because the current law requires the Secretary of State to review social security benefits in June. The amendment allows the Secretary of State flexibility to conduct upratings at shorter intervals over the next two years. I hope that the House will think that reasonable.

I emphasise that the change in the law will not allow us to make upratings at intervals of more than 12 months. Benefits must be reviewed at intervals which cannot exceed 12 months. We intend to stick to the historic method. Upratings will be related to a measured past increase in prices—the latest that we can consider in order to carry out the uprating when it is due. I hope that the House will agree to the amendments.

Mrs. Beckett: We understand the proposed mechanism, but we have reservations about the dates. Are the dates likely to be in legislation, or will they be arbitrary? Most of the proposals for the social security review are likely to be unpopular, so perhaps we can see a hint of the date for the next general election, as we are to have two upratings before April 1987.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Twice in our history Governments have tried to change the length of the year. The first was in medieval times, and the second was during the period of this Government, when claimants had to live in a 53-week year and then in a 54-week year.

The House should welcome the move so long as we have an undertaking that it will not be used to cut the real value of benefits. I have three questions for the Minister. When the Government calculate the move to July and then to April, will the calculation accurately reflect the number of weeks involved? Secondly, may we have an undertaking that because prices vary throughout the year, with peaks and troughs which are evened out on a year-to-year basis, the move will not lead to benefit levels which are lower than the old November-to-November levels? Thirdly, since convention, and not statute, links supplementary benefit to prices, will that convention be maintained?

Mr. Newton: I shall answer first the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). The amendments will give the Secretary of State flexibility in the uprating date, although the interval cannot be longer than 12 months. My off-the-cuff reaction is that I can see no reason why the actual dates for the uprating need to be written into legislation.

I do not understand the first question asked by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). The problem about the number of weeks in a benefit year arises because of the quirks in the calendar. Our calendar does not have precisely 52 weeks in a year. I do not wish to weary the House with another lecture on the phenomenon which came to be known to the cognoscenti as "creep", but the hon. Gentleman will be aware that if upratings take place religiously at 52-week intervals they steadily advance through the year, and if one projects into the next century there could be two upratings in a year because of that phenomenon.

We propose two upratings at eight-month intervals, so it is fruitless to argue about how many weeks there are in a month. I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's

argument. We shall take the latest available retail prices index for the appointed time, which enables us to carry out the uprating at the time that we want to do it, and apply that faithfully to the benefit figures.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's second question more clearly. We abandoned the old forecasting method because of its uncertainties. Without going back to that method, it is difficult to estimate the precise effects on benefit levels of using different periods. It is clear that any change in the period of uprating means that at some point in the following period benefit will be higher than it would otherwise have been because the uprating has been advanced. At some other period it would be lower for the opposite reason. The exact effects at a particular time will depend on the pattern of inflation, which I cannot predict.

I hope that I understood the hon. Gentleman's third question. We certainly intend to maintain the historic basis of uprating and to apply it in the way described. We shall not alter the method without making it plain to Parliament. We think that our proposal is sensible and right.

I do not wish to mislead anybody. Supplementary benefit uprating is related to the retail prices index, less housing costs. That is another complicated factor which makes it difficult for me to give better answers to the hon. Gentleman's questions. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured.

Question put and agreed to.

New Clause

VACCINE DAMAGE PAYMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 5, after clause 20, insert the following new clause—

" . In section 1 of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979—

(a) in subsection (1), for "£10,000" there shall be substituted "the relevant statutory sum";

(b) the following subsection shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(1A) In subsection (1) above "statutory sum" means £10,000 or such other sum as is specified by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this Act by order made by statutory instrument with the consent of the Treasury and the relevant statutory sum for the purposes of that subsection is the statutory sum at the time when a claim for paments is first made."; and

(c) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (4)—

"(4A) No order shall be made by virtue of subsection (1A) above unless a draft of the order has been laid before Parliament and been approved by a resolution of each House."."

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss the following Lords amendments:

No. 7, in clause 28, page 26, line 37, at end insert—

"(3A) Section *[Vaccine damage payments]* extends to Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man."

No. 8, in clause 28, page 26, line 38, leave out "(3)" and insert "(3A)"

No. 10, in clause 29, page 27, line 15, at end insert—

"section *[Vaccine damage payments]*;"

No. 40, in the title, in line 3, after "to" insert

"amend section 1 of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 and"

I must inform the House that these amendments involve privilege.

Mr. Newton: The amendment provides the power needed to change the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 to vary the amount payable by means of an order subject to affirmative resolution in each House.

The House will recall that among the many announcements made by my right hon. Friend during recent weeks that have caused pleasure was his statement —*[Interruption.]* Do I sense an air of disbelief in the House? It cannot be from the Government Benches and there are hardly sufficient Opposition Members present to constitute disbelief.

The House will recall that my right hon. Friend told the House on 18 June of his intention to double the present vaccine damage payment of £10,000—which has stood unaltered since such payments were first introduced under the 1979 Act—to £20,000. There was no provision in the 1979 Act for increases. Therefore, we have used the flexible instrument of this Bill to introduce the necessary primary legislative amendment quickly. We hope to bring the necessary order before the House at the earliest possible moment after the Bill has received Royal Assent, should it be so favoured.

Although the power that we have taken will make the new amount payable in respect of new claims made on or after the date of coming into operation of the order, my right hon. Friend is making arrangements to apply the increased amount to new, successful claims made on or after 18 June, when he announced the increase. I hope that that provision will be welcomed by the House and that I will have its support in carrying this amendment into law.

Mrs. Beckett: We give a cautionary welcome to the proposal. It is most unfortunate that the payment has not been increased since it was announced in 1978 and introduced in 1979. We note the flexibility of the Bill that has allowed this proposal to be chucked in at the last minute.

Why was the proposal chucked in at the last minute? Given that it is a fairly obvious proposal for the Government to introduce, we wonder why it happened only in the amendments made in another place and was not put before us for lengthier consideration at an earlier stage. What will be the cost of the increase in a full year?

Most important, we wonder what the proposal means for the future of the scheme. The Minister said that there was no provision for increases under the 1979 Act. I am sure that he will recall that that was because we did not want the Act to pre-empt decisions that we thought would have to be made following the recommendations of the Pearson commission. It was intended as a stop-gap measure to ensure that vaccine damaged children received some assistance before a proper scheme could be worked out that would be more far-reaching and generous.

Will introducing the proposal to increase the sums available, welcome though it is, mean that the whole idea of implementing the Pearson commission's recommendations has now been consigned to the dustbin? The sum is to be increased broadly in line with the rate of inflation between 1978 and the present day. Is it intended that the order should be increased each year, as are other regular payments? If not, I am sure that the Minister will tell us why not.

On the timing of the proposal, will the Minister tell us what light it casts on the consideration of the review being undertaken into degrees of disability? Although any increase is always welcome, it is a little strange that the

[Mrs. Beckett]

Government have brought forward this proposal so abruptly at a time when they are undertaking a fundamental survey of the needs of the disabled.

4.45 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): My hon. Friend introduced the amendments with a degree of levity. I wish briefly and seriously to welcome the Government's prompt action in responding to the needs of these children. I am especially delighted that the measure will be backdated to 18 June. That is a tremendously generous gesture and will be very welcome.

I first came across vaccine damaged children in care in Birmingham. I was most concerned by the degree of disability that they suffered. Some were only mildly disabled, but some were seriously disabled and many will need care for the remainder of their lives. One family in my constituency has a seriously disabled daughter aged 14, who obviously faces the future with some apprehension.

Mr. Frank Field: It is understandable that the hon. Lady should welcome the measure and its backdating. But does she not realise that, in a sense, it would be unfair if the benefit was reviewed only every so many years? Many of our constituents will have claimed compensation at the old rates and some will be a few days outside being eligible for the new rates.

While we welcome the uprating—I am sure that the whole House does—if it is reviewed only every now and again instead of regularly each year, that will make a tremendous difference to the amounts of money payable to these children.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that nothing can compensate for that sort of disability when children are born normal but handicapped through vaccine. I hope that he will bear with me for a minute because I have a view on the matter that he raised.

These children are tragic victims of something that, in a sense, benefits the whole of society. I hope that people will not be put off having their children vaccinated and inoculated. The hospital with which I used to be involved in central Birmingham was involved in the eradication of smallpox, which was substantially carried out through an inoculation programme. I hope that in years to come the day will arrive when most infectious diseases can be eradicated from this nation and others by such programmes.

There is no doubt that those who care for these people are devoted and dedicated, whether the children are in care or at home. They deserve our full support. I hope that eventually it will be possible to set up some form of proper tribunal for assessment of such cases to determine payment of appropriate compensation—perhaps on the lines of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. However, this is obviously not the time to debate the methods that might be used.

I am sure that the whole House will join me in welcoming the Government's generous action in introducing these amendments.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) for her kind words.

I come now to the specific points raised by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). To pick up the slightly uncharacteristically uncharitable phrasing that she used about why the proposal was "chucked in at the last minute", I can tell her that it was because a number of representations had been made to the Government. It is well known that there has been concern about this matter for some time.

The Government came to the conclusion — and I personally strongly reached the conclusion—that it was right to create a position in which we could increase, and increase more easily, the amount payable, and we have taken the opportunity provided by this Bill to do that.

On the last of the hon. Lady's questions about inflation and future uprating, this increase goes rather beyond the simple application of inflation during the period since 1979. No doubt because of the movement in prices at some points around the time when the payment was first introduced, the calculations may depend slightly on the time of the year taken. My calculations show that the 1985 equivalent of the £10,000 applicable in 1979 is £17,750. Therefore, on that basis the increase to £20,000 is significantly more than pure inflation proofing.

Mrs. Beckett: I calculated my figures from the announcement of the scheme in 1978, and what was thought then to be a worthwhile sum of £10,000 would now need to be £19,230. The Government are being slightly generous, but not a lot.

Mr. Newton: That may be right, but the hon. Lady might have been wiser not to have raised that point because she has calculated the rate of inflation between the time when the then Labour Government announced the proposal in 1978 and implemented it in 1979. That is not the sort of issue on which I want to have a verbal punch-up with the hon. Lady today, but when she walks right into it in that way I am bound to pick up the implication of her remarks.

What we are doing cannot be described as a mean increase. It represents a broad sum of £20,000, ahead in value of the £10,000 when it was introduced in 1979. That probably gives the hon. Lady a clue to my next remark, which is that we do not have a definite plan for annual uprating, though it follows from the type of amendment that we have made—which is not to substitute a new substantive figure in the primary legislation but to take power to make such an increase by order—that there will henceforth be greater flexibility. As I say, I cannot make a commitment on behalf of the Government to engage in annual uprating of the payment.

Regarding the future of the scheme, as the hon. Member for Derby, South pointed out, some of the broader issues that can be related to this relatively limited issue — picking up the whole theme of the Pearson commission and the question of compensation more widely—go wider than we can sensibly debate today. However, the hon. Lady will be aware that the Government have not accepted the recommendation of the Pearson commission for a system of compensation in the courts based on strict liability in tort, subject only to causation being proved.

I hope that I carry the hon. Member for Derby, South —this answers her question about our survey of the extent and effect of disablement in the population—when I say that it would not be sensible now to make

further large decisions in this sphere until we have the results of that survey—which is the biggest survey ever carried out in Britain of disablement problems and their effects—and are thus in a position to have the greater information required to examine disability and disability benefits as a whole.

Mrs. Beckett: May I take it, therefore, that the Minister is saying that the decision to make the uprating in this way does not pre-empt a more widespread scheme in the future?

Mr. Newton: In putting forward this proposal in relation to vaccine damage payments under the 1979 Act, the Government are not seeking to pre-empt anything in the future. Equally, I am not seeking to prejudge anything in the future or to suggest that the Government have taken decisions beyond the decision to raise the vaccine damage payment from £10,000 to £20,000 in relation to claims made on or after 18 June 1985.

The hon. Member for Derby, South questioned me about the cost. It is modest. We estimate that the extra cost in a full year will be £120,000, so that in terms of the great sweep of the Department of Health and Social Security budget it is a small sum. Nevertheless, it will be of considerable significance to those families who are helped.

Question put and agreed to. [Special Entry.]

Clause 28

EXTENT

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 26, line 37, leave out "extends to Northern Ireland only."

and insert—

", this section, and sections 29 and 30 below extend to Northern Ireland."

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Clause 28 provides for the extent to which the Bill applies to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This technical amendment provides that clause 28, and clauses 29 and 30, extend to Northern Ireland, as we are, naturally, anxious that those in Northern Ireland, as well as those in the rest of the United Kingdom, should have the benefits of the provisions of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 7 to 10 agreed to [Some with Special Entry.]

Clause 29

COMMENCEMENT

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 27, line 17, after "paragraphs" insert "22,".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment. Clause 29, which deals with commencement, states that any provisions not specifically listed there will be brought into force by commencement order. Paragraph 22 of schedule 5 is not listed, even though it will have retrospective effect from 1 January 1985. This is obviously inconsistent, and the amendment adds this provision to the list of those that will take effect on the day the Bill is enacted.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 1

TRANSFER AND REVALUATION

Lords amendment: No. 12, in page 31, leave out lines 32 to 35 and insert—

"52C.—(1) The taking out or the transfer of the benefit of a policy of insurance or a number of such policies, or the entry into or the transfer of the benefit of an annuity contract or a number of such contracts, if it takes place after the commencement of this section, only discharges trustees or managers of an occupational pension scheme from their liability, or any part of their liability."

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient for the House to consider at the same time the following Lords amendments:

No. 13, in page 31, line 40, at beginning insert "for or".

No. 14, in page 31, line 40, leave out from "person" to end of line 43 and insert

"in a case where and to the extent that subsection (2) below has effect."

No. 15, in page 31, line 44, at end insert

"at the time an earner's pensionable service terminates or at any later time"

No. 16, in page 31, line 49, after "provided" insert "for or in respect of him"

No. 17, in page 32, line 1, leave out

", after an earner's pensionable service terminates"

No. 18, in page 32, line 4, leave out "*(a)*,"

No. 19, in page 32, line 8, at end insert—

"(2A) Where before the commencement of this section—

(a) an earner's pensionable service terminated; and

(b) at the time his pensionable service terminated or at a later time the whole or any part—

(i) of the requisite benefits; or

(ii) of the short service benefit or of any alternative to short service benefit,

provided for or in respect of him by an occupational pension scheme was appropriately secured,

the trustees or managers of the scheme shall be deemed to have been discharged from their liability, so far as what they were liable to provide was so secured, at the time when it was first so secured."

No. 20, in page 32, line 15, leave out from beginning to "authorised" in line 16 and insert—

"*(a)* the insurance company with which it is, or was, taken out or entered into is, or was, at the relevant time,"

No. 21, in page 32, line 18, after "1982" insert "or any similar previous enactment"

No. 22, in page 32, leave out lines 20 to 31.

No. 23, in page 32, line 33, leave out "prescribed conditions" and insert

"conditions which satisfy such requirements as may be prescribed".

No. 24, in page 32, line 36, leave out "prescribed conditions" and insert

"conditions which satisfy such requirements as may be prescribed".

No. 25, in page 32, line 36, at end insert—

"and

(e) it satisfies such other requirements as may be prescribed."

No. 26, in page 32, leave out lines 39 to 41.

No. 27, in page 33, line 8, at end insert—

"(4A) In subsection (3)*(a)* above, "the relevant time" means the time when the policy of insurance was taken out or the annuity contract was entered into or, as the case may be, when the benefit of the policy or contract was transferred."

No. 28, in page 33, line 44, leave out from "where" to end of line 45 and insert

"section 52C(2A) above has effect."

No. 29, in page 33, line 47, at beginning insert—

"section 52C(2A) above does not have effect and".

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

No. 30, in page 33, line 48, leave out "*(a)*" and insert "*(b)*".

Mr. Whitney: Our consultations with experts in the pensions world have persuaded us that there are deficiencies in the provisions in new sections 52C and 52D which the Bill adds to the Social Security Pensions Act 1975. I must admit that these provisions have given us considerable trouble, and I record our gratitude for the help and advice that we have been given by the pensions experts.

The amendments clarify the position — a position which we had always intended to achieve in this part of the Bill — relating to the extent to which trustees can discharge their liability when the benefit rights of early leavers are secured by an insurance policy.

We are dealing with a number of amendments and I am conscious of the fact that this is not the first time that it has been necessary for us to amend these provisions. However, we are dealing with a complicated area of law, even by the demanding standards of occupational pensions legislation. The changes reflect our wish to get the new provisions right and our willingness to listen to the experts to enable us to do that. Should hon. Members require me to do so, I shall spell out the detailed points of the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 13 to 30 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 31, in page 35, line 31, leave out "and".

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a minor drafting amendment, but it seems worth getting paragraph 2(2) right while schedule 1 is being amended. The removal of the word "and" is a drafting point.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 32, in page 37, line 8, leave out "his widow" and insert

"to any other person in respect of him"

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a technical amendment which will put right a defect in the revaluation requirements for flat-rate benefits. The requirements apply, for other benefits, to all dependants' benefits provided by the scheme, but flat-rate benefits cover only widows benefits. This is an error which the amendment corrects.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 33, in page 37, line 20, leave out

"payments made from time to time"

and insert

"a payment or payments made"

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is another technical amendment. The definition of a money purchase benefit is defective because it does not cover the situation where the benefit results from a single contribution or payment. This amendment will remedy the defect.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 34, in page 39, line 35, after "to" insert "or in respect of"

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient for the House to consider at the same time Lords amendment No. 35, in page 39, line 37, after "to" insert "or in respect of"

Mr. Whitney: It has been suggested that it is not entirely clear whether accrued rights include all benefits for or in respect of the member. These amendments make it clear that they do.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 35 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 36, in page 40, line 46, leave out "or friendly societies" and insert

"such as are mentioned in section 52C(3)(*a*) above"

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is another technical amendment. When someone uses a transfer value to buy an annuity, the annuity will have to satisfy prescribed conditions. It was always our intention that these conditions should include restrictions on with whom the policy or contract can be taken out. It was also our intention that the prescribed conditions should not conflict with new section 52C, which deals with discharging liability on buy-out. We now have doubts whether the power in paragraph 13(2)(*b*) is sufficient to enable us to do this. We have therefore concluded that it would be best to put this provision on all fours with new section 52C.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule 5

Minor and Consequental Amendments

Lords amendment: No. 37, in page 68, line 15, at end insert—

"32A. The words "under section 38 of this Act" shall be omitted from subsection (5)(*b*) of section 59 of that Act (increase of official pensions)."

Mr. Whitney: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 39, in schedule 6, page 69, line 38, column 3, at end insert—

"In section 59(5)(*b*), the words "under section 38 of this Act."

Mr. Whitney: The amendments are technical and put right an oversight in the Health and Social Security Act 1984.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 38 to 40 agreed to.

Interception of Communications Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

PROHIBITION ON INTERCEPTION

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 1, line 5, at beginning insert

"Subject to the following provisions of this section."

5 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office, (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following Lords amendments: No. 2, in page 1, line 7, leave out from "offence" to end of line 15 and insert "and"

No. 3 in page 1, line 20, at end insert—

"(2) A person shall not be guilty of an offence under this section if—

(a) the communication is intercepted in obedience to a warrant issued by the Secretary of State under section 2 below; or

(b) that person has reasonable grounds for believing that the person to whom, or the person by whom, the communication is sent has consented to the interception.

(2A) A person shall not be guilty of an offence under this section if—

(a) the communication is intercepted for purposes connected with the provision of postal or public telecommunication services or with the enforcement of any enactment relating to the use of those services; or

(b) the communication is being transmitted by wireless telegraphy and is intercepted, with the authority of the Secretary of State, for purposes connected with the issue of licences under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 or the prevention or detection of interference with wireless telegraphy."

No. 15, in clause 10, page 9, line 23, at end insert—

" "wireless telegraphy" has the same meaning as in the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949;"

Mr. Waddington: The amendments implement an undertaking that I gave in Committee to narrow the exception to the new offence which dealt with giving consent to an interception. The amendments make a drafting change to the exception for interception for purposes connected with the provision of postal or telecommunications services. We are making it clear that the exception covers Post Office powers to open letters believed to contain inflammable material or to monitor obscene telephone calls, which is an offence under the Telecommunications Act.

Finally, the amendents incorporate a further but limited exception for those acting under Wireless Telegraphy Act powers who monitor radio transmissions for purposes connected with the issuing of licences or for the protection or prevention of radio interference. Certain forms of telecommunications on the public system are nowadays conveyed by radio for part of their journey. In certain circumstances, those acting to prevent interference might have to monitor across a band that is used by such a system and this exception is introduced against that possibility.

I hope that I shall be excused for mentioning one other matter and setting the scene for our consideration of the eight groups of amendments that we shall be discussing. This group of amendments, and Lords amendment No. 5, fulfil undertakings. The others respond to submissions made in another place, which in some instances followed on from what was said in this place a few months ago. In the course of the earlier proceedings in this place the Government demonstrated their readiness to meet submissions made to them by making a number of significant changes. The nature of the amendments now before us is further evidence of the Government's willingness throughout to accept constructive suggestions from whichever side of the House they have come and to deal with these important issues in the non-partisan spirit which I am sure the House would wish.

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I speak for the union which sponsors me, the Union of Communication Workers (Engineering Group). There is still some disappointment that unofficial telephone tapping has not been tackled further. All the amendments made in another place have improved what we consider to be a fundamentally unsatisfactory position. I welcome the slightly greater protection that will be given to employees by Lords amendment No. 3 in subsection (2A)*(a)*. It widens the definition to cover

"the enforcement of any enactment relating to the use of"

public telecommunication services.

We shall have to consider the operation of this measure extremely carefully. It will be important for the Government to give thorough consideration to the detailed working of the measure within a few months, or perhaps within a year, to ensure that it is operating satisfactorily and fairly.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 agreed to.

Clause 2

WARRANTS FOR INTERCEPTION

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 2, line 23, at end insert—

"(2A) The matters to be taken into account in considering whether a warrant is necessary as mentioned in subsection (2) above shall include whether the information which it is considered necessary to acquire could reasonably be acquired by other means."

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment clarifies "necessary" in clause 2, obliging the Secretary of State, as he always does in practice, to consider whether the information in question "could reasonably be acquired by other means."

Thus the Bill expressly mentions one of the main elements of the existing non-statutory procedures set out in the White Paper in a way which I hope will commend itself to the House. The change places beyond any doubt that there must be a consideration of alternatives and that it is one of the factors which the tribunal will consider in reviewing the Secretary of State's decisions. By qualifying "necessary", the amendment applies also to the Secretary of State's power to renew warrants and his duty to cancel them.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Minister moved towards us at a number of stages in the Bill's passage through this House. It is sad that he did not so move at an earlier stage on this issue. The argument was advanced clearly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on Second Reading.

In Committee, the Opposition moved amendments which were supported by some Conservative Members.

[Mr. Clive Soley]

The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), for example, supported the Opposition in a Division that we forced in an effort to get an amendment made to the Bill. If we had been successful, their Lordships in another place would have been saved some trouble.

I am rather puzzled why the amendment has taken the form in which it appears before us. The 1980 White Paper stated:

"normal methods of investigation must have been tried and failed, or must, from the nature of things, be unlikely to succeed if tried."

Their Lordships have included a rather weaker test. The test is that

"The matters to be taken into account . . . could reasonably be acquired by other means."

That is a looser test than that which appeared in the White Paper. On balance, we would have preferred the White Paper's wording. However, that is a minor matter. The inclusion of the amendment strengthens the Bill and for that reason we welcome it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I echo the remarks of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). The acceptance of the amendment will improve the Bill. I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for notifying the Government's acceptance. I am much in favour of defining the circumstances in which a warrant can be issued and defining them as exactly as possible in the circumstances. The amendment is a step in the right direction. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me when I say that it is a small step and that I wish he had gone further.

Mr. Waddington: I take on board the remarks of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). White Paper language is seldom suitable for direct incorporation into statute. For example, that criterion rests on "normal" methods having failed, but normality does not have a sufficiently precise meaning to serve here at the heart of the statutory definition of the Secretary of State's powers. The alternative test of impracticability, which was proposed in an amendment which was tabled in another place, does not allow the Secretary of State to take proper account of the need for speed or the adverse consequences of the discovery of alternatives. I believe that the formulation before us follows existing practices and gives proper effect to the approach set out in the White Paper. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Hammersmith and my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham for their comments, but even by their lights the amendment offers an improvement.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

ISSUE AND DURATION OF WARRANTS

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 4, line 6, leave out from "period"" to end of line 13 and insert—

"(*a*) in relation to a warrant which has not been renewed, means—

(i) if the warrant was issued under subsection (1)(*a*) above, the period of two months beginning with the day on which it was issued; and

(ii) if the warrant was issued under subsection (1)(*b*) above, the period ending with the second working day following that day;

(*b*) in relation to a warrant which was last renewed within the period mentioned in paragraph (*a*)(ii) above, means the period of two months beginning with the day on which it was so renewed; and

(*c*) in relation to a warrant which was last renewed at any other time, means—

(i) if the instrument by which it was so renewed is endorsed with a statement that the renewal is considered necessary as mentioned in section 2(2)(*a*) or (*c*) above, the period of six months beginning with the day on which it was so renewed; and

(ii) if that instrument is not so endorsed, the period of one month beginning with that day."

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment fulfils an undertaking that was given in Committee that the Government would incorporate in an appropriate way in the Bill the arrangements for the duration of warrants as set out in paragraph 11 of the White Paper. The amendment secures the same practical effect as those arrangements. The original undertakings met with the support of hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. I hope that its implementation in this way will be found equally acceptable.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I asked for this amendment on Second Reading and requested it from the Home Secretary in the discussions that I had with him. The Home Secretary was good enough to tell me that he would meet that request. The amendment fulfils that undertaking and I thank the Government for making an important improvement in the Bill.

Mr. Waddington: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for being helpful. He suggested this amendment at an earlier stage. It concerned another of those cases where one could not incorporate in the Bill the precise wording of the White Paper, but we knew what we wanted to attain and we have attained it.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6

SAFEGUARDS

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 5, line 5, leave out "subsection (2)" and insert "subsections (2) and (3)"

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 7, in page 5, line 17, at end insert "and"

No. 8, in page 5, leave out lines 19 to 21.

No. 9, in page 5, line 23, at end insert—

"(3) The requirements of this subsection are satisfied in relation to any intercepted material if each copy made of any of that material is destroyed as soon as its retention is no longer necessary as mentioned in section 2(2) above."

Mr. Waddington: These amendments incorporate in the clause 6 safeguards an express reference to the destruction of material the retention of which is no longer necessary. They fulfil an undertaking given following discussions in the other place of an amendment identical to the one moved by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) in Committee on 2 April. The change makes explicit the requirement that material must

be destroyed as soon as it no longer meets the purposes for which warrants can be issued, and it can be welcomed by both sides of the House.

Mr. Kaufman: The amendment is welcome, but where are alliance Members? We hear a great deal about the concern of the Liberal and SDP Members for civil liberties, but not one of those hon. Members is present in the Chamber for this extremely important debate. They have a great deal to say outside the Chamber about their claims to work hard here, but when we are debating matters of fundamental importance to civil liberties, heaven alone knows where they are. It is important to have that on record.

Mr. Golding: There is a trip to Windsor races this evening.

Mr. Kaufman: If alliance Members are on that trip, they are doing something more constructive than they are normally doing. Nevertheless, it is offensive to the House that, when a Minister says that he is adding something to a Bill in response to a point made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), neither the hon. Gentleman nor any of his colleagues is here.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 7 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 7

THE TRIBUNAL

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 5, line 40, after "applicable" insert "by a court"

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment complements the reference to judical review added to the Bill in Committee on 2 April, which was accepted on both sides of the House as placing beyond any doubt that it was the task of the tribunal to consider whether the Secretary of State's decision was proper. This further change meets concern expressed in the other place about whether the principles of judical review were sufficiently clear and states expressly that they are the principles that would be applied by the court. Therefore, the amendment does not change the substance of the clause or alter the effect that, in the Government's view, was secured by the earlier change. Hon. Members may see this amendment as a clarification, and in that sense I invite them to agree to it.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 9

EXCLUSION OF EVIDENCE

Lords amendment: No. 11, in page 8, line 16, after "apply" insert

"—

(a)"

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 12, in page 8, line 18, at end insert

"or

(b) where the evidence is adduced or the question in cross-examination is asked for the purpose of establishing the fairness or unfairness of a dismissal on grounds of an offence under section 1 above or of conduct from which such an offence might be inferred

and paragraph *(a)* of that subsection does not apply where a person has been convicted of the offence under that section."

Mr. Waddington: These amendments meet a point originally identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) in Committee. He pointed out that if the Post Office or a public telecommunications operator were challenged in an industrial tribunal with dismissing an employee on grounds of conduct that amounted to improper interception, they might not be able to adduce evidence in support of their case. The same matter was pursued by an Opposition spokesman in the other place. The Government found the point persuasive, and these amendments meet it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for having responded to my point. The amendment takes account of the point that I was making, and there should be no further problems.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 12 agreed to.

Clause 10

INTERPRETATION

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 8, line 40, leave out from first "copy"" to "and" in line 41 and insert

", in relation to intercepted material, means any of the following, whether or not in documentary form—

(a) any copy, extract or summary of the material; and

(b) any record of the identities of the persons to or by whom the material was sent,"

5.15 pm

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 14, in page 9, line 7, leave out from "warrant" to end of line 9.

Mr. Waddington: These are drafting amendments, which secure the better expression of two of the terms used in the Bill. They make no change of substance.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 14 and 15 agreed to.

SCHEDULE 1

THE TRIBUNAL

Lords amendment: No. 16, in page 11, leave out lines 27 to 37 and insert—

"Procedure of Tribunal

3. The functions of the Tribunal in relation to any application made to them shall be capable of being carried out, in any place in the United Kingdom, by any two or more members of the Tribunal designated for the purpose by their President; and different members of the Tribunal may carry out functions in relation to different applications at the same time."

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This amendment fulfils an undertaking given in Committee in the other place to introduce a quorum for the tribunal. It means that no decisions may be taken in the name of the tribunal by fewer than two of its members. It has been necessary to recast paragraph 3 of schedule 1, but

[Mr. Waddington]

the other adjustments are essentially consequential and do not affect its substance. In particular, the president of the tribunal will, as in the original version, remain responsible for determining how business will be conducted, and so for deciding how many members in addition to the minimum two should be concerned with any particular matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

OFFENCES IN CONNECTION WITH ALCOHOL ON COACHES AND TRAINS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 3, leave out from "offence" to end of line 7 and insert—

"*(a)* if the vehicle is a public service vehicle and he is the operator of the vehicle or the servant or agent of the operator, or

(b) if the vehicle is a hired vehicle and he is the person to whom it is hired or the servant or agent of that person".

5.17 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 14, leave out

"in relation to such a vehicle"

No. 3, in page 2, line 16, leave out from "1981" to end of line 18.

Mr. Shaw: These amendments relate to the liability of operators and hirers of vehicles to which clause 1 applies and their servants or agents, who knowingly cause or permit the carriage of alcohol. As presently drafted, the clause catches the operator and the hirer and the servant or agent of either whether the vehicle in question is a public service vehicle or a train. During earlier proceedings on the Bill, hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), expressed concern that in England and Wales the position of British Rail and its employees would be different from that in Scotland. In England and Wales they would be liable; in Scotland they would not. The Government agree that the position should be the same so far as possible on both sides of the border, and that is the purpose of these amendments.

The net effect of the amendments is that for public service vehicles—coaches and so on—the hirer and the operator and the servant or agent of either are all caught whereas for trains only the hirer and his servant or agent are caught. So British Rail and its drivers, guards and ticket collectors are not liable.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 2 and 3 agreed to.

Clause 2

OFFENCES IN CONNECTION WITH ALCHOHOL, CONTAINERS ETC, AT SPORTS GROUNDS

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 2, line 19, leave out "a controlled container" and insert

"an article to which this section applies"

Mr. Giles Shaw: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 33, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

"(3) This section applies to any article capable of causing injury to a person struck by it, being—

(a) a bottle, can or other portable container (including such an article when crushed or broken) which—

(i) is for holding any drink, and

(ii) is of a kind which, when empty, is normally discarded or returned to, or left to be recovered by, the supplier, or

(b) part of an article falling within paragraph *(a)* above;

but does not apply to anything that is for holding any medicinal product (within the meaning of the Medicines Act 1968)."

Mr. Shaw: These amendments relate to the types of container which people will be prohibited from taking into football grounds and from possessing in any area of the ground which has a direct view of the pitch. In Committee, a number of hon. Members thought that our definition was too wide. Particular concern was expressed because articles such as thermos flasks and scent bottles would be prohibited. By these amendments, we have sought to narrow the definition so that only those containers which are most likely to be used as missiles are prohibited.

As compared with clause 2(3) the amendments limit in two respects the containers caught. First, only containers for drink would be caught. Clause 2(3) catches containers of liquid. The effect of this is to free such items as scent bottles and deodorant aerosols. Secondly the amendments would catch only containers which are normally discarded when empty, or returned to the supplier. This would de-criminalise—if that is the word—such items as thermos flasks and babies' bottles. We are catching cans and most bottles, and glasses of the type normally provided in pubs and bars. These are the containers most commonly misused. I hope the House will welcome the restrictions embodied, and the revisions made, in these amendments.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I welcome the attention the Lords gave this matter. It may seem trivial but it is important to many people who enjoy attending various types of sports fixture. My noble Friend Lord Harris did excellent work on the Bill and described the problem of the small boy with a soft drink at a cricket match. Small boys have attended cricket matches and had bottles of squash for many years and I hope that they will long be able to do so. The Minister said that we are considering people carrying a drink container at a football match, but we are not. The amendment is about people carrying drink containers at any type of sporting fixture that Ministers might decide to include in the scope of the Bill. I appreciate the care that the Lords gave this matter precisely because the Bill goes so wide.

It has been suggested that the other place should not have given the Bill such detailed consideration, but that the consequences of the parties in this House ensuring that the Bill had a smooth passage ought to have been that the Lords gave it no attention or only minimal attention. I refute that view and the suggestion, which appeared in some of the public prints, that my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), by having a valuable meeting with the Home Secretary, committed themselves to every jot and detail of a Bill that had not then been printed.

One of the features that bears on the amendment, but which was not in the Bill as it was then described, is the ease with which the Bill can be extended to any other sport. It could cover sports that take place during much longer periods of time than football matches, such as whole day race meetings, athletics meetings and cricket matches. Moreover, the Bill could apply to sports that are generally attended by whole families, such as speedway.

Only a motion under the negative procedure is required to extend to any other sport the provisions concerning containers. Under that procedure, there is no guarantee that an hon. Member or substantial group of hon. Members can secure votes, or even a debate, on the matter. There is usually not too much difficulty securing a debate in Committee on a prayer, but such debate does not give rise to a vote on the Floor of the House. It is therefore open to a Minister to extend the Bill to any other sport by a procedure which offers no guarantee of a vote. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends remain worried that the Bill is couched in such wide terms as to open up such a possibility.

The way of life of people who attend longer lasting sporting events could be affected, and there are problems concerning sponsorship of sports grounds by companies involved with alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks. It would be helpful if the Minister could affirm that the only problem of which the Government are aware concerns football. The ease with which the Minister spoke of the Bill applying only to football enables us to read the minds of Ministers, but the wide powers involved have understandably given rise to anxieties in sports such as cricket, racing, speedway and rugby league, where there are no crowd control problems and nobody throws drink bottles about. The normal peaceful watching of sport should be allowed to continue without interruption or the threat of it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Like the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), I am glad that the Government have decided that the amendment can be accepted. When we last discussed the matter, I expressed considerable anxiety on several scores. The first was that the Bill would be extended to a variety of sports such as cricket. I tabled an amendment which suggested that the Bill should be extended only by affirmative resolution. It received the support of the Liberal party—it is perhaps the first time that I have ever had its support—but, unfortunately, it was not selected.

I also expressed doubt about the desirability of prohibiting such a wide range of containers, which would have included thermos and hip flasks, as they might also be prohibited at cricket matches. I welcome the amendment. It reduces the scope of activity which is rendered criminal, and I favour that. I still regret that the Bill is couched in such wide terms, but the Government's acceptance of the amendment is welcome and I congratulate my hon. Friend on having done so.

Mr. Giles Shaw: With the leave of the House, may I say that my right hon. Friend has no intention at present of designating grounds or sporting events other than those which are associated with association football and which have been so described. However, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, there could be an occasion when action might have to be taken fairly speedily should there be a further outbreak of the type of crowd violence that has given rise to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 5 agreed to.

Clause 3

LICENSING HOURS WITHIN SPORTS GROUNDS, 1964 c. 26

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 4, line 36, leave out "in contravention of conditions or restrictions imposed by or" and insert

"at any time that is excluded from the permitted hours by virtue of this section or in contravention of conditions imposed".

Mr. Giles Shaw: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a highly technical drafting amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS ABOUT ORDERS UNDER SECTION 3

Lords amendment: No. 7, in page 5, line 16, leave out "or removal".

Mr. Shaw: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a minor drafting amendment. The effect of removal of a justices' licence to different premises is that the premises to which the licence originally related cease to be licensed premises. The words "or removal" thus add nothing to the final words of the subsection.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 8, in page 5, line 17, leave out "or the grant of a protection order in respect of the premises".

Mr. Giles Shaw: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 9, in page 5, line 22, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

"(4) Where an order under that section is in force in respect of any premises and application is made not less than twenty-eight days before the order is due to expire for renewal of the order or for a further order in respect of the premises, the first-mentioned order shall not cease to have effect by virtue of subsection (1)*(b)* above until the application is disposed of by the magistrates' court."

Mr. Shaw: Both of these amendments are designed to protect football clubs which undergo a change of licensee. As the Bill is drafted, such a change could in certain circumstances terminate the exemption order with no possibility of a new order for at least 28 days. That would mean that no alcohol could be sold at the premises during that period. We see no justification for penalising a club under those circumstances, which are probably outside its control. The amendments permit the current exemption order to continue in force until the courts have dealt with a fresh application for a new order by the new licensee, provided that the application is made in good time before the expiry of the current order. The amendments are somewhat technical, but I hope that the House will agree to accept them.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I understand that the amendment originated with a firm of Liverpool solicitors which managed to see the Bill and comment on it in time for its suggestions to be included. That is a victory for people who will be closely affected by the Bill. The Bill was rushed. Not many of us were able to see such comments in time for them to be debated, and it took the other place to rectify that shortcoming. It is therefore right that the other place had longer than us to discuss the Bill. The Bill is bad in many respects and I hope that the promised monitoring exercise is effective.

Mr. Shaw: I accept that, through the co-operation of the official Opposition and the other parties, the Bill was granted rapid progress. However, I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the circumstances in which the legislation was brought before the House are, I hope, exceptional, in both their character and importance.

The hon. Gentleman referred to monitoring. The assurance given by my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur in the upper House is clear. It is our intention to review the position during the season in relation to the legislation on public order that will be brought before the House in due course. My noble Friend gave the assurance that the long title of that Bill would allow, if it were necessary, and if my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary deemed it right, for amendments to be brought forward. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that further amendment would have to be looked at carefully in relation to the state of the game at the time.

5.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): As we are coming to the end of the not exactly protracted proceedings on the Bill, and as the Act will be in operation at the beginning of the football season in fewer than four weeks from now, may I ask the Minister whether the Government have any plans to keep the House informed of the progress of the monitoring exercise, so that we may share in the information that the Government will be gaining on the use of the Act? For example, it would be interesting if the House could be informed periodically of the number of exemption orders being granted. There may be no reason why we cannot be given a list of the clubs that have been granted those orders. It would also be interesting and useful, if we have to reconsider these matters in future more permanent legislation, for the police, the football authorities and others to give us some idea, first of the success of the Act in dealing with the serious problem that every one of us in the House wants to be dealt with, and secondly of the financial effect on the clubs because, inevitably, that has given rise to a great deal of concern. It would be useful if, over the next season, we could be kept informed of how things were going on that front, too.

Mr. Shaw: I fully understand why it would be useful to keep the House informed. I am sure that that will be done through the questioning procedure.

The consequences on the football clubs were the crucial factor giving rise to the concern expressed about the exemption procedure, particularly for sponsored boxes. I understand that it is the intention of the football league itself to keep my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary advised on how it views the position. Its information could form the basis of any evidence that is put before us. However, the right hon. Gentleman is right. We have agreed to review the matter as the season progresses.

The right hon. Gentleman said that there might be a review of the legislation to put it on a more permanent footing. I remind him that it is primary legislation, which is therefore already on a permanent footing.

Mr. Kaufman: Of course, we have the questioning procedure, but we do not always know when information

is available to the Government. It would be useful if the Government, of their own accord, could make information available to the House from time to time. It may well be that the Minister is unaware of the device of the planted question, I should like to remind him of it. It is something to which he might have recourse to keep the House informed.

Mr. Shaw: Of course, as I am so close to the Floor, I rarely stoop so low, but I understand that there is such a device. I shall bear in mind what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 9 agreed to.

Clause 10

AMENDMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (SCOTLAND) ACT 1980

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 8, leave out lines 10 to 12 and insert—

"*(a)* in section 68(1), after paragraph *(b)* there shall be inserted—

"*(c)* a sporting event, or a class of sporting event, taking place outside Great Britain;";"

Mr. Shaw: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment corrects a drafting defect in relation to the Scottish legislation—the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. As presently drafted, it gives the impression that the Secretary of State would designate grounds outside Great Britain, whereas all that is required is that events, or classes of event, should be designated. The amendment now makes that clear.

Mr. Beith: It is ironic that the last Lords amendment that we should consider brings us back to the basis on which the Bill was introduced—an event that took place outside Great Britain at a sportsground that is incapable of being designated, even under the amendment. Useful though the provisions will be in controlling alcohol in football grounds, I believe that they leave unanswered many of the problems of football hooliganism, including some of those that may have contributed to the original cause of the Bill. Those problems will require the continued attention of Ministers.

Mr. Shaw: I remind the hon. Gentleman that it was not purely the event that occurred in Brussels that gave rise to the legislation, although it was the last straw. I am sure that he recognises that the problem of violence in football grounds has been steadily getting worse in recent years, culminating in major events during the last season here in the United Kingdom.

Question put and agreed to.

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 2

MEANING OF 'ASSOCIATE'

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (7) below, for the purposes of this Act any question whether a person is an associate of another person, shall be determined in accordance with the following provisions of this section (any reference, whether in those provisions or in regulations under the said subsection (7), to a person being an associate of another person being taken to be a reference to their being associates of each other).

(2) A person is an associate of an individual if that person is the individual's husband or wife, or is a relative, or the husband or wife of a relative, of the individual or of the individual's husband or wife.

(3) A person is an associate of any person with whom he is in partnership, and of the husband or wife or a relative of any individual with whom he is in partnership; and a firm is an associate of any person who is a member of the firm.

(4) For the purposes of this section a person is a relative of an individual if he is that individual's brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, lineal ancester or lineal descendant, treating—

(a) any relationship of the half blood as a relationship of the whole blood and the stepchild or adopted child of any person as his child; and

(b) an illegitimate child as the legitimate child of his mother and reputed father,

and references in this section to a husband or wife include a former husband or wife and a reputed husband or wife.

(5) A person is an associate of any person whom he employs or by whom he is employed; and for the purposes of this subsection any director or other officer of a company shall be treated as employed by that company.

(6) In subsection (5) above, "company" includes any body corporate (whether incorporated in Great Britain or elsewhere).

(7) The Secretary of State may by regulations—

(a) amend the foregoing provisions of this section so as to provide further categories of persons who, for the purposes of this Act, are to be associates of other persons; and

(b) provide that any or all of subsections (2) and (6) above (or any subsection added by virtue of paragraph *(a)* above) shall cease to apply, whether in whole or in part, or shall apply subject to such modifications as he may specify in the regulations;

and he may in the regulations make such incidental or transitional provision as he considers appropriate.'. — *[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.35 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 30.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The purpose of the new clause is to provide a definition in the Bill of the expression "associate", and follows from our discussions in Committee. The definition covers the principal categories relevant to personal bankruptcy of persons who are defined as being associates for the purposes of the Insolvency Bill. The definition will allow for any necessary changes to it to be made by regulations. The amendment to clause 72 makes a consequential change in the interpretation clause.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I welcome the new clause. In Committee I said that it was unsatisfactory that the Bill did not contain a definition of "associate" and I welcome the fact that we now have it.

I take it that, although the wording is different, the effect of the clause is basically the same as the effect of the definition in the Insolvency Bill. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am happy to give that confirmation. The effect is the same. As I said, the only difference is that, should it be necessary to extend that classification, it could be done by regulation in future.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

POWER OF PERMANENT TRUSTEE IN RELATION TO THE DEBTOR'S FAMILY HOME

"—(1) Before the permanent trustee sells or disposes of any right or interest in the debtor's family home he shall—

(a) obtain the relevant consent; or

(b) where he is unable to do so, obtain the authority of the court in accordance with subsection (2) below.

(2) Where the permanent trustee requires to obtain the authority of the court in terms of subsection (1)*(b)* above, the court, after having regard to all the circumstances of the case, including—

(a) the needs and financial resources of the debtor's spouse or former spouse;

(b) the needs and financial resources of any child of the family;

(c) the interests of the creditors;

(d) the length of the period during which (whether before or after the relevant date) the family home was used as a residence by any of the persons referred to in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* above;

may refuse to grant the application or may postpone the granting of the application for such period (not exceeding twelve months) as it may consider reasonable in the circumstances or may grant the application subject to such conditions as it may prescribe.

(3) Subsection (2) above shall apply—

(a) to an action for division and sale of the debtor's family home; or

(b) to an action for the purpose of obtaining vacant possession of the debtor's family home,

brought by the permanent trustee as it applies to an application under subsection (1)*(b)* above and, for the purposes of this subsection, any reference in the said subsection (2) to that granting of the application shall be construed as a reference to the granting of decree in the action.

(4) In this section—

(a) "family home" means any property in which, at the relevant date, the debtor had (whether alone or jointly with any other person) a right or interest, being property which was occupied at that date as a residence by the debtor and his spouse or by the debtor's spouse or former spouse (in any case with or without a child of the family) or by the debtor with a child of the family;

(b) "child of the family" includes any child or grandchild of either the debtor or his spouse or former spouse, and any person who has been brought up or accepted by either the debtor or his spouse or former spouse as if he or she were a child of the debtor, spouse or former spouse whatever the age of such a child, grandchild or person may be;

(c) "relevant consent" means in relation to the sale or disposal of any right or interest in a family home—

(i) in a case where the family home is occupied by the debtor's spouse or former spouse, the consent of the spouse, or, as the case may be, the former spouse, whether or not the family home is also occupied by the debtor;

(ii) where sub-paragraph (i) above does not apply, in a case where the family home is occupied by the debtor with a child of the family, the consent of the debtor; and

(d) "relevant date" means the day immediately preceding the date of sequestration.".—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 23.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Hon. Members will be aware that the Government have been considering, both in the context of this Bill and the Insolvency Bill, the introduction of the provision to give some protection to certain members of the debtor's family who were living in his property when it vested in the permanent trustee in his sequestration and who are therefore vulnerable under present law to being required to leave that property as soon as the permanent trustee wishes to sell it for the benefit of the creditors.

The new clause achieves that, first, by requiring the permanent trustee to obtain the court's authorisation if he wishes to sell or dispose of the family home. For this purpose, "family home" is defined as meaning any property in which, immediately before the date of his sequestration, the debtor has a right or interest and which is used as a residence by the debtor's spouse or former spouse or by the debtor and his children. Secondly, the clause requires the court to take into account all the circumstances of each case when considering whether to give such authorisation or any action which would have the effect of requiring them to leave that home. Among the circumstances which the court is specifically required to take into account are the needs and financial resources of the spouse, former spouse or children in the family home, the interests of the creditors and the length of time—both before and after the debtor's sequestration—in which they have lived in the family home. Thirdly, the court is empowered to refuse or impose conditions upon the granting of any such authorisation or decree or to postpone the granting of such authorisation or decree for up to 12 months.

I recognise that the provision represents a significant inroad into the rights of creditors to all the assets of the debtor, but it was clear during the Insolvency Bill's passage in another place that there was a strong feeling that some regard should be given in these circumstances to the needs of persons who are dependent upon the debtor to the extent that, as a consequence of the sequestration, they may be evicted from property in which they have lived as their family home. I believe that the provision before us represents a reasonable balance between those conflicting interests, in that it gives the court the flexibility to make an appropriate decision in every case, after weighing up the different interests. I therefore commend it to the House.

Mr. Millan: Again I welcome the new clause, which deals with a matter which I raised in the context of another clause in Committee. A consultation document was issued for the Insolvency Bill, and now there is a similar provision in that Bill.

The final words of the Solicitor-General for Scotland sum up the whole business. It is necessary to take account

of the interests of the creditors, but, equally, the bankruptcy of an individual should not impose undue hardship on his wife, or, in the case of a bankrupt woman, her husband, and the rest of the family. It is necessary to strike the right balance.

I shall not presume to deal with the clause in detail, because we have had little time to consider the detail of it, but its approach, which balances the interests of the creditor and the family, is right, and gives the court the full power of discretion in dealing with these difficult matters. I welcome the clause, especially the approach adopted in it.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Not for the last time, I echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). The Solicitor-General for Scotland properly said that the change was significant and that the new clause was not merely a technical amendment. If one were hostile, one would say that the provisions infringe the rights of the creditor and the powers of the permanent trustee. I think that I speak for many people—I certainly speak for Labour Members—when I say that the provision seems humane and sensible. It is absolutely right that a court should have to give permission for the sale of a home which is occupied by the debtor's spouse or the debtor and his children, and should have the power to weigh all the competing interests and to refuse an application or grant a postponement for up to 12 months to allow the family to make other arrangements for accommodation. Obviously, the matter is important, and the new clause introduces an element of flexibility which is eminently reasonable. I am grateful to the Government for introducing the new clause.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am grateful to both the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for welcoming the new clause, and the flexibility that it introduces.

I should have drawn their attention to a small technical point. In line 27 of the new clause, as printed, where the word "jointly" appears, there should have been substituted the words "in common". I am sure that, as a distinguished conveyancer, the hon. Member for Garscadden will understand why.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

COMPENSATION OF DEBTS DUE TO AND BY THE CROWN

'(1) Where this section applies compensation shall not be available between debts due to or by the Crown under the provisions of any statute and debts due to or by the Crown in respect of contractual obligations.

(2) This section applies

(a) in the case of a sequestration under this Act;

(b) in the case of a protected trust deed.'. — *[Mr. Millan.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Millan: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Although this is an excellent new clause, I am not as confident that the Government will accept it as I was about the other two clauses. It deals with compensation for debts due to and by the Crown. It is a modified version of the new clause which I moved in Committee, in that it is a more modest attempt to reduce the procedure of compensation at present available to the Crown.

Later we shall deal with the question of Government preference. In a bankruptcy, the Government have both preference on debts and the advantage that, if they owe money to the debtor's estate, they can search for another Government Department which may be owed money by the debtor and set one against the other. That applies to both statutory debts and ordinary debts arising from contractual obligations, which may be in respect of the supply of goods under an ordinary commercial contract.

As the Government are now all pervasive—not all persuasive, because they are greatly unpersuasive—and large numbers of Government Departments are involved in all sorts of different activities, the Crown has advantages which no individual creditor can possibly have. The principle of compensation and set-off is well established in Scottish law. In the case of the Government, it is taken to extremes. The new clause would limit it to either contractual debt obligations or statutory obligations. It is a restrictive new clause.

5.45 pm

Apart from the equity of the matter, there are practical difficulties in settling sequestrations in certain circumstances. Those who are involved in this area of activity tell me that it is sometimes difficult to get money from a Government Department because it will spend a great deal of time making absolutely sure that it cannot avoid paying the money and that the debtor did not owe it or another Department money. As the rest of the Bill reduces Government preference, it is anachronistic to maintain the full rights of compensation and set-off of the Crown. The clause would reduce the set-off considerably. It is an excellent new clause and it will be a pity if the Government do not accept it.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am pleased that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) recognised the difficulties that would have ensued if he had sought, as he did in Committee, to prevent a set-off of debts owed to and by different Government Departments. With regard to the remainder of his new clause, my arguments in Committee remain unchanged, and unless he and and other hon. Members wish me to rehearse them, I shall not do so.

A further factor must be considered. If a change were made in the Bill to the law relating to compensation, it would create an anomaly, not only between the English and Scottish personal bankruptcy procedures, but between the law of compensation as it relates to company insolvency in Scotland and as it would relate to personal bankruptcy in Scotland. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) did not care for the first argument, he will see the force of the second.

The right hon. Member for Govan said in Committee in relation to Crown preferences that the argument for a consistent approach throughout the United Kingdom was powerful. The same is true for compensation and set-off. To have one system applying to personal bankruptcies in Scotland and another to all the remaining insolvency procedures in Great Britain is a recipe for considerable confusion and dissatisfaction.

Mr. Millan: I believe in consistency, which is why I tabled a similar new clause to the Insolvency Bill last Thursday, not with conspicuous success.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman is anxious to secure consistency. He may feel that he has been badly done by in the House, in that his argument has not secured the favour that he believes it deserves. Nevertheless, if the right hon. Gentleman appreciates that he cannot secure a general change, he should found on his failure and have a consistent approach here.

For that reason, and without rehearsing the more general arguments on compensation or set-off, I ask the right hon. Gentleman to withdraw his new clause.

Mr. Dewar: My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) will not have been surprised by the Minister's response. Indeed, there was a hint of his expectation in the way in which he moved the new clause. It is unfortunate that the Government are not prepared to consider the arguments more sympathetically. I did not have the advantage—I use the word a little timidly—of serving on the Committee or of being involved at any stage in the Insolvency Bill, which overshadowed and prejudged many of the decisions made in connection with this Bill. However, I am not greatly impressed by the Minister's arguments on this occasion, although I did not have the advantage of hearing him at length in Committee.

The fact that there would be a gap between insolvency law for companies and personal bankruptcies might lead to some difficulty, but, as my right hon. Friend said, if the new clause were valid, it would be logical to import a similar approach into the other Bill and not merely to trump the argument by saying that we had made a mistake in the first place. The merits of the matter should rule. In any event, company law has always been on a United Kingdom basis, whereas, almost from the first decade of this century, bankruptcy law has been considered on the different Scottish legal basis.

I agree with my right hon. Friend that there is a problem with the unbridled right to compensation which the Crown has, and the new clause is clearly an attempt to find a reasonable limitation by stipulating that the right to set-off should be limited, as described, to sums owed and sums payable under statute, or to the set-off between sums that arise from contractual obligations. That is a reasonable proposition, but the Minister has clearly set his face against it.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Although the hon. Gentleman is not persuaded by the Government's approach to the matter—I appreciate that he was not a member of the Committee, so he may have missed the arguments — the Scottish Law Commission, not surprisingly, gave some attention to it when preparing its report. It said that we might need to find a satisfactory solution to the common law on compensation as it stands now, but it did not believe it appropriate to make such a change solely in the context of bankruptcy. It suggested that any change should become part of its examination of the law of obligations in Scotland. That is the best way to approach the matter.

Mr. Dewar: That may be so, and no doubt that is a persuasive argument for putting off anything. The trouble is that, as we know, the law of diligence has been under review for about a decade, and although the cathartic moment of production is almost upon us—I understand that from a written answer the other day—it has been a long and weary road. I am not entirely convinced by the argument that we should leave this matter until the Scottish Law Commission considers the law of obligations, because its review may take a long time. My right hon. Friend was considering the specific problem of compensation and the privileges of the Crown, which are regulated to some extent by statute. If we need a change in the law now, I should have thought that it would be reasonable to try to strike the right balance.

I should outlive my welcome if I tried to rehearse the arguments that I did not hear in Committee. Therefore, I merely record my regret that Ministers have taken—I suppose predictably—a conservative view of the matter.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 2

INTERIM TRUSTEE

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 3, line 33, leave out

'or is not a fit and proper person to act as an interim trustee'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 2 and 31.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Hon. Members who attended the Committee stage of the Bill will recall that the Government introduced several amendments to provide an interim system relating to the qualifications required for insolvency practitioners under the Bill until part I of the Insolvency Bill comes into effect and the system contained in that part can be used throughout Great Britain.

These amendments retain that interim provision, but also provide for the time when part I of the Insolvency Bill comes into force. It was originally intended that such provisions would be inserted into this Bill by part I of the Insolvency Bill when that part became effective, but on further consideration we have decided that it is simpler and more convenient to amend now so that the Bill's provisions tell the whole story.

Mr. Millan: This is another matter which I raised in Committee, and I am glad that the provision is being tidied up. One difficulty with the Bill is that it ran simultaneously with the Insolvency Bill and the Government seemed unable to make up their mind about many important matters in the Insolvency Bill. All the provisions relating to insolvency practitioners were rewritten during the Report stage of the Insolvency Bill last week, which produced an almost completely new part I. I am still unhappy about at least one aspect of the insolvency practitioner provision in that Bill, but it would be more appropriate to pursue that with the Department of Trade and Industry than with the Solicitor-General.

In the meantime, I am glad that the interim arrangements have been clarified by the amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 2, in page 3, line 45, at end insert—

';

Provided also that, until the coming into force of section 2 of the Insolvency Act 1985 (qualifications of insolvency practitioners), paragraph *(b)* above shall have effect as if at the end were added the words "or is not a fit and proper person to act as an interim trustee".'. — *[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 7

MEANING OF APPARENT INSOLVENCY

Mr. Millan: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 8, line 13, leave out from 'due' to end of line 27.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 4, 5, 6 and 7 and the following amendments: No. 8, in page 8, line 17, leave out '3' and insert '4'.

No. 9, in page 8, line 31, leave out '*(c)* or *(d)*' and insert 'or *(c)*'.

Mr. Millan: This amendment deals with a matter raised by the Scottish Consumer Council, unfortunately after the Committee stage of the Bill. The matter was not discussed in Committee, but, having considered it with Scottish Members, I believe that the Scottish Consumer Council has a valid point. It is worried about paragraph *(d)* of clause 7(1), and the first of my amendments would simply eliminate that paragraph. Amendment No. 8 would extend the period of notice from three to four weeks.

If the Government do not accept that we should reconsider this entire matter, I hope that they will at least accept that we should give a debtor a longer period of notice than three weeks. One week is a modest increase. I hope that the Solicitor-General will not tell me that a clause in the Insolvency Bill—I believe that it is clause 113—provides only three weeks' notice in cases of personal bankruptcy in England and Wales. On this matter there is no virtue in consistency, and it is wrong to have only three weeks in the English Bill. The period of notice should be longer than three weeks.

The merits of the matter rest on the procedure which allows a creditor simply to serve a notice—a demand for payment—on a debtor. If the debtor does not pay within three weeks, under the terms of the Bill, he will be treated as apparently insolvent. That brings in all the other provisions, including petitions for sequestration, provided in the Bill.

6 pm

That is a fairly stringent provision, because in other circumstances, before one can say that a debtor is apparently insolvent, other conditions have to be fulfilled, and they are outlined in the earlier part of the clause. In many cases they involve some sort of preliminary court action, but here there need be no court action at all; simply a notice in a prescribed form by a creditor to a debtor. If, on the basis of that, the debtor does not pay, the whole process of sequestration can follow.

I am not as worried about this situation as the Scottish Consumer Council appears to be, because in most circumstances the creditor would find the initiation of the whole procedure of sequestration an elaborate way of obtaining payment when, by taking appropriate court action, he could obtain payment of his debt in some other way. Thus the procedure would not be used frequently, certainly not by a creditor as a matter of course. Nevertheless, the Bill says that lodging a demand for payment and not being paid within three weeks is an indication of an apparent insolvency and everything else can follow from that. That worries me considerably.

It may be that part of the answer lies in the phrase "in the prescribed form". Perhaps the Solicitor-General can let us know what will be included in the prescribed form. Presumably, it will include a warning to the debtor about the dire consequences which may follow if he does not pay within three weeks. We do not know whether that is the case, because we have not seen the prescribed form and have not been given any indication of what might be in it.

Having looked at the provision, I am not at all convinced that it is necessary to have it in the Bill as one of the indications of an apparent insolvency. No creditor will be put to any disadvantage if we simply take it out. If a creditor goes through the courts and obtains a successful decree against the debtor, and the debtor does not pay, then, as I understand the rest of this clause, that by itself is sufficient for him to be able to petition for sequestration. I do not see why the creditor should not be able to go through the court. A simple solution to the problem would be to remove the paragraph altogether.

The second of my amendments, which would simply extend the period of notice from three to four weeks, is second best. It is not an appropriate way of amending the provision, but the very least we ought to do is to give rather more notice to the debtor. To be frank with the Solicitor-General, when I first looked at the representations of the Scottish Consumer Council I was a bit sceptical. However, having considered them more carefully, I consider that there are strong grounds for being concerned about this paragraph. As I say, I do not believe it will be used as frequently or in the sorts of circumstances about which the Scottish Consumer Council is anxious. The way to deal with those anxieties is to remove the paragraph, and that is the purpose of amendment No. 3.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Clause 7(1)*(d)* was introduced to provide a relatively uncomplicated means of access to the sequestration process where there is no dispute that a debt equal to or exceeding the relevant amount is payable. For that reason, it also provides a straightforward method for a debtor to avoid being prejudiced by the procedure. He can achieve that by a straightforward denial that a sum of £750 or more is payable. The provision is designed to cover situations where the debtor has not acknowledged that he has ceased to pay his debts but where he is, none the less, prepared to accept, if it is put to him, that he is unable to pay that debt. In those circumstances, it may be in his best interests to have his estate sequestrated.

The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that if the only way in which that can be done is by having the debt judicially constituted, that procedure involves additional expense. It is not a particularly large sum, but at a time when we are constantly trying to ensure that administrative costs are kept to a minimum, if the opportunity is given to the debtor in terms of a letter in a prescribed form and he does not deny the debt, it is a key-in to the sequestration procedure and obviates an unnecessary action for debt which could cost money.

Mr. Millan: The trouble with that argument is that whatever is in the prescribed form, and whatever is in the paragraph, there will be circumstances where the debtor does not understand the full significance of what is being said to him. Ordinary people understand that if they are taken to court it is a serious matter, but unfortunately quite a number of people get letters asking them to pay bills and pay little attention to them. That applies whether or not the letters are sent by recorded delivery, for which the amendment provides. Many debtors should be paying their

[Mr. Millan]

bills and perhaps are perfectly able to pay them, but they will not realise the full significance of this simply because it does not involve court action.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I understand the point made by the right hon. Gentleman, but he pre-empts the argument that he knows I am about to make. This is not just a little brown envelope coming through the door. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, when it comes in the prescribed form it will be by recorded delivery. He is correct in that we have not yet decided what the prescribed form will be, but it is expected that the form will spell out clearly that if the debt is in any way disputed a simple denial of the debt will be sufficient to stop a sequestration procedure.

The right hon. Gentleman and I could go on endlessly disputing whether the form could be set out in a style appropriate enough to make the point clear to every debtor who receives it. Recently we have had cause to be proud of the forms that we have set up, and the Scottish Consumer Council has complimented us in the last two years on a form which was provided.

Mr. Millan: The Solicitor-General for Scotland is positively smiling.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman says that I am positively smiling, and he is correct. Those compliments were in relation to the form prescribed for the simplified method of divorce. I recognise the anxieties of the right hon. Gentleman, but this provides a simple, cheap and desirable technique.

The right hon. Gentleman's first amendment seeks to exclude the paragraph altogether, but coupled with it are a number of Government amendments. As he may recall, he was concerned in Committee that a series of debts amounting to £750 might be prescribed as well as a single debt of not less than that amount, and this would entitle a creditor to use clause 7(1)*(d)*. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising that point and I hope that the Government amendments make the point clear. Amendment No. 5 provides that a demand under clause 7 must be served on the debtor by recorded delivery. That is to avoid the possibility of the debtor not being aware of the letter because he is on holiday, for example.

I deal finally with the right hon. Gentleman's amendment changing the period from three weeks to four weeks. With some perception, the right hon. Gentleman anticipated my argument. It is not just an illogical difference between English and Scottish personal bankruptcy provisions. Once again it is the difference in Scotland between personal bankruptcy and corporate insolvency procedures. The Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, as well as relating to individual insolvency, deals with the insolvency of such entities as partnerships and bodies corporate as well as registered companies. I see that as an anomaly, and accordingly there is no great value in the right hon. Gentleman's proposal.

More importantly, because we recognise that there must be some anxiety that too short a period might mean that inadvertently or without the knowledge of the debtor this procedure got under way, we inserted the provision that such a letter had to be served by recorded delivery. That seems to me to be a greater safeguard than three, four or even five weeks. It might be anticipated that ordinary people went on holiday for a fortnight, but there could be any one of a variety of reasons which took someone away from home for a longer period and simply having a letter popping through the letter box could create problems. Because we intend to require such a letter to be served by recorded delivery, I suggest to the right hon. Gentleman that the problem that he sees arising is better dealt with in that way than by moving the period from three weeks to four weeks.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman can enlighten me about one matter raised by the Scottish Consumer Council. The hon. and learned Gentleman spoke of the debt being accepted by the debtor or repudiated, in which case the procedure would follow. What happens if the debtor offers to pay in part? I gather from the council that that would not be acceptable—it has to be all or nothing.

Mr. Dewar: I share a good deal of the concern expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). He said, quite properly, that for most of us the starting point was the briefing from the Scottish Consumer Council. There is nothing wrong in that. It is one of the most valuable roles of informed groups, such as the council, that they alert hon. Members to matters giving rise to anxiety in lengthy, complicated and highly technical legislation. My attention having been drawn to it, I concluded that there was cause for the concern which the Scottish Consumer Council expressed, and that has not been removed by the Minister.

I accept that the Government amendment which says that the notice under clause 7(1)*(d)* has to be sent by recorded delivery is a useful minor improvement, but it seems to me to be a little bit of conscience money and does not strike at the heart of what was canvassed by the Scottish Consumer Council.

6.15 pm

We are dealing here with any sum of more than £750. Although that might once have been a large sum, it is no longer so. As the council points out, it might well cover a wide range of consumer debts, and it is below the summary cause limit, for example, which puts it in some perspective. Furniture or a motor car—even an elderly, decrepit secondhand one—will cross the mark, allowing the purchaser to fall within the procedure envisaged in the clause.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the argument that the simplest way would not be to improve with minor changes such as the introduction of recorded delivery letters but to excise the subsection from the Bill. The reason is one based upon the psychology of the people likely to be involved. I am especially unsympathetic to the argument of the Solicitor-General for Scotland that we could not, for example, extend the period to four weeks because that would take us out of line with similar provisions which apply to companies.

There is a world of difference between the approach of a company, even a small closed company, and that of the kind of person who might find himself in difficulty as a debtor under this provision. I accept that companies have to be on the same basis north and south of the border. It might be inconvenient if they were not, and company law has always been on a United Kingdom basis, but I see no reason why in Scotland we should not have a different approach to the individual debtor from that applied to a company.

Very often there are circumstances in which letters are winging out, many of them by recorded delivery no doubt, saying "Pay up, or else." There are people who are used to getting them and used to turning up at court, once they are summonsed, to minute their views on instalment payments or dissent. Even if a form is very carefully drafted, an enormous number of people who fortunately do not know what insolvency, liquidation or bankruptcy is will be asked to understand that they are about to be plunged into a legal process the consequences of which are very serious.

Sequestration means that assets are taken over by a trustee. The debtor has to reveal all sorts of information about his personal and financial affairs to the trustee administering his assets. If he continues to work, there are implications about paying a proportion of his income to the trustees. It is quite out of the ordinary and very different from the action for debt which may be pursued under a summary cause. It is a difference of degree, and I do not believe that even a form drafted with personal care by the Solicitor-General for Scotland is likely to ensure that people know exactly what is happening and what the significance may be.

I fear that in many cases a recorded delivery letter will be seen by the recipient as another attempt to recover money which he owes. He may not owe it, and he may not even realise the significance of having to dispute the debt at that stage. Thinking that he can deal with it as he would deal with a summary cause action for the normal form of recovering debt, he may find that he has given up the right to dispute the debt, and he is then on the slippery slope towards sequestration and in a difficult legal position with which he is not well qualified to deal.

The fact that the letter has to be sent in the prescribed form—I am not sure how it is prescribed—

Mr. Millan: By regulations.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. However carefully it is prescribed, we are in that difficult position. There is a point of principle here because, as the Scottish Consumer Council pointed out, we are initiating a sequestration without a court decree stating that the debt is owed. That is dangerous. If the Solicitor-General for Scotland received a letter saying, "We shall sequestrate you and an apparent insolvency will be established if you do not within the specified period write and deny the debt," I have no doubt that he would know what to do. After all, he is a man of the law. But I can think of constituents of mine who would not understand. In the unlikely event of this machinery being used, they would find themselves slipping into a very hazardous position.

The second line of argument which has been properly advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Govan is that it is unlikely in the event that this machinery will be used very often. If it is, the consequences could be unfortunate. However, an important point is that it is in no way illogical to argue that it is unnecessary to have this provision if it is unlikely to be used very often. There are all kinds of other ways in which a creditor could proceed against a debtor. It would in no way be a substantial infringement of the rights of a creditor to excise paragraph *(d)* from the Bill. It would remove the fears to which we have referred; fears which in a small number of cases could become very real.

In an earlier debate the Solicitor-General for Scotland referred to the fact that the Scottish Law Commission was carrying out a number of general reviews. One relates to the system of debt enforcement and diligence. If it decided to introduce changes which made the law of diligence in Scotland a little more humane and sensible, it would seem to be unwise to put paragraph *(d)* of clause 7(1) on the statute book. It might stand out as an unsatisfactory procedure which ran counter to the general reform which we hope will emerge from the lengthy review of the law of diligence which is being carried out by the Scottish Law Commission.

This provision would endanger individual liberties and might be misunderstood. Therefore, I urge the Solicitor-General for Scotland to accept the admirably clear amendment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan. There is nothing wrong with its drafting; it merely asks for this provision to be deleted. In no sense would it prejudice the creditor, and in a small number of important cases the debtor would be protected if this provision were removed from the Bill.

Mr. Millan: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that if this provision is left in the Bill, we shall ultimately regret it. Eventually it will have to be removed from the legislation. The arguments advanced by the Solicitor-General for Scotland were singularly unpersuasive. He made it sound as though it was for the good of the debtor that there should be a simplified procedure. He has completely misunderstood its effect. Recorded delivery is useful, but this paragraph means that the debtor is already under an obligation to give his denial by recorded delivery. It is astonishing that recorded delivery was never applied in the first instance to the demand. It puts the debtor on the same basis as the creditor in terms of recorded delivery.

The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) raised an interesting point on denial—that even an offer to pay is not a denial if the money is owing and that under this paragraph it has no effect. There may be many occasions when there is no dispute that the money is owed, although the debtor may have difficulty in paying the money within the stated time. But that does not help him. Unless he says that the money is not owed, sequestration will be enforced. If I were advising a constituent who received a recorded delivery letter, I would say that he ought to tell a lie and write back saying, "I deny that the money is immediately payable." That would afford protection under this clause. That is absurd, but it is his only protection. He does not have to demonstrate that the debt is not immediately payable; he merely has to say that it is not immediately payable, even if, when he says that, he knows that he is telling a lie. That cannot be right.

As for the parallel with companies, that again is absurd. A trading company employs solicitors, accountants and other professional advisers. The Solicitor-General for Scotland looks sceptical, but a company will certainly employ accountants, because there is a statutory obligation to have an audit. Solicitors would also have been involved, when the company was set up, to draw up the articles of association. A trading company presumably takes matters of this kind seriously and would understand the implications, whereas an individual debtor may not fully understand them.

In certain trades and businesses one finds that there are notoriously bad payers, in the sense that they do not pay their debts frequently. Farmers are a good example. Many perfectly reputable farmers who have been farming for

[Mr. Millan]

many years do not pay their debts within three weeks. However, if they do not pay their debts within three weeks their assets can be sequestrated. Either this paragraph will not be used, in which case it is unnecessary, or its use will mean that a number of farmers will suddenly find that their assets have been sequestrated. If their farms are in the constituencies of Conservative Members, this provision will have to be deleted. The Solicitor-General for Scotland smiles, but this is a serious point. If this provision were enforced against farmers, we would be unable to retain this provision in the law of Scotland.

This point was not raised in Committee. Most hon. Members did not understand its full import. My original scepticism about the point made by the Scottish Consumer Council has given way on my part, and on the part of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the right hon. Member for Western Isles, to real anxiety. I believe that if it should be used Ministers will regret having retained this paragraph.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I believe that this is a valuable way to constitute insolvency. I am at one with the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) in believing that this provision will be used infrequently. It will not frighten farmers or anybody else into paying their bills if they are insolvent. All one is doing is setting up an elaborate procedure for sequestration. If that is what one wants to do, the simplest way to set about it is to take action to have the debt judicially constituted.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that his constituents who might have small, outstanding debts would have recorded delivery letters suddenly popping through their letter boxes which would cause confusion. To that extent, it is important that there should be a lower limit of £750. Even in 1985 that is a very considerable sum of money to owe either to a group or to an individual, so the lower limit is important.

I would point out to the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) that if one was in this position one could not offer to pay the debt by instalments. Either the debt is owed, or it is not. That is the point that would be followed through if such an action were to be pursued, as the right hon. Member for Govan suggested that it should be pursued by taking it to the courts. A debtor might say, "I accept that I owe Mr. X £100, but I deny that I owe him £750." In that case, the process leading to sequestration would not be set in motion.

6.30 pm

We are introducing a novelty, but I do not share the anxieties expressed in the debate. Given our fruitful co-operation with the Scottish Consumer Council in the past, I hope that we shall be able to draw up a letter, in a prescribed form, leaving people in no doubt about what steps they should take if they accept that they owe a sum in excess of £750 or, if they deny that they owe the money, what steps they should take to avoid the prospect of sequestration.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 4, in page 8, line 14, after third 'of', insert

'(or debts the aggregate of which is)'.

No. 5, in page 8, line 15, after 'debtor', insert ', by recorded delivery,'.

No. 6, in page 8, line 16, after 'debt', insert '(or debts)'.

No. 7, in page 8, line 17, after 'its', insert '(or their)'. —*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 24

ELECTION OF PERMANENT TRUSTEE

Mr. Millan: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 25, line 17, at end insert—

'*(e)* a person who is an associate of the debtor'.

It seems strange that, now that we have in the Bill a definition of an associate, we should not, when dealing with those who are not eligible for election as a permanent trustee, exclude a person who is an associate of the debtor. It may seem obvious that such a person should not be appointed as a permanent trustee, but a number of other fairly obvious people who should not be so appointed, including the debtor himself, for example, are mentioned in the subsection.

I intend the amendment to improve the Bill. Indeed, that has been the aim of all my amendments, but the Solicitor-General for Scotland has not seen them in that light. I hope that he will accept this one.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have to disappoint the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). However, before he gets too gloomy, I should add that he may find that I am in a more favourable frame of mind later. I understand the reasoning behind the amendment, but I think that it is undesirable and unnecessary.

The amendment is undesirable because, having regard to the definition of an associate in new clause 2, it would prevent a person from acting as an insolvency practitioner in cases where there was no likelihood of any conflict of interest. That was the main reason why a similar provision was omitted from part I of the Insolvency Bill. The amendment would require persons who wished to be insolvency practitioners in a sequestration in Scotland to meet more stringent conditions than would be required in the case of a Scottish company liquidation or English bankruptcy proceedings.

The amendment is unnecessary because persons proposing to act as insolvency practitioners under this Bill will be subject to the provisions in part I of the Insolvency Bill when that part comes into operation. As a result of an amendment made to the Insolvency Bill on Report last Thursday, regulations will be able to be made

"prohibiting a person from acting as an insolvency practitioner in prescribed cases, being cases in which a conflict of interest will or may arise."

In the interim period, pending the commencement of part I of the Insolvency Bill, consideration will be given, in consultation with the professional bodies, to including in regulations as one of the prescribed requirements for a person being qualified to act as an insolvency practitioner a requirement which, in effect, would prevent him from acting where there is likely to be a conflict of interest.

I take it that the right hon. Gentleman is anxious to avoid such a conflict of interests. I hope that he will appreciate that, given the amendment that was made to the Insolvency Bill last week, his objection will be met.

Mr. Millan: I am not persuaded, but I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 31

VESTING OF ESTATE AT DATE OF SEQUESTRATION

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 33, line 3, after 'bankruptcy', insert

'or other similar orders in, or in connection with, bankruptcy proceedings'

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we may take Government amendment No. 12.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The purpose of the amendment is to put beyond doubt the fact that the trustee's act and warrant will be registered in the appropriate register in the part of the United Kingdom where the estate is studied and to ensure that acquisitions for value of the bankrupt's estate prior to the registration will not be prejudiced by it. This savings provision virtually re-enacts the provision at the end of section 97(3) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1913.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 12, in page 33, line 6, leave out 'to the same effect' and insert

', but any right or interest acquired for value before the registration or publication shall not be prejudiced by the effect of the act and warrant or by such registration or publication' —*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 33, line 20, leave out subsection (7).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendments Nos. 18 and 27.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The amendments are designed to meet a point raised by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) in Committee about the unfairness of the provisions that vest immixed funds of a debtor and spouse in the permanent trustee, even though most of them belong to the debtor's spouse, and then have the spouse to rank as a postponed creditor in respect of her share. The amendments delete those provisions and will mean that the ownership of such funds will be a matter of fact to be determined, in the event of an unresolved dispute, by the court. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Govan for raising the matter.

Mr. Millan: I am glad to acknowledge that the Solicitor-General for Scotland listened to my arguments in Committee and I am pleased that he has responded.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 32

VESTING OF ESTATE, AND DEALINGS OF DEBTOR, AFTER SEQUESTRATION

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 34, line 6, leave out from 'may' to 'shall' in line 9 and insert

', after having regard to all the circumstances, determine a suitable amount to allow for—

(a) alignment for the debtor; and

(b) the debtor's relevant obligations;

and if the debtor's income is in excess of the total amount so allowed the sheriff'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take Government amendments Nos. 15, 16, 21 and 22.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The amendments have as their common theme the need for consideration to be given in bankruptcy proceedings to the maintenance of the debtor and his family. Amendments Nos. 14 and 15 are intended to ensure that the court, when deciding the level of the income that should be left to him, will take account of the debtor's need to maintain himself and his family, including any spouse or former spouse and children even though they are not living with him.

The amendments to clause 35 provide that in considering whether to recall an order awarding a capital payment or a transfer of property on divorce, the court must consider all the circumstances, and in particular the financial circumstances of the person from whom the payment or property would be recovered in the event of recall of the order.

The purpose of amendment No. 16 is to make it clear that any creditor, even an alimentary creditor, whose debt would be discharged in the sequestration by virtue of clause 54 should not be able to do diligence in respect of that debt against any income vesting in the debtor after the date of his sequestration. As drafted, clause 32(4) does not prevent alimentary creditors, who can claim in the sequestration—and whose claim would be discharged by virtue of clause 54—from, as it were, "coming out" of the sequestration and doing diligence directly against the debtor's post-sequestration income. That would be an unfortunate result. The amendment prevents it from taking place.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 34, line 10, at end insert—

'(2A) The debtor's relevant obligations referred to in paragraph *(b)* of subsection (2) above are—

(a) any obligation of aliment owned by him ("obligation of aliment" having the same meaning as in the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985);

(b) any obligation of his to make a periodical allowance to a former spouse;

but any amount allowed under that subsection for the relevant obligations need not be sufficient for compliance with a subsisting order or agreement as regards such aliment or periodical allowance.'.

No. 16, in page 34, line 15, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

'(4) Diligence in respect of a debt or obligation of which the debtor would be discharged under section 54 of this Act were he discharged under section 53 thereof shall not be competent against income vesting in him under subsection (1) above.'.— *[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move manuscript amendment No. 75, in page 35, line 14, leave out from "dealing" to "is" in line 16.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take amendment No. 17, in page 35, line 14, leave out "before" and insert

'within a period of 3 months commencing on'.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Following the tabling of amendment No. 17 by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), we have given further consideration to the period after the date of sequestration within which certain transactions between a debtor and a third party would be protected.

The hon. Member for Garscadden is probably aware that the Scottish Law Commission gives no reason for its

[The Solicitor-General for Scotland]

view in paragraph 11.38 of its report that the protection for such dealings, which at present is unlimited, should continue only until the date of publication of the award of sequestration in the *Edinburgh Gazette*. It would appear, however, that it might have been influenced by the thought that publication in the *Edinburgh Gazette* should be taken as notice to the world of sequestration. That is not correct either as a matter of fact or of law.

We have accordingly concluded that there should be no time limit upon the protection afforded to such dealings and I have tabled a manuscript amendment to this effect. This would appear to be preferable to the amendment extending the period for three months because it is equally arbitrary to have a three-month period as to have the period as at present specified in the Bill.

I appreciate, of course, the argument that it is important to avoid any fraudulent misuse of this period to the detriment of the creditors, but having looked carefully at the provision, I am convinced that the safeguards contained in it are more than adequate. Certainly section 107 of the 1913 Act which is similar in many ways to what we are now proposing has not, to my knowledge, caused any difficulty in the 72 years that it has been operating.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Garscadden and I hope that he thinks that the Government amendment is desirable. I suspect that he chose the three-month period because he did not believe that he would be successful in achieving any time limit.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister is partly correct. I am grateful to him for tabling his manuscript amendment which goes further than my amendment. I enjoyed his modest knocking of the *Edinburgh Gazette* and its role in the world. I do not know who edits that august publication, but the Solicitor-General's view was probably realistic.

I agree that any period of protection would be arbitrary and that it is better to remove the restriction and to leave protection to be dealt with by clause 32(8)*(b)* which states "the person dealing with the debtor was. . . unaware of the sequestration and had. . . no reason to believe that the debtor's estate had been sequestrated or was the subject of sequestration proceedings."

That means that in a bona fide case the person will be completely protected. That is a sensible approach which has worked well for many years under the law of Scotland. It is a good amendment, even if it had to be scrawled in quill pen at the last moment by one of the Solicitor-General for Scotland's aides.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 33

LIMITATIONS ON VESTING

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 35, line 39 leave out 'other than such money as is mentioned in section 31(7) of this Act'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 34

GRATUITOUS ALIENATIONS

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 37, line 6 leave out from 'that' to second 'or' in line 7 and insert

'immediately, or at any other time, after the alienation the debtor's assets were greater than his liabilities.'.

The amendment makes it clear what is meant by absolute solvency. It is in line with existing case law based on the Bankruptcy Act 1621, which this Bill replaces.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 35

RECALLING OF ORDER FOR PAYMENT OF CAPITAL SUM ON DIVORCE

Amendments made: No. 21, in page 38, line 20 leave out

', after having regard to all the circumstances of the case.'

No. 22, in page 38, line 27 at end insert—

'; Provided that before making an order under this subsection the court shall have regard to all the circumstances including, without prejudice to the generality of this proviso, the financial, and other, circumstances (in so far as made known to the court) of the person against whom the order would be made.' —*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 38

TAKING POSSESSION OF ESTATE BY PERMANENT TRUSTEE

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 42, line 5 after 'Act.', insert

'and subject to section *[Power of permanent trustee in relation to the debtor's family home]* of this Act.' —*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 39

MANAGEMENT AND REALISATION OF ESTATE

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move manuscript amendment No. 76, in page 42, line 34, leave out "subsections (6) and (7)" and insert "subsection (6)"

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss Government amendments Nos. 24 and 33.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The manuscript amendment is consequential on amendment No. 24 and comes immediately before it.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the amendment is only technical, but we do not have a copy of it. Perhaps the Solicitor-General for Scotland will explain it. I understand from the noises behind me that no one else has seen it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps the Solicitor-General for Scotland will help the House by explaining a little further.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I had hoped to move quickly since there is nothing mysterious about the amendment, which reads

"page 42, line 34, leave out 'subsections (6) and (7)' and insert 'subsection (6)'."

I am sure that the hon. Member for Garscadden agrees that the amendment is desirable and necessary.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 44, line 5, leave out subsection (7).—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 40

PROTECTION OF RIGHTS OF SPOUSE AGAINST ARRANGEMENTS INTENDED TO DEFEAT THEM

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 45, line 16, after 'Act', insert

'as amended by the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1985'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss Government amendment No. 26.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: These are drafting amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 26, in page 45, line 18, leave out 'that Act' and insert 'the said Act of 1981'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 50

ORDER OF PRIORITY IN DISTRIBUTION

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 53, line 9, leave out 'or a spouse's right to money vesting in the permanent trustee by virtue of section 31(7) of this Act'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 53

AUTOMATIC DISCHARGE AFTER 3 YEARS

Amendment made: No. 28, in page 58, line 30, leave out 'above'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 66

GENERAL OFFENCES BY DEBTOR ETC

6.45 pm

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 66, line 38, at end insert 'or any individual creditor'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss Government manuscript amendments Nos. 73 and 74.

Mr. Dewar: Fortunately, the amendments need not detain us long because the Solicitor-General for Scotland has decided to fall into line with admirable advice that he has been given and table more skilfully drafted amendments which have the same effect. Clause 66(7) states:

"A debtor who is engaged in trade or business shall be guilty of an offence if . . . he pledges or disposes of . . . any property which he has obtained on credit and has not paid for unless he shows that he did not intend to prejudice his creditors."

It is suggested that a car might be bought on hire purchase and that the debtor might sell that car and use the proceeds to satisfy some of his creditors. He would not act in any sense to their prejudice, but would specifically prejudice the hire purchase company which would lose the car and the security which it represents.

The amendment makes it clear that the phrase "prejudice his creditors" covers the prejudice of any individual creditor. The Minister proposes a different solution in his manuscript amendment No. 74, which includes the words

"references to intent to prejudice creditors shall include references to intent to prejudice an individual creditor."

That is more elegant, but it has the same intent and I am pleased with it.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The purpose of the amendment is to prevent a debtor who has unlawfully disposed of goods on hire purchase from claiming that the disposal, far from prejudicing the general body of creditors, has benefited them at the expense of the unfortunate creditor involved in the hire purchase agreement.

Such a case is unlikely to arise frequently, but I accept that it is not beyond the bounds of possibility. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for tabling his amendment. However, acceptance of the amendment in its present form might permit the debtor to establish a defence if he shows either that he did not intend to prejudice the general body of creditors or that he did not intend to prejudice any one of them.

My amendment makes it clear that the debtor must establish that he intended to prejudice neither the general body of the creditors nor any one of them. A similar point might also arise in connection with clause 66(2) and 66(6). The manuscript amendments cover those sections.

Mr. Dewar: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 73, in page 67, line 31, after 'section' insert '*(a)*'.

No. 74, in page 67, line 33, at end insert—

'*(b)* references to intent to prejudice creditors shall include references to intent to prejudice an individual creditor.'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 72

INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 70, line 15, leave out

'means such person as may be prescribed'

and insert

'shall be construed in accordance with section *[Meaning of "associate"]* of this Act;'.

No. 31, in page 71, line 7, at end insert

'being, in accordance with section 2 of the Insolvency Act 1985 (qualifications of insolvency practitioners), so qualified:

Provided that, until the coming into force of that section, the expression shall instead mean'.

No. 32, in page 71, line 45, at end insert—

'(5) Any reference in this Act to an enactment relating to the limitation of actions shall not include any such enactment which implements or gives effect to any international agreement or obligation.'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 73

AMENDMENTS, REPEALS AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 33, in page 73, line 10, at end insert—

'(6A) Where a debtor whose estate is sequestrated after the commencement of this subsection is liable, by virtue of a transaction entered into before that date, to pay royalties or a share of the profits to any person in respect of any copyright or interest in copyright comprised in the sequestrated estate, section 102 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1913 (trustee's powers in relation to copyright) shall apply in relation to the permanent trustee as it applied before its repeal in relation to a trustee in bankruptcy under the said Act of 1913.'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 34, in page 73, line 24, at end insert—

'( ) Unless the context otherwise requires, any reference in any enactment or document to a person's estate being sequestrated under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1913 shall be construed as, or as including, a reference to its being sequestrated under this Act; and analogous references shall be construed accordingly.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Government amendments No. 48 and 52.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: These are purely drafting amendments.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 3

PREFERRED DEBTS

Mr. Millan: I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 79, line 12, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we shall discuss Government amendments Nos. 36 to 38, and the following amendments: No. 39, in page 79, line 29, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 40, in page 79, line 38, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 41, in page 79, line 43, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

Government amendments Nos. 43 and 44.

Mr. Millan: The amendment deals with the question of preferred debts. I intend to say little about this, not because the matter is not of considerable importance—it is one of the most important matters in the Bill—but because we dealt with it in Committee and again on the Report stage of the Insolvency Bill last Thursday.

Whatever the quality of the arguments that I put forward, the Solicitor-General will simply say that we must be consistent with the Insolvency Bill and that he cannot accept my amendments. I want to put on record that I am glad that the Government have accepted their defeat on VAT and reduced the preference from 12 to six months. I shall not embarrass the hon. and learned Gentleman by quoting back at him some of the things that he said in Committee about VAT and PAYE. However, it is not logical that the Government have accepted the reduction in preference on VAT from 12 to six months, yet are not willing to accept the reduction in preference on PAYE and national insurance contributions—which would be the effect of my amendment. I know that the Government will not accept it because they turned down a similar amendment on the Report stage of the Insolvency Bill.

It is a pity that, having given way more or less gracefully on VAT, the Government have not accepted the logic of the matter and reduced the preference on PAYE. I do not hold out any hope that there will be a conversion at this late stage, unless the Solicitor-General takes a bold step and says, "I do not care what happened with the Insolvency Bill, this is such a powerful argument that I shall accept it." On past behaviour, I do not think that he will do that.

I simply record my disappointment that the Government have not accepted the logic of the position and reduced preference in a way that ultimately will be to the benefit of small firms, which are the ordinary creditors. For a Government who are anxious to say how much they support small firms and want to help them in every possible way to deny themselves the opportunity to give them help by reducing Government preference in bankruptcy is, to say the least, unfortunate.

I wish to place on record that I have been consistently trying to reduce the ravages of Government in bankruptcies in favour of small firms and ordinary creditors.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I would have been quite happy if the right hon. Gentleman had referred to what I had to say; I doubt whether anyone else would have been at this stage.

The purpose of the Government amendments is two-fold. First, they reduce the preference period for VAT debts to six months, bringing the Bill into line—as the right hon. Gentleman appreciates—with the Insolvency Bill. Secondly, they clarify the six months period relating to VAT charged on supply of goods and services made prior to the date of sequestration, even though, because of the VAT accounting arrangements, payment need not at that time have been made to Customs and Excise. A similar clarificatory amendment has been inserted in the Insolvency Bill.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, during the course of the two Bills at various stages, and in another place, the matter of Crown preference was discussed exhaustively. A position has been adopted in the Insolvency Bill, and it appears that, at this stage, there is little purpose in pursuing the matter further.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 79, line 23, leave out from beginning to 'the' in line 24 and insert 'is referable to'.

No. 37, in page 79, line 24, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 38, in page 79, leave out lines 25 and 26 and insert 'the relevant date'.

No. 42, in page 80, line 30, at end insert—

'5A. So much of any amount which—

(a) is ordered, whether before or after the relevant date, to be paid by the debtor under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985; and

(b) is so ordered in respect of a default made by the debtor before that date in the discharge of his obligations under that Act,

as does not exceed such amount as may be prescribed.'

No. 43, in page 80, line 41, leave out

'in respect of which any value added tax is due'

and insert

'to which any value added tax is attributable'.

No. 44, in page 81, line 1, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'six'.

No. 45, in page 82, line 13, leave out

'(5) Regulations under paragraph 5'

and insert—

'Transitional Provisions

9. Regulations under paragraph 5 or 5A'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Schedule 5

VOLUNTARY TRUST DEEDS FOR CREDITORS

Mr. Millan: I beg to move amendment No. 46, in page 88, line 34, at end insert—

'7A. In the case of a trust deed to which paragraphs 6 and 7 of this Schedule apply, the trustee shall, not later than 28 days after final distribution to creditors of the estate which falls to be distributed under the trust deed registered under paragraph 5(D) of this Schedule, send to the accountant in bankruptcy a certificate that the estate has been distributed in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed together with a statement in the prescribed form as to the realisation of the estate and its distribution.

7B(1) Where a trustee under a trust deed to which paragraphs 6 and 7 of this Schedule apply has, in terms of that trust deed, obtained a discharge from the acceding creditors and from the debtor, he may give notice of his discharge to each qualified creditor who has not acceded to the trust deed.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraphs (3) and (4) below, where notice has been given in terms of sub-paragraph (1) above then the creditors who did not accede to the trust deed shall be deemed to be parties to the discharge of the trustee.

(3) A qualified creditor who has not acceded to the trust deed may within 28 days of the date of the notice given in terms of sub-paragraph (1) above apply to the court for an order setting aside his deemed participation in the discharge of the trustee.

(4) The court shall make such an order if, but only if, it is satisfied that the conduct of the trustee has been such as to preclude a deemed discharge from the creditor concerned.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we will discuss Government amendment No. 47.

Mr. Millan: I shall not spend a great deal of time discussing this amendment. It deals with a matter that I raised in Committee. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland drew attention to the fact that schedule 5 did not contain a provision for the discharge of the trustee in dealing with the voluntary trust deeds for creditors. I tabled the amendment to try to deal with that position. The Government's amendment is, no doubt, better drafted and I shall be happy to see it adopted.

I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for responding to the point that I made in Committee.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As the right hon. Gentleman indicated, there is no substantial difference between the two amendments. The Government amendment covers one or two minor points of detail not covered by the right hon. Gentleman's amendment. On that basis, and that basis alone, I ask the House to accept our amendment.

Mr. Millan: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 47, in page 88, line 36, at end insert—

'9. Where the trustee under a protected trust deed has made the final distribution of the estate among the creditors, he shall, not more than 28 days after the final distribution, send to the Accountant in Bankruptcy for registration in the register of insolvencies—

(a) a statement in the prescribed form indicating how the estate was realised and distributed; and

(b) a certificate to the effect that the distribution was in accordance with the trust deed.

10. Where the trustee under a protected trust deed has obtained a discharge from the creditors who have acceded to the trust deed he shall forthwith give notice of the discharge—

(a) by sending the notice by recorded delivery to every creditor known to him who has not acceded to the trust deed; and

(b) by sending the notice to the Accountant in Bankruptcy who shall register the fact of the discharge in the register of insolvencies,

and, except where the court makes an order under paragraph 12 below, the sending of such notice to a creditor who has not acceded to the trust deed shall be effective to make the discharge binding upon that creditor.

Creditors not acceding to protected trust deed

11. A creditor who has not acceded to a protected trust deed may, not more than 28 days after notice has been sent under paragraph 10 above, apply to the court for an order under paragraph 12 below.

12. Where, on an application by a creditor under paragraph 11 above, the court is satisfied (on grounds other than those on which a petition under paragraph 7(1)*(b)* above was or could have been presented by that creditor) that the intromissions of the trustee under the proteced trust deed with the estate of the debtor have been so unduly prejudicial to that creditor's claim that he should not be bound by the discharge it may order that he shall not be so bound.

13. Where the court makes an order under paragraph 12 above, the clerk of court shall send a copy of the order to—

(a) the trustee; and

(b) the Accountant in Bankruptcy who shall register the copy of the order in the register of insolvencies.' *[The Solicitor General for Scotland.]*

Schedule 7

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS AND RE-ENACTMENTS

Amendments made: No. 48, in page 94, line 12, at end insert—

'*The Conveyancing and Feudal Reform (Scotland) Act 1970 (c. 35)*

In paragraph 9(2)*(b)* of Schedule 3 ("insolvent" for purposes of standard condition as to default); for the words "163 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1913" there shall be substituted the words "11A of the Judicial Factors (Scotland) Act 1889".'

No. 49, in page 94, line 46, leave out '22' and insert '26'.

No. 50, in page 95, line 13, leave out '22' and insert '26'.

No. 51, in page 95, line 18, leave out 'and' and insert

'(1A) in paragraph 2(2) for the words "in a case where the relevant event took place on or after the day of the passing of the Social Security Act 1985" there were substituted the words "in any other case", and'.

No. 52, in page 96, line 20, at end insert

'*The Value Added Tax Act 1983 (c. 55)*

In section 22(4)*(a)*(ii) ("insolvency" for purposes of refund of tax in cases of bad debts), for the words "163 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1913" there shall be substituted the words "11A of the Judicial Factors (Scotland) Act 1889".'

No. 53, in page 97, line 2, after 'applies', insert

'and

(a) the winding up of a company has commenced,'.

No. 54, in page 97, line 3, leave out 'a' and insert 'the'.

No. 55, in page 97, line 4, leave out '*(a)*' and insert '(i)'.

No. 56, in page 97, line 5, after 'the' insert 'date of such'.

No. 57, in page 97, line 6, leave out

'of the winding up of the company'.

No. 58, in page 97, line 7, leave out '*(b)*' and insert '(ii)'.

No. 59, in page 97, line 7, at end insert

'.

(b) an administration order is in force in relation to a company, an alienation by the company is challengeable by the administrator.'.

No. 60, in page 97, line 15, leave out from '*(b)*', to 'the' in line 17.

No. 61, in page 97, line 18, leave out '*(c)*' and insert '*(b)*'.

No. 62, in page 97, line 26, leave out 'the commencement of' and insert

'the date on which—

(i)'.

No. 63, in page 97, line 27, after 'company', insert

'commences; or

(ii) as the case may be, the administration order is made'.

No. 64, in page 97, line 29, leave out 'commencement' and insert 'date'.

No. 65, in page 97, line 30, after '(4)', insert 'to'.

No. 66, in page 97, line 38, after 'liquidator', insert 'and, after the coming into force of Chapter III of Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985, an administrator appointed thereunder'.

No. 67, in page 97, line 38, at end insert—

'(5) In subsections (1) to (3) above, any reference to an administrator or to an administration order—

(a) shall be construed in accordance with Chapter III of Part II of the Insolvency Act 1985; and

(b) shall be of no effect until the coming into force of that Chapter.

(6) This section extends to Scotland only.'.

[Mr. Millan]

No. 68, in page 97, line 39, leave out

'In the winding up of a company registered in Scotland'.

No. 69, in page 97, line 41 leave out from 'preferences)' to end of line 19 on page 98 and insert

'applies for the purposes of this Act as it applies for the purposes of that Act but as if—

(a) for any reference to a debtor there is substituted a reference to a company;

(b) in subsection (1), for paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* there are substituted the words "the commencement of the winding up of the company or the making of an administration order in relation to the company.";

(c) in subsection (4) for paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* there are substituted the following paragraphs—

"*(a)* in the case of a winding up—

(i) any creditor who is a creditor by virtue of a debt incurred on or before the date of commencement of the winding up; or

(ii) the liquidator; and

(b) in the case of an administration order, the administrator.";

(d) in subsection (6), for the words from the beginning to "1889" there are substituted the words "A liquidator and an administrator"; and

(e) for subsection (7) there is substituted the following subsection—

"(7) This section shall be construed as one with Part XX of the Companies Act 1985; and subsection (5) of section 615A of that Act shall apply in relation to the foregoing provisions of this section as it applies in relation to subsections (4) to (3) of that section.".

(2) This section applies to Scotland only.'. — *[The Solicitor-General for Scotland]*

Schedule 8

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 70, in page 102, line 13, column 3 at beginning insert 'In'.

No. 71, in page 102, line 19, column 3 at beginning insert 'In'.

No. 72, in page 102, line 58, at end insert—

'1985 c. 17.	The Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985.		In section 13, the word " — *(a)*"; the words from "or, *(b)*" to "estate,"; the word " — (i)"; and the words from 'or, (ii)" to "1913,".'.

6.59 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have made some significant changes to the Bill during its passage, and I am grateful to the many professional bodies for their assistance.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Yorkshire Water Authority Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill has been in embryonic form for a number of years. The works proposed in the measure would alleviate flooding from the River Foss, which occurs at its confluence with the River Ouse close to the city centre of York. The River Foss is a left-bank tributary of the River Ouse, joining it some 1,100 m downstream of Lendal bridge.

Flooding from the River Foss is linked directly with flood levels in the River Ouse. The River Foss has been canalised, and within its urban reaches has sufficient capacity to pass one in 100 year flood flows. However, with high levels in the River Ouse, water simply backs up the River Foss.

A similar and related problem occurs with the Tang Hall and Osbaldwick Beck, which, until the late 18th century, were tributaries to the River Foss, but which are now in culvert to the River Ouse, with high level overflows to the Foss.

In recent years, serious flooding has occurred in York — in 1968, 1978 and 1982 — the flooding in January 1982 being the worst since 1947 and having an estimated return period of 80 years. In the January 1982 floods, 78 domestic properties and 64 industrial and commercial premises were inundated for two or three days. As a result of cleaning-up operations, day-to-day commercial and domestic routines were affected for considerably longer than that. I recall the great concern of my constituents for months, indeed years, after that flooding, and the special help of the lord mayor of York's alleviation plan to assist individual constituents.

Traffic in the flooded area was totally disrupted and, as the floods affected the inner ring road, the effects of the disruption were felt over a much wider area. Inevitably, the flooding severely limited the deployment of the services used in the emergency and diverted them from their normal duties. Those services were stretched to their limit.

The feasibility study which the Yorkshire water authority commissioned following the 1982 floods recommended, as the preferred solution, the construction of a flood barrier in the River Foss, with a pump station. It has the merit that because the Foss level can be controlled by pumping the run-off from the Foss catchment while the barrier is closed, the operation of the storm sewer and beck overflows will not be inhibited by high River Foss levels, as they would have been under the alternative proposals which were then considered. The estimated cost of the recommended solution was also the lowest of those investigated.

The feasibility study reported that the proposed barrier should be sited downstream of the Castle Mills bridge so that no modification of existing upstream defences would be necessary, and gave as the recommended gate location a position immediately upstream of Blue bridge. It further stated that the most appropriate type of barrier would be a turn-over lift gate, its detailed appearance being subject to approval by York city council as the planning authority.

As for the pumping station, the feasibility study mentioned that a substantial building would be required if conventional axial flow vertically-mounted land drainage pumps were used and that an underground pumping station would, therefore, be preferable. While giving details of such an arrangement of an underground pumping station midway between Blue bridge and Castle Mills bridge, the feasibility study stated:

"the layout and location of this station remain flexible at present being the subject of both technical and planning considerations."

Hon. Members will understand if, at this point in my remarks, I slake my thirst with some Yorkshire water authority produce.

In addition to the barrier and pumping station, the Bill provides for a number of necessary additional works. These are a flood protection wall and access road, works Nos. 3 and 4, running north from the pumping station; a new control structure with sluice gate, work No. 5, in substitution for the existing control structure at Castle Mills lock; a new pipe, work No. 6, in substitution for an existing pipe to take waters in that pipe above the barrier; the raising of Tower street, work No. 7; and a new car park access and adjacent flood wall, works Nos. 8 and 9, on St. George's field.

The principal reason why Yorkshire water authority cannot rely on existing general powers to implement the scheme is that it involves interference with navigation. No general powers are available for this purpose and, accordingly, it is necessary in each case to obtain the requisite powers by way of private legislation. Recent examples are the Severn-Trent Water Authority Act 1983 in respect of flood prevention in the valley of the River Soar, and the Southern Water Authority Act 1982, which was for a new control structure with lock gates on the River Rother.

In addition, water authorities' general powers are insufficient or of doubtful application in a number of detailed respects. The necessary powers proposed in the Bill for the management and operation of the barrier and pumping station are an example, general powers not being available for the purpose. Also, with a scheme of this nature, the inclusion of all necessary powers in one Bill overcomes any difficulties that may be encountered in the interaction of the authority's several different general powers and can result in a considerable saving in time and expense in implementing a scheme.

Early in 1985 a number of local residents voiced objections concerning the environmental impact of the proposed works, particularly in respect of the effect on the Georgian riverside promenade known as New Walk terrace, and it became apparent that there was genuine concern over that. In the light of the objections then raised, I organised a public local meeting. Because of the views then expressed, the water authority has agreed to propose amendments in Committee to provide for the proposed barrier and pumping station to be relocated within the limits of the deviation for those works and away from New Walk.

It is understood that the proposed modifications meet the objections that have been raised, and the water authority has now applied and obtained planning permission for the revised scheme. As proposed to be modified, the scheme remains consistent with the recommendations of the feasibility study commissioned by the water authority.

The miscellaneous general powers that are proposed are contained in part IV of the Bill. The majority of these reflect powers conferred on other water authorities in recent years by local Acts, and this part of the Bill in particular was the subject of detailed prior consultation with the relevant Government Departments.

Parts I, II, IV and V concern the flood relief scheme, and I shall outline the principal provisions. Part II contains the necessary powers for land acquisition, and these provisions are, in the main, well precedented. Clause 14 contains the description of the works to be authorised, with powers for ancillary works contained in clause 15, and a general power in clause 16 to deviate within the limits shown on the plans.

Clause 17 provides for alterations in paths likely to be affected, and clauses 18 to 20 contain the common additional provisions regarding interference with highways generally. Clauses 21 to 27 provide various necessary powers for operations in and the control of the rivers affected and, again, are closely based on precedent, the power to give directions under clause 24 to vessels being modelled on similar provisions conferred on harbour authorities.

Clause 28 ensures that the specific powers are without prejudice to the application of the authority's general powers, and that is a common provision in measures of this character. Clauses 29 to 33 provide for the manner in which the barrier, pumping station and sluice gate may be operated, and provide penalties for interference with them. The restrictions upon the use of the barrier and pumping station are necessary in the interests of navigation.

Clause 34 provides, as necessary, that restrictions contained in existing local legislation affecting the Rivers Ouse and Foss do not operate to prevent the application of the powers in the Bill.

Part V contains general and administrative provisions including, in clause 47, the requisite adaptation of the Land Drainage Act 1976 to enable central Government grants to be available and the limitation, in clause 50, of the deemed planning permission available under the general development order. Clause 50 and a number of other clauses bearing on the city council's functions are likely to be subject to restrictive amendments to be agreed with the council in due course. Amendments to effect the proposed alteration of works are required to a number of clauses, and most notably clause 14, in which the description of work needs to be modified to accord with the revised scheme. In addition, the revised scheme calls for restrictive limits of deviation for the altered works, the deletion of references to the towing path on the east bank of the River Ouse and to New Walk in clause 17 and the omission of most other references to the River Ouse, which, in the main, will no longer be affected. All the requisite amendments for the revised scheme will be proposed by the promoters in Committee.

The miscellaneous clauses are contained in part IV and have been the subject of prior consultation with relevant Departments, especially the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment and the Lord Chancellor's Department.

I shall refer to Calderdale and its sewage works. The instruction in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) is as follows:

"After Second Reading of the Yorkshire Water Authority Bill, to move, That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill to amend Clause 36 to require the Promoters to provide and

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

maintain a sludge main which will take out of Calderdale the sludge now tipped, treated or dried at the Lowfields site and at the Press House at North Dean."

It is apparent from the steps that I have outlined and from the letters to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax that the authority is committed to solving the problem of odour and fly nuisance from its sewage works at North Dean and Lowfields as a matter of urgency. In the short term, the authority is treating the sludge at the North Dean works with lime to reduce smells and has found an alternative site to Lowfields to which the sludge can be taken. A planning application has been submitted for this site. It is a remote and disused reservoir named Coldacre, which could quickly be brought into use once permission is given.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that a planning application has been submitted. What is his estimate of the likelihood of that application being approved? I represent an adjoining constituency which would be affected by the application, if granted. It is my understanding that the chances of its being granted are nil.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I cannot presume upon the planning decisions of local authorities. I was seeking to deal with the principle behind the instruction of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax. If the hon. Gentleman bears with me for a little longer, I may be able to throw some more light on the issue.

If planning permission is refused, further attempts will be made to find an alternative site. Given the topography of Calderdale, that may be difficult.

The proposed instruction is mandatory and would require clause 36 to be amended to oblige the authority to make a pipeline to take the sludge out of Calderdale. The instruction does not state where the sludge main is to go and, in the absence of an alternative site being available, this presents a difficulty. Some of the sludge might not be capable of being transported by a sludge main. Apart from these practical difficulties, and the absence of available finance to implement the instruction, the passage of the instruction would pre-empt the studies that are now being undertaken by the Yorkshire water authority and would preclude the adoption of the best solution identified by those studies.

The passage of the instruction would present the water authority with real difficulties in continuing the promotion of the Bill. If the authority——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that the instruction is out of order and that he must not go into detail.

Mr. Gregory: I shall not talk further about the instruction, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appeal to your kindness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that if necessary I can respond to any hon. Members who subsequently direct their remarks to the instruction.

I have set out the basis of the Bill, and it remains to be said that the people of York have been waiting for decades for such a measure and have suffered quite considerably in the process. I hope that the Bill will have the support of the House.

7.16 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): The Bill does not relate solely to flood prevention in York, as it contains a variety of wide-ranging general powers which the Yorkshire water authority is seeking from Parliament.

My original concern stemmed from these accretions to the already extensive powers of the authority. However, I was persuaded eventually that the powers were largely necessary and that there was considerable precedent for them.

The Bill is presented at a time when there are sewage disposal and treatment problems in the Halifax area and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson). The Calderdale area is served by a complex of sewage works at Salterhebble, Copley and North Dean. These extensive developments are in close proximity to residential property and the odour nuisance has been to varying degrees a problem in the area for decades.

When the problems came to the fore in the mid-1970s the odours were attributed to the manufacture of humus-based products. A series of measures was taken to mask the odours such as the spraying of scented chemicals. However, that did not overcome the problem. The production of the humus was then discontinued, but that did not result in a significant reduction or elimination of the odours.

The smells have continued and they are more than the slightly earthy smells which one would usually associate with any sewage treatment operation. The difficulties that arose in 1983 were exacerbated by the decision of the water authority to compost in the area the sludge which is the end product of the treatment process. A pressed cake is produced at the press house at the North Dean works. This is currently transferred for composting to another site at Lowfields, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley. This gives rise to further foul odours and considerable problems of fly infestation in an area which is very near to residential areas.

Over the years the water authority has sought to reduce the odours by a variety of measures, and principally by the installation of new machinery for the addition of lime to the sludge. However, smells continue.

There have been further plans, which I hope will be implemented shortly, to introduce an oxygen injection process at the Copley plant. This may help, but no one can be sure that it will solve the problem. As a result of this history of very serious problems which have continued for a long time, and which have been of great concern to my constituents and those of my hon. Friends, my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley and I decided that our constituents had suffered from these problems for too long. I therefore added to the Bill an instruction which would mean taking sludge from the area of Calderdale. I hope that it is appropriate to explain the reasoning behind it, although the instruction is out of order.

The objective is to take the sludge by a sludge main to a more appropriate location where the sludge can be properly treated. The Yorkshire water authority's powers in respect of sludge mains are set out fully in clause 36. After detailed discussion with the authority, I accept that the process of removing sludge from the area by means of a sludge main is only one of the options available for dealing with a serious sewerage problem. The options

include an entirely new processing method and covering in parts of the sewage works. These options could be more effective. It seems reasonable to allow the water authority to consider the various options and details and produce a strategy for dealing with the problem.

What is vitally important is that my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley know that the studies will be completed in a relatively short time and that the solution will be implemented on a priority basis. They cannot be expected to suffer for a further few more decades as they have suffered in the past.

Accordingly, on 17 June, the deputy chairman of the Yorkshire water authority, Mr. J. P. Coverdale, who has been extremely helpful to me and to my hon. Friends throughout the discussions, wrote to me. His letter is headed:

"Calderdale Sewage Disposal Strategy including Halifax and Lowfields."

It says:

"The Authority recognises that a long-term solution to the problem of odours and fly nuisance from its sewage works in the Calder Valley must be found urgently and is now preparing a sludge strategy and carrying out local studies of sewage works in the Calder Valley which will be completed within 12 months.

Immediately after completion the preferred solutions will be considered by the Authority and implemented on a priority basis as soon as reasonably practicable."

It is important that these points are recorded. On that basis, one would hope that future officials of the Yorkshire water authority would not be able to gainsay what are regarded by me and my constituents as binding commitments on the part of the authority — commitments that a way will be found to solve the problem, that the solution will be implemented quickly and that we in Halifax and Calder Valley can look forward confidently to the removal of this nuisance.

It has never been my intention to impede flood prevention work in York, although some, for their own devious reasons, have sought to distort and misrepresent the situation. Having received adequate assurances from the Yorkshire water authority about sewage disposal and treatment in Calderdale, I shall not oppose the Bill.

7.22 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I support the Second Reading because it is important to the people of York in particular and Yorkshire in general that progress by the Yorkshire water authority in alleviating flooding in York be allowed to continue. It is also important to ensure that the provisions of former water undertakings be continued, and the water authority be given the authority of the past local water boards to continue certain protections and services for the people of Yorkshire. There is much that I do not agree with in what the Yorkshire water authority does, but on this occasion I believe that we should support Second Reading.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) spoke about the future development of the Calderdale area. It is important to inform the House that a great deal of energy and expense has been put into the Calderdale area by the Yorkshire water authority to alleviate the difficulties suffered by the constituents of the hon. Member for Halifax. The hon. Gentleman accepted that in what he said about the letter from the deputy chairman of the Yorkshire water authority. A great deal of concern about alleviating the difficulties of the people in Calderdale has been expressed. I hope that the Bill will have a smooth passage, as it will ensure that we do not have the repercussions from flooding in York that we have had over decades.

Some of the areas that are flooded suffer badly. The people who have to put up with this disturbance should be given an assurance by the House that every effort will be made to help the Yorkshire water authority to prevent that flooding. As the hon. Member for Halifax will not challenge the Bill, I ask the House to give the Bill its blessing so that we can get the business required by the Yorkshire water authority through. It can then get on with the job of alleviating the flooding and providing the necessary services for Yorkshire.

7.25 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I support the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). I do not want the House to interfere with what the Yorkshire water authority does. I am not concerned with the Calderdale area, although I respect the concern of the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley). However, I am concerned that the Yorkshire water authority should not find its tasks made more difficult because of anything that the House has done. We should support the authority in its tasks of providing a decent water supply and adequate sewage treatment in Yorkshire.

I am particularly concerned about sewage provision and water supply in Rawmarsh in my constituency. I have been satisfied in correspondence with the chairman of the Yorkshire water authority in the past few weeks that it has plans to deal fairly soon with these problems. I do not wish the problems to be exacerbated by any delay for which the House could be held responsible. I hope that, as further retrenchment appears attractive to the Treasury, there will be no discouragement of the water authority from fulfilling the plans about which we have been informed in the past few weeks.

I trust that the Government will not merely accept and facilitate the Bill but will make sure that the water authority lacks neither resources nor the approvals necessary to maintain adequate sewage provision, a decent water supply and proper progress in cleaning water courses and rivers in our region.

7.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Government have considered the content of the Bill and have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the Yorkshire water authority. My Department has no outstanding points on the Bill and it is acceptable to us. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is very much aware of the Bill and is content with its proposals. The flood prevention scheme will benefit an urban area and is needed to protect part of York from flooding.

It may be helpful to the House if I touch on the local issue of the sewage works in Halifax, which my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) described in more detail than I am aware of.

Water authorities discuss their plans with sponsor Departments—the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—and Ministers take account of their needs when setting the financial parameters within which they operate, and this point was well taken by the hon. Member for Wentworth

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

(Mr. Hardy). However, within the limits it is for the authority to set out reasonable priorities and, as the hon. Gentleman said, the Yorkshire water authority is doing so.

Both my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax and my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) have demonstrated how constituency interests can be properly advanced. On behalf of his constituents, my hon. Friend the Member for York initially made some criticisms of the plans. In consultation with the water authority, he got the plans made better and I congratulate him on that.

Equally, my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax, who was representing the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) as well, has, in discussions with the water authority, secured promises from it that he was generous enough to accept.

On that basis, the Government recomend that the Bill be given a Second Reading and allowed to proceed in the usual way into Committee, where its provisions can be considered in detail.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed.

House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975

7.29 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I beg to move,

That Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 be amended as follows:—

PART I OF SCHEDULE 1

1. After the entry beginning 'Chief or other Social Security Commissioner for Northern Ireland' there shall be inserted:—

'Commissioner for the special purposes of the Income Tax Acts appointed under section 4 of the Taxes Management Act 1970.'

PART II OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

2. There shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

'A Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal constituted under the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1984.

The National Development Team for Mentally Handicapped People.'.

Entries omitted

3. The following entries shall be omitted:—

'The Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations.

The Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland.

The Health and Safety Commission.

The Home-Grown Cereals Authority.

The Land Authority for Wales.

The Manpower Services Commission.

The National Dock Labour Board.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

The Red Deer Commission.'

PART III OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

4. There shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

'Chairman of the Business & Technician Education Council.

Chairman of the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas.

Chairman, Deputy Chairman or Managing Director of the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations.

Chairman of the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission.

Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority.

Chairman of the Land Authority for Wales.

Chairman of the Manpower Services Commission.

Chairman of the Board of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education.

Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the National Dock Labour Board.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Training Authority.

Chairman of the Red Deer Commission.

A full-time chairman of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Commons Commissioner.

Director of British Telecommunications p.l.c. appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Director of any company in receipt of financial assistance under section 5 of the Films Act 1985, being a director appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Member of a panel appointed under section 97(2D)(*a*) of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975 of persons eligible to act as chairmen of Social Security Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Member of the Trinity House Lighthouse Board nominated by the Secretary of State.

President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Entries omitted.

5. The following entries shall be omitted—

'Chairman of an Appeal Tribunal constituted in accordance with Schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefits (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, or Senior Chairman in relation to such a tribunal.

Chairman of a Local Tribunal constituted under section 97(2) of, and Schedule 10 to, the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

Constable, Lieutenant or Major of the Tower of London.

Director of ICL Public Limited Company nominated by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Levy Exemption Referee for the purposes of the Industrial Training Act 1982.'

Other amendments.

6.—(1) In the entry 'Chairman of a committee constituted under section 90 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1960' for 'section 90 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1960' there shall be substituted 'section 91 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984'.

(2) In the entry 'Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the National Seed Development Organisation Limited' the words 'or vice-chairman' shall be omitted.

(3) In the entry 'Director of Harland and Wolff Limited' for 'Limited' there shall be substituted 'p l c'.

(4) In the entry 'Director of Short Brothers Limited' for 'Limited' there shall be substituted 'p l c'.

(5) In the entry 'Member of the panel of persons appointed under Schedule 5 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1971 to act as chairmen and other members of rent assessment committees' for 'Schedule 5 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1971' there shall be substituted 'Schedule 4 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984'.

(6) In the entry 'President, or member of a panel of chairmen, of industrial tribunals established under section 13 of the Industrial Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1964' for 'section 13 of the Industrial Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1964' there shall be substituted 'Article 30 of the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Order 1984'.

The schedule lists offices the holders of which are disqualified from membership of the House. It is desirable and important that those detailed provisions are updated regularly. Of the 44 amendments covered, 24 are new entries, 14 are deletions and six are amendments to existing entries. Approximately 95 office holders will be brought into the scope of schedule 1 and 104 will be released. There is, therefore, a net reduction of nine. I have arranged an explanatory note giving details of all the changes, which was put in the Vote Office some weeks ago. As far as I am aware, no comment or amendment has been made. As we are following a well-established procedure, I commend the motion to the House.

7.29 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) is due to respond on behalf of the Opposition. I know that he wants to ask a question. I was just doing duty on the Yorkshire Water Authority Bill. My right hon. Friend will be heading towards the Chamber quite quickly as the Annunciator will have shown that the Minister was speaking.

My right hon. Friend wanted to ask about recorders. I freely admit that I have not read the explanatory memorandum. My right hon. Friend wanted to raise with the Minister the rather peculiar circumstances of recorders and members of the judiciary in respect of their being hon. Members. Has the Minister had any thoughts about that? I do not know whether the matter has been put to him in writing. I do not recall it being raised before. Indeed, I do not know how many right hon. and hon. Members are recorders but, in my decade in the House, I have heard about some of my hon. Friends carrying out the duties of recorders. Time does not constrain us, so I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to pursue the matter in some detail, and the Minister might like to respond.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am happy to reply to what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) asked about recorders, but, as the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has now arrived, perhaps it would be for the convenience of the House if I were to reply to any points that he or any other hon. Members raise.

7.31 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) for missing his speech. It was so brief that I rushed in only to find that he had sat down.

This is an important debate in that, if accepted, the motion will disqualify some people from sitting in the House and thus to a significant extent diminish individual liberty and political rights. In view of that, it is a pity that the debate is relatively ill attended.

I do not wish to be critical of my right hon. Friend, but I have considerable reservations about the methods that we are adopting. I do not feel able to formulate a clear view about the rightness or wrongness of the changes in the schedule here envisaged. For many years past the House has entrusted to the Minister and his officials the power of making orders under section 5 of the 1975 Act, and we have abdicated responsibility. That is highly undesirable.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend because he, in common with other Ministers, has made it a practice to put an explanatory memorandum in the Vote Office. They have proved to be of considerable assistance to those of us who want to know why people are omitted from, or included in, the schedule. The Government are to be congratulated on that improvement in procedure. The fact that we have an explanatory memorandum, however, reveals as many defects as it tries to cure.

I should like to draw attention to several of those defects. We can now see all of the criteria with which the House is concerned. Apparently, Ministers and officials take account of four criteria when determining whether an office holder should appear in a schedule. Why does £4,000 appear among the criteria? I do not believe that Parliament has ever been asked to express a view about whether the £4,000 is right or wrong. No doubt the figure will be uprated. When? Who will be asked? To what extent will Parliament be consulted? I fancy that the answer is not at all—we shall be told when it happens and not before.

That is true of all of the criteria. I do not believe that any has received statutory approval or been discussed in detail in this place. That is bizarre when those criteria can be used to disqualify people from membership of this House.

Have the criteria ever been the subject of parliamentary discussion? If not, why not? Will we be consulted when the £4,000 is uprated? If not, why not? Criteria *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* involve quality judgments of some nicety. They are quite capable of abuse. It is clear that many office holders are disqualified when it is not possible to test whether they should be disqualified. It is not possible to determine whether the judgment is fair or unfair.

We also discover that some office holders who have previously been disqualified should not have been disqualified. At least, that must be the implication. We should take the example of members of the Red Deer Commission who are unpaid. They have previously been disqualified, but we now learn that they should not have

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

been. Why were they disqualified in the first place? If they should not have been, how have they suddenly been relieved of the exemption? We are making changes in people's constitutional rights and have not a clue what is going on.

Another category of office holder is now to be disqualified. There is a rather engaging phrase in the explanatory memorandum concerning them:

"the need to disqualify has only just been recognised."

Hard luck on them, but what is the need? Examples are the Commons Commissioner, the director and assistant director of the National Development Team for Mentally Handicapped People, and the chairman of the Business and Technician Education Council. Why has the need to disquality them only just been recognised? What need? Have they been consulted? Did they know that they would be disqualified? What effect does disqualification have on their contracts of employment? It is a very rum situation. Although we can be flippant about it, people's political rights are affected. Their liberties are diminished, as is the electorate's right to choose whom it wishes.

There is another group of people for whom it is extremely difficult to see why disqualification should be justified. I could go on like this for a long time. It becomes tedious in the end.

By the motion, which, if passed by the House, will be incorporated into a statutory instrument, we are legislating to diminish people's political and personal rights. I doubt whether anybody in the Chamber, with the possible exception of the Minister, knows enough about each office that is the subject of disqualification to form a clear view as to whether that office or office holder should be disqualified. I do not, I suspect that Opposition Members do not, and looking at the sparsely attended Conservative Back Benches, I venture to suggest that my hon. Friends do not, either. The fact that the House is so sparsely attended suggests that people are not greatly interested in any event.

The present procedure is inadequate. We as the legislature should not entrust to Ministers and officials the right to enfranchise or disqualify. We need to have a Select Committee, and the draft resolution should be laid before it. It could then comment on the proposals and advise the House so that when the motion comes to be considered by the House on such an occasion, we should have the benefit of a Select Committee's advice, rather like the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I am listening to the hon. Gentleman with great interest. Like him, I find the list of disqualifications and cases where disqualification is no longer thought to be necessary rather foggy. More information is required so that right hon. and hon. Members can make a judgment. The hon. Gentleman and the Minister might consider that, given that under the Government's economic policies we are going through a period of record bankruptcies, that in itself——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the motion deals with office holders. We are not to discuss other disqualifications. We must stick to the schedule that we are now discussing.

Mr. Wareing: I am sorry. I was hoping only that that might be discussed in future by the House. I cannot raise that issue, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take it into account and that in future we shall have the opportunity to debate that aspect of disqualification from membership of the House of Commons.

Mr. Hogg: That will arise only if we have an opportunity, by way of primary legislation, to discuss the 1975 Act in the context of proposed amendments. Today we are discussing the schedule, which is given statutory force by section 5 of the 1975 Act. That does not extend to bankruptcy.

The Government must be congratulated to this extent. The explanatory memorandum helps us, but not sufficiently, because in relation to each of the offices that are being disqualified we do not know which of the criteria has resulted in that disqualification, nor is it possible for the House to form a clear view as to whether the nice judgment formed by the Minister and his officials is fair or unfair. For that reason, I am making my proposals.

7.42 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I have just one question for the Minister. How many people are covered by

"A Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal constituted under the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1984."?

The reason why I ask that question is obvious. Many of our friends and colleagues take an active part in tribunal work. It can be time-consuming, take a great deal of effort, and involve individuals in considerable expense.

When the regulations were passed in 1984, I found that the tribunal was not like others. Basically those who work in those tribunals decide whether someone has a special case for additional milk quota, and they do not have such wide responsibilities as those in some other tribunals. For no apparent reason, the amount fixed for fees is about five or six times that of other tribunals. Therefore, instead of a small, compact number, a large number of people must be involved. Therefore, how many people are affected who are involved in dairy produce quota tribunals?

7.43 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I agree with the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), as would everyone in the House, that it is important to be sure that we have considered all aspects when we talk of disqualifying people from their political rights. Therefore, I should be interested to hear from the Minister whether those listed as people to be disqualified have been consulted in advance, or whether it has been presented to them as a fait accompli.

I also echo a question asked by the hon. Gentleman. Why, other than the monetary threshold figure, have some of the needs to disqualify only just been recognised? With regard to the threshold figure itself, does it represent any change in the threshold in real terms compared with the threshold when we last dealt with the legislation? In other words, is it purely a cost of living adjustment, or has there been an additional exclusion?

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred to recorders. I do not need to elaborate further. I should like to hear the Minister's answer.

7.45 pm

Mr. Hayhoe: I should like to refer to the points that were raised in the debate.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) asked about recorders. I refer him to the debate that we had in April 1983, when the matter was considered in some detail. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) participated——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I was in the Whips' Office.

Mr. Hayhoe: No doubt my hon. Friend hoped to participate. However, I know that several of my right hon. and hon. Friends did.

It has been recognised for a long time that full-time members of the judiciary are debarred from being members of the legislature. That is common ground between us. It has also been recognised for many years that several hon. Members are lay justices, and, providing that they exercise their jurisdiction outside their own constituencies, some hon. Members continue to give valuable service in that regard.

The position of recorders lies in between those two in that they are paid. I understand that by tradition they do not deal with cases arising from their own constituencies, or sit in their own constituencies. It has been a long-standing practice of the House that recorders and deputy recorders should not be excluded from membership of the House.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr asked how many right hon. and hon. Members practise as recorders or deputy recorders. I understand that at present the figure is 10. The matter could be looked at again, but when we discussed it last time in 1983 the consensus was that the practice had been followed for many years, and there seemed to be no particular reason why we should depart from it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham was right to refer to the explanatory memorandum, although he was a little less generous than he sometimes is. It was an innovation that I helped to bring in a few years ago. It is not produced just a day or so before the debate. I always arrange for a parliamentary question to be answered making it clear that it is in the Vote Office, and a few weeks elapse. This time, it went into the Vote Office on 5 July, which gave people time to study it and raise questions about it. One is always happy to seek to answer any of those questions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I did not mean to sound ungenerous. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, because I know that, following the 1982 difficulties, he introduced that procedure. It would be of great assistance to hon. Members if, in relation to each of the office holders being disqualified or relieved, he would say which criterion of the four has had the result of bringing about the disqualification.

Mr. Hayhoe: I was just about to refer to that. As so often happens, my hon. Friend's intervention pre-empted my answer. I was going to say that I had noted his point carefully. I shall look at the matter and see whether that can be done in future years.

I was asked about the £4,000 de minimis figure, which is quoted in the memorandum. It was £500 in 1957 and was uprated to £4,000 in 1983. The figure was published for the first time in last year's explanatory memorandum.

In cost of living terms, £500 in 1957 is equivalent to £4,103 today. Therefore, it has roughly been valorised, and I undertake that the level will be reconsidered. It has certainly not drawn particular criticism in our debates, and perhaps it was about right in 1957, and is about right now. If a change is desirable next year, it will be reported to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham rightly said that we were discussing the disenfranchising of people tonight, but happily the balance lies with enfranchising people. When we compare the strict balance of those put into disqualification with those taken out, one sees that it is slightly more favourable to enfranchisement, with nine more people no longer being disqualified. The individuals concerned are informed. I would not and could not guarantee that the matter was discussed with everyone affected. However, I take my hon. Friend's point, and will find out whether that would be possible for the limited numbers involved.

My hon. Friend also suggested the possibility of a Select Committee looking into these matters, and I shall draw that to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred to the dairy produce quota tribunals. The explanatory memorandum shows that 31 individuals are involved.

As I said earlier, we are following well-tried procedures. These are important matters, and it is right that they should come before the House and that hon. Members should have the opportunity, which I have sought to provide by publishing the details of the proposals well before our debate, to make their views known. I shall certainly continue that practice in future, without any commitment one way or the other to the important possibility of a Select Committee studying these matters. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 be amended as follows:—

PART I OF SCHEDULE 1

1. After the entry beginning 'Chief or other Social Security Commissioner for Northern Ireland' there shall be inserted:—

'Commissioner for the special purposes of the Income Tax Acts appointed under section 4 of the Taxes Management Act 1970.'

PART II OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

2. There shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

'A Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal constituted under the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1984.

The National Development Team for Mentally Handicapped People.'

Entries omitted

3. The following entries shall be omitted:—

'The Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administrations.

The Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland.

The Health and Safety Commission.

The Home-Grown Cereals Authority.

The Land Authority for Wales.

The Manpower Services Commission.

The National Dock Labour Board.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

The Red Deer Commission.'

PART III OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

4. There shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

'Chairman of the Business & Technician Education Council.

Chairman of the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas.

[Mr. Hayhoe]

Chairman, Deputy Chairman or Managing Director of the Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administrations.

Chairman of the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission.

Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority.

Chairman of the Land Authority for Wales.

Chairman of the Manpower Services Commission.

Chairman of the Board of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education.

Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the National Dock Labour Board.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

Chairman of the Red Deer Commission.

A full-time chairman of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Commons Commissioner.

Director of British Telecommunications p.l.c. appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Director of any company in receipt of financial assistance under section 5 of the Films Act 1985, being a director appointed by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Member of a panel appointed under section 97(2D)*(a)* of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975 of persons eligible to act as chairmen of Social Security Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Member of the Trinity House Lighthouse Board nominated by the Secretary of State.

President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.'

Entries omitted

5. The following entries shall be omitted:—

'Chairman of an Appeal Tribunal constituted in accordance with Schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefits (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, or Senior Chairman in relation to such a tribunal.

Chairman of a Local Tribunal constituted under section 97(2) of, and Schedule 10 to, the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975.

Constable, Lieutenant or Major of the Tower of London.

Director of ICL Public Limited Company nominated by a Minister of the Crown or government department.

Levy Exemption Referee for the purposes of the Industrial Training Act 1982.'

Other amendments

6.—(1) In the entry 'Chairman of a committee constituted under section 90 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1960' for 'section 90 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1960' there shall be substituted 'section 91 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984'.

(2) In the entry 'Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the National Seed Development Organisation Limited' the words 'or Vice-Chairman' shall be omitted.

(3) In the entry 'Director of Harland and Wolff Limited' for 'Limited' there shall be substituted 'p.l.c.'.

(4) In the entry 'Director of Short Brothers Limited' for 'Limited' there shall be substituted 'p.l.c.'.

(5) In the entry 'Member of the panel of persons appointed under Schedule 5 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1971 to act as chairmen and other members of rent assessment committees' for 'Schedule 5 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1971' there shall be substituted 'Schedule 4 to the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984'.

(6) In the entry 'President, or member of a panel of chairmen, of industrial tribunals established under section 13 of the Industrial Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1964' for 'section 13 of the Industrial Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1964' there shall be substituted 'Article 30 of the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Order 1984'.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1985.
2. Social Security Act 1985.
3. Shetlands Islands Council (Omnibus Services) Order Confirmation Act 1985.
4. Scarborough Council Act 1985.
5. Durham City Council Act 1985.
6. British Railways (Trowse Bridge) Act 1985.

Liability for Defective Products

7.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Alex Fletcher): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9427/79, draft Directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of all Member States concerning liability for defective products and of the Explanatory Memorandum by the Department of Trade and Industry dated 1st July 1985; and supports the Government's intention to have the Directive adopted at the earliest opportunity.

The subject of product liability is not new to the House. The Select Committee on European Legislation considered the subject in 1976 and again in 1979, and it was debated by the House at some length in November 1980.

The anomalies in our existing laws governing product liability are well known. A purchaser who is injured by a defective product is entitled to compensation from his supplier, usually a retailer, in strict liability, that is without proof of default, under the law of contract. A victim other than the purchaser, however, can recover damages only under the law of tort—or delict in Scotland—if he can show that someone in the chain of supply has been negligent. For many years now, it has been recognised that this state of affairs is unjust.

As the House will be aware, the Scottish and English Law Commissions examined the question of product liability and published a joint report in 1977. They were critical of the existing law on a number of counts and recommended that the United Kingdom should introduce a system of strict liability. They recognised that it was desirable to impose liability on those in the chain of manufacture and distribution, who were in the best position to exercise control over the quality and safety of a product, and to insure against possible defects.

The Royal Commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury — the Pearson commission — also reported on this subject in March 1978, and made a similar recommendation. It was against that background that our support for the underlying principles of the proposed directive developed.

The proposed directive is a harmonisation measure introduced under article 100 of the Treaty of Rome. In putting forward its proposal, the European Commission recognised that the divergence in the laws of member states might distort competition, influence the free movement of goods and lead to different levels of protection for the consumer. The extent to which such distortions have occurred is extremely difficult to measure, but we must recognise, considering the experience some British companies have had in exporting, for example, to the United States, that differences in potential liability and in insurance costs arising from different regimes can, indeed, have an influence on marketing decisions and on the terms of trade.

When the House debated an earlier draft of the proposed directive in November 1980, there was a general consensus that a harmonised European regime based on strict liability was the right way forward, but a number of problems with the text of the directive were pointed out. My right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim) pointed out that, although the Government agreed with the aim of establishing a common system of liability throughout the Community, the draft could not be accepted as it stood.

One of the most important changes that we considered necessary was the incorporation of a development risks defence. It is sometimes referred to as a "state-of-the-art" defence. We accepted the argument put to us by industry that the extension of liability to a producer, even when it was impossible to have detected the defect in the product at the time it was put on the market, could substantially inhibit innovation, especially in high-risk industries. We have, therefore, sought to incorporate this defence, to make a number of other changes, and to seek clarification on other points raised during the extensive consultations we have undertaken.

In Brussels, differences of opinion between member states have persisted on one or two points, in particular on the development risks defence and on the imposition of a financial limit on a producer's total liability. Those differences could not be resolved and, therefore, a compromise package was put forward earlier this year. It incorporated the development risks defence based on the principle of strict liability without financial limit.

Individual member states are, however, allowed to derogate on both those points, subject to certain limitations. On financial limits, for example, no member state could introduce a total limit for a single manufacturer's liability on a single product of less than 70 million ecu—about £40 million. Experience of operating under those derogations would be reviewed after 10 years to consider their effect and to explore the scope for coming closer together on these points.

We would, obviously, have much preferred a completely harmonised regime throughout the EC, with a development risks defence but no financial limit, but the course of the negotiations made it quite clear that a common regime on those lines would never be agreed, and that the only alternative to accepting the compromise was to continue for another decade, or more, without reaching agreement.

In those circumstances, we believe that the compromise package, on which the revised text of the directive is based, should be supported. If the directive is adopted in this form, we shall be free to introduce, in our implementing legislation, a system in the United Kingdom of unlimited strict liability with a development risks defence. Many of our partners will do the same, although some will exclude the defence, and some will impose a limit on total liability. Although such differences are regrettable, we consider that the common features in the directive—especially the common establishment of the principle of strict liability—are more important than the two differences.

The circumstances in which the development risks defence can be successfully invoked are likely to be rare. It sets a tough standard, and the minimum financial limit is set high so that it should have a minimum effect, if any, on the cost of insurance.

The package should be seen as a whole. It includes all the other elements in the proposed directive, which have received less attention during the past five years than development risks and financial limits. We have managed to secure some substantial improvements to the text on these points, and to secure clarification on the interpretation of some of the articles, in response to the concerns raised in this House and elsewhere since the first draft was published. For example, hon. Members will notice that we have secured a much more satisfactory definition of "a defective product", and of the scope of

[Mr. Alex Fletcher]

products covered by the directive, and we have secured some important changes and extensions to the defences listed under article 5.

On property damage, we have limited the application of the directive to damage done to purely personal property, with a minimum claims limit to exclude trivial claims. Although some hon. Members might have preferred property damage to be excluded altogether, I hope they will agree that, with these limitations to the scope and definition, the provision is now acceptable.

Some anxiety has been expressed about the effect that the directive might have on the cost of insurance against product liability claims and on the consequent extra burden on industry at a time when the Government are making special efforts to lift such burdens.

Every study of which the Government are aware, including comparative evidence from countries with different regimes, has shown that the provisions in this directive should lead only to a marginal rise in insurance premiums. This is not surprising. Industry is already subject to strict liability in contract and to liability subject to proof of negligence in tort.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): How wide are the Department's consultations? Has my hon. Friend heard of an organisation called the Society of British Aerospace Companies Ltd, and has he consulted it as to whether the effect of insurance costs will be marginal?

Mr. Fletcher: We have had wide consultations with industry, including the CBI. Even if we did not consult the industry to which my hon. Friend referred directly—I cannot answer his point now, but I shall try to find out—I hope that its representations were included in those made to my Department by the CBI.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister said that his Department may not have had consultations with the aircraft industry, but that it consulted the CBI. This morning, I received a letter from the CBI saying that the change would result in significant increases in insurance costs for the consumer. My hon. Friend will know that I am worried about this, especially about rubbers. The Minister said that the CBI agrees with him, but I say that it does not. Would he check this with his Department, because my view is confirmed in a letter from the CBI?

Mr. Fletcher: One of the joys of being a Member of the House, at least for the remainder of the time that I am here, is realising that my hon. Friend will never allow me to forget about rubbers. For those who do not understand the reference, I should explain that we are talking about scented erasers. We have discussed this matter at length with the CBI, whose representatives I met only a few weeks ago.

My hon. Friend said that the change would result in increased costs to the consumer. The insurance costs will be borne by the consumer. Of course, if the increase is significant, it will be passed on to consumers through the pricing mechanism. However, we have had detailed discussions with industry, and we have made the best attempts that we can with the British insurance industry, taking into account experience elsewhere, to judge what the increase in insurance costs would be. The answer is that it will be negligible. I know what the CBI says in the letter to my hon. Friend and to other hon. Members, but the letter does not display any expertise on insurance costs.

I do not accept comparisons with the American experience of product liability as proof that a strict liability regime brings in its wake automatic increases in insurance costs. With punitive damages, contingency fees for lawyers and jury trials for civil liability cases, it is not surprising that companies in high-risk industries have had special difficulties with product liability insurance in the United States. In our view, however, the vagaries of the United States legal system, not the concept of strict liability, caused the so-called "crisis" in product liability insurance in the United States some years ago.

This directive does not represent a burden on business. The best British companies take their responsibilities for potential defects in their products very seriously; they already insure against possible disasters, and they pay up when it is clearly established that innocent victims have been damaged by their products. This directive will make it clear that all manufacturers and, equally important, all importers must reach these same high standards.

It is no longer acceptable that retailers, but not manufacturers, should be subject to strict liability, or that the innocent victims of the occasional disaster caused by a defective product must bear the burden on their own. Ultimately, the burden must be shared by all those who benefit from the product, as any increase in insurance or testing costs resulting from strict liability will be passed on to consumers through the pricing mechanism.

Mr. Taylor: If it is so desperately important to look after consumers' rights and to give them compensation, why has the Minister excluded agriculture? Is that not an area where people suffer damage and death because of problems with products?

Mr. Fletcher: My hon. Friend is correct to say that the directive excludes primary agriculture, on the basis that farmers cannot be held personally responsible for the vagaries of climate and conditions outwith their control. However, once agricultural produce is processed by manufacturers, it will come within the scope of the directive.

All products supplied in the EC will be covered by the directive. So British companies will not be placed at any competitive disadvantage. I repeat that it will apply also to all importers, regardless of where the products originate.

The directive in its present form represents a long-needed advance in consumer protection throughout the EC. I invite the House to agree that we should adopt it without delay.

8.9 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I tried to jot down the Minister's last words. I believe he said that this was a long-needed advance in consumer protection. I am happy to support that view. The ludicrous state of our law until now has meant, as the Minister explained, that only those who had purchased an item and could prove negligence could claim consequently. An example would be a woman who had bought a defective hot water bottle. She could sue if she was scalded, but not if her child was scalded. In the cases of thalidomide, and, more recently, Opren, people seeking to claim compensation have been unable to do so

because of the lack of a compensation provision for third parties. As the Minister has said, this is a welcome strengthening of the Act.

The Minister spent a good deal of time on the state-of-the-art defence. The Minister said that it was at the United Kingdom behest that the state-of-the-art defence was included, and it is that which gives me the greatest cause for concern. There is concern in many areas that this may be widened to include design defects, and the National Consumer Council in its brief expressed concerns which are widely held, and which I certainly support, that this will give the possibility of the reintroduction by the back door of the concept of negligence.

The Minister did not address himself to why we need this provision. He will no doubt know the details better that I do, but we must be just about the only country in Europe to have sought this state-of-the-art defence. In his speech, the Minister said that the reason for it was that if we did not do it it might cut back on some of the development and research in the British pharmaceutical industry. Look at what happens elsewhere in Europe. Germany has a thriving pharmaceutical industry but it has seen no need for a state-of-the-art defence and its industry prospers and survives. The likelihood is that Germany, France and Denmark will derogate from this position and will not call into effect the state-of-the-art defence.

Mr. Fletcher: It will be helpful if I mention the countries which are for and against the state-of-the-art defence. The countries in favour are the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany—except in pharmaceuticals. The countries against are France, Greece, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Mr. Ashdown: There is a significant schism and the interesting point is that Germany does not seek this for pharmaceuticals, yet it has a thriving pharmaceutical industry. Why does the Minister believe that it is so important for us? Does he not concede that there is a possibility, however strict his definitions, that there will be a back door return to the concept of negligence? Other countries do not have it. Is it not also true that those countries which have the state-of-the-art defence, like Britain, may be used as test beds for research and development?

The Minister mentioned the Pearson commission and I should like to draw his attention to what it said about the matter. It described the position very clearly when it said:

"to exclude development risks from a regime of strict liability would be to leave a gap in the compensation cover, through which, for example, the victims of another thalidomide disaster might easily slip."

Is that not precisely the gap we want to close? The Pearson commission made that point strongly. The Minister gave a brief explanation, which was much too weak and inadequate, about why he wishes to see the state-of-the-art defence maintained. We can give this piece of legislation two cheers, but not three. The inclusion of the state-of-the-art defence means that the legislation has within it a gaping black hole through which it seems quite possible that many cases of injustice and inadequate compensation will slip.

Particularly in the case of another disaster like thalidomide, as the Pearson commission said is it not the case that that defence leaves that massive hole? When the Minister comes to sum up, I hope he will take time to explain to the House why precisely he wishes to see the state-of-the-art defence continued when other countries think it is not necessary and when the Pearson commission in particular has recommended the opposite approach.

8.16 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): As a recently appointed member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, I am concerned that this directive has been around for many years. The information I have received is that the Select Committee called for a debate. I was not a member of the Committee at the time that happened. In 1980, this subject first obtained in scientific journals the sort of coverage it deserved. Since then, there has been a tendency for the subject to be rushed and I suspect that perhaps what the Minister said about the need for achieving a breakthrough has led to a compromise that will leave many people in industry rather perturbed.

I understand the need for getting on with legislation in the European Community. Apparently, it gets bogged down sometimes, but at times there are important matters of this kind which have been around for a long time, and one is left wondering why the matter has been brought forward and effectively, it can fairly be said, pushed through at short notice after inadequate discussion towards the end of a consultation period. I am informed that, when the previous Minister was considering this matter, assurances were given that the United Kingdom would seek as major objectives, first, the achievement of a common regime and, secondly, as has been mentioned on several occasions, the incorporation of the state-of-the-art defence.

It has also been made clear to me that the present compromise neither adequately safeguards either of those two objectives nor excludes liability for damage to property. As I understand it, the directive will not lead to the harmonisation of European laws. The Minister fairly pointed out that several countries do not subscribe to the directive in its complete form. Therefore, it will add an extra burden to industry and create an uncertainty of approach which is likely to harm further investment decisions.

The main concerns raised with me are, first, that if strict liability without proof of fault is introduced it must be a specific requirement and claimants collectively should prove that the product was defective, that the injury was caused by the defect, and that the defendant was the producer. Secondly, it must also be open to the manufacturer to prove that he did not put the product into circulation, and that if he did the product was not defective when it was put into circulation, or that the product was not put into circulation in the course of business.

It is further put to me that the defence of contributory negligence should be maintained, particularly where it could be clearly adduced that the manufacturer issued with the product clear instructions or a warning drawing the consumer's attention to the need to exercise care in the use of the product. I suspect that those arguments are familiar to the Minister, but what may have gone on behind the scenes and what representations may have been made to the European Legislation Select Committee have not previously been heard in the House.

As I have said before, I am in favour of moving the log jam of legislation which has been snarled up in Europe for a number of years. But there are priorities which must be applied, and it has been put to me most strongly that there has been inadequate consultation in the run-up to the

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adoption of this directive. Adopting it is effectively what we are doing today. As a new member of the Select Committee, I hope we do not find that the removal of a log jam means that things suddenly get rushed through the House.

This matter has not been the subject of public debate in Britain for five years or more and consultation at the last minute is inadequate. Moreover, the proposed directive does not comply with the Government's previously stated position. The people who are greatly concerned about this would have liked to see the achievement, both in the common regime and in the specific requirement, of the incorporation of the state-of-the-art defence.

I shall be interested to hear the Minister's view. I understand that there are difficulties in getting through directives of this type given the problems in Europe at the moment. However, it has to be done in such a way as to ensure that those who have been consulted in the past are adequately consulted as the matter proceeds to a final conclusion. That is precisely what we are doing in this debate.

8.20 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It would be wrong to approve the motion without conveying that there is real concern in industry about the proposals in the directive. The Minister mentioned the CBI. It should be put on record that the CBI has made it clear that it believes that the regulations will be contrary to the main policy objectives outlined by the Government and will expose industry to the possibility of precisely that degree of liability that the Government declared was unacceptable.

The CBI also points out that the directive will not lead to harmonisation, though that has been mentioned, that the proposals will mean extra burdens on industry just when the Government are seeking ways to lessen them, and that it will introduce further uncertainties at a time when industry is working hard to remain competitive in the face of increasing insurance and other costs.

There is no doubt about the insurance position. Although the Minister has had consultations with someone, the CBI has no doubt. It says that the directive will involve very substantial additional insurance costs and that it will be very serious for industry

It is not just the CBI that is saying that. Other organisations such as the Federation of British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers' Associations makes it clear that in its view the directive will do enormous damage to its members, to jobs, to profits and to trade. The Minister should make it clear that, although he may think that it will not do a great deal of damage, our major industries, especially those on the heavy side, think that these are very damaging proposals.

It is not just trade associations which take this view. This morning I spoke to people running a number of firms in Southend. If the Minister has any doubt about what industry thinks of the proposals, he should speak to the giant MK Electrical Company, which is greatly concerned that the proposals will have a very serious effect on jobs, on investment, on profits and on its future.

I want to ask the Minister a few basic questions. Why is he so confident that the effects on insurance costs will be marginal? In this connection, I sought the views of the Society of British Aerospace Companies. After consulting top aviation underwriters, the society accepts that for those involved in the production of boots or blankets, for example, there will probably not be an enormous difference in insurance costs, but for anyone involved in a technical or developed product in a special or high-risk industry such as aerospace there will be a devastating effect on insurance premiums. The society —not one or two renegades in it but a society which represents British aerospace—has made it clear that not only does it think that these proposals will add enormously to the insurance costs of its members but that in some cases there will be great difficulty in getting insurance cover at all.

It must also be made clear that we are not achieving a great deal, if anything, by these proposals. We shall not get the famous harmonisation which the Common Market is obsessively keen to secure. These are not harmonisation proposals. Countries will still be different.

The Minister also said that we had the protection of the state-of-the-art defence, that the Government thought that this would be a good idea and that we should see it within three years. But let us add three years to 1985. In 1988, although I hope that it will not happen, we could have a different Government. We might have a Labour Government. By and large, the Labour and Conservative parties, in different ways, are concerned for the welfare of industry. I do not suggest that Labour does not care because in a different way the Labour party cares a great deal about jobs and investment, just as Conservatives do. But we also have these strange creatures, the Liberals, who pop into debates such as this for five minutes, speak from a Consumers Association brief and then disappear. It should be recorded that when we are debating a very important motion which will affect the future of British industry, jobs and investment, there is no one present to represent the Liberal party and no one from the Social Democratic party. Instead, a representative popped in to say that the Consumers Association was a grand idea, and then shot out to have a cup of tea. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said that the Liberals believed that the Government should drop the state-of-the-art defence.

Although I know that the chairman of the Conservative 1922 Committee and all members of the party will fight hard to make sure that we have a Conservative Government next time round, it is just possible that, because of events outwith our control, there will be a change of Government. If the Liberals and the Social Democrats held the balance of power, they could say that one of their conditions for doing a deal with one of the major parties would be to drop the state-of-the-art defence. That would have a devastating effect on industry and on jobs in any company involved in technology or heavy industry. To that extent, it is desperately important for the Minister to realise that here we have uncertainty, which is the one thing that we do not want at present, as the CBI says.

Within the three years of implementation, we could have a change of Government. We could just have the alliance, which wants to drop the state-of-the-art defence, having effective control by holding the balance of power. What, then, would be the position of industry? The Government are bringing in uncertainty for industry at the one time that it does not want it.

There is a second uncertainty. In 10 years, this directive is to be reviewed by the EEC Commission. At that time it will review how the derogations are working out. We know that all kinds of exciting developments are expected

from a conference on a treaty of European union and more majority voting. As I understand it, the Government's position is that we do not want a treaty but that we want to see more majority voting. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who spends all his time studying European matters, will confirm that the British Government accept that any review will be done by a majority vote. So far the majority of the European nations —and certainly they will by then—think that the state-of-the-art defence is one that they are not too keen about in Britain's case. We could in 10 years' time find the state-of-the-art defence being thrown out simply because of a majority vote. Even if the 630 Members of this House say that we do not like it, it will not matter two hoots.

Mr. Cash: I should point out that I have on a number of occasions expressed my disquiet at some aspects of the Dooge report and also at too rapid a movement to majority voting. I have gone even further and said that I have grave reservations about it.

Mr. Taylor: I am delighted to hear that. My hon. Friend is one of the sincere hon. Members present. He is saying that he does not like the Dooge report and that he does not like majority voting. But I am saying that he will be able to do nothing about it, apart from complain, in a few months. He knows that we have a vote about the extra cash, which means the end of reform of the EEC. We are now going on to discuss extra majority voting. More and more Conservatives are saying that they are not happy with the way that the Common Market is working. They do not like the jobs that it is losing for Britain. They do not like the extra taxes. They are worried about the effects on industry. It goes on and on.

With this directive the Commission will have the power to propose to the Council of Ministers that by a majority vote the state-of-the-art defence will be got rid of. If that happens, it will be a bad day for British industry.

If there was any doubt that this directive would be damaging to industry, that the Department was right and that it was not so bad after all, I think that we saw that it was likely to be gravely damaging when the Common Market decided to leave out agriculture. Whenever agriculture is exempted we know that it must be something nasty. For example, rates are a terrible burden but agriculture is exempted from paying rates. If anything is particularly bad or nasty, one usually finds that agriculture is exempt. Although we are told that this measure is needed to protect European consumers, agriculture is exempt. Can the Parliamentary Under-Secretary say what is meant by the exclusion of primary agricultural products? I think it means that foodstuffs are not exempt if it can be proved that they have undergone industrial processing which causes a defect. If, therefore, people are poisoned or deformed as a consequence of a primary agricultural activity it will not be possible to make a claim against those who produced the food. Only if somebody puts paper around the food which is found to be defective can a claim be made.

Mr. Cash: I refer my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) to the explanatory memorandum that is attached to the amendment to the proposal which sets out the reasons why it appears to be justified to exclude primary agricultural products. It says:

> "This is by way of contrast to agricultural products industrially produced because strict liability for defects in such products which have been caused by factors extraneous to the activities of agricultural producers could be too onerous"

without adding why.

> "Such an exemption is even admissible from the point of view of consumer protection for it says that the formulation of the amendment under the present directive when read with article 11 does not exclude liability for fault which generally speaking will not be impossible to attribute."

If my hon. Friend can make sense of that, I shall welcome his comments.

Mr. Taylor: What they are saying is quite clear: that it could be too onerous. In other words, if this is applied to agriculture, it could be too onerous a burden for agriculture to carry. But what about British Aerospace? It is not provided with the same protection and subsidy as is provided for agriculture. And what about heavy industry and engineering? It worries me intensely that a Government who are concerned about looking after the interests of British industry and British jobs sadly do not seem to care about them so much whenever agriculture is at stake. It is said that agriculture cannot be allowed to suffer damage. If the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State thinks that agriculture is so important, what protection will be provided for people who are deformed or damaged because of the various chemicals that are used in agricultural production? As my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford said, the only reason for the exclusion of agriculture is that the liability would be too onerous for agriculture. If it is too onerous for agriculture, what about other industries? Are we not concerned about investment and jobs in British Aerospace, engineering and the whole gamut of British industry?

The proposals will achieve nothing of value. We are not even getting the harmonisation which the Euro-nuts want that would help trade. The proposals will simply add to the burdens placed upon industry and, far more important, will add to the uncertainties faced by industry. Once again we are introducing something that is completely unjust. We are piling further burdens upon industry without putting any extra burdens upon agriculture. It is tragic that something that is so devastatingly bad for British industry and that contains all these wide implications of uncertainty is being debated in a House which, admittedly on a special night, is not quite so full as it should be. If hon. Members knew what was involved and were to think about their effects, these regulations would be thrown out very quickly, whether or not, as is still the case, members of the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party were in attendance.

8.34 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): It is always difficult, in legislation of this kind, whether it originates in the European Community or in this country, to obtain the right balance between obtaining protection for the consumer, which is one of the primary objectives, and avoiding placing upon industry any burden which would make it more difficult for it to provide jobs and compete in the world. We must ensure that industry is not faced with additional costs, when it is the avowed intention of Her Majesty's Government to seek ways in which to reduce complications and costs for British industry.

Mr. Cash: "Lifting the Burden" has just been published and contains a section relating to European regulations. Does my hon. Friend think that this subject ought to be referred back for further consideration?

Mr. Griffiths: My hon. Friend is right. At this point, however, I am simply accepting that we need to obtain a balance between these considerations and protection of the consumer. One of the problems which during the last few years has made the discussion of consumer protection more difficult has been the number of extremely tragic and highly publicised disasters which have been caused by pharmaceutical products. The result has been a particularly strong demand for consumer protection, which has led to the House being in danger of imposing upon industries far wider than that particular sector a burden which is both unnecessary and unhelpful.

In general, industry likes certainty. It likes to know what its position will be in a variety of markets. If these proposals were to lead to harmonisation, I should support them. I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), do not support harmonisation for its own ends. Nevertheless, harmonisation of matters of this kind would result in many advantages. It is not simply a question of competing with firms which operate in countries with different legal regimes. We are also trying to sell in those markets, so we are subject to the national laws of those countries. Harmonisation would therefore be desirable, but unfortunately we are not debating a measure that will result in harmonisation. It will create a new set of uncertainties to replace the existing uncertainties. One wonders whether there is a case for saying that if we cannot have harmonisation it would be better to leave well alone.

I remember that I said a good deal of what I am saying now in our 1980 debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the fact that tonight he is able to bring back the fruits of his predecessor's promise: a firm adherence to the principle of a state-of-the-art defence. I wish that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) had remained in the Chamber after making his speech because, if nothing else, he and I have one thing in common. Both he and I have within our constituencies parts of the Westland organisation.

I listened with blank amazement to the hon. Gentleman opposing a state-of-the-art defence, when the subsidiary of Westlands in my constituency is one of the strongest and most vociferous companies impressing the need for a state-of-the-art defence if we are to maintain our position on the frontiers of research and development, particularly in developments in the aircraft and aerospace industries, and also in the development of composite materials, since it is difficult to know in advance how these materials will operate in long-term use. It is essential that a firm knows that state of the art can be put forward as a genuine defence if a defect arises which could not have been foreseen at the time of manufacture because we did not have the scientific ability to recognise it.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the fact that that problem has been taken on board, but, like my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, I am alarmed that there is a possibility that not only may we find that after 10 years some countries have opted out of accepting that defence within their national boundaries, but that the EEC could decide that the defence should not be accepted in the harmonised legislation which we hope to see at that time. That would be worrying not just in 10 years' time, but in the intervening period, because it is not possible for industries to know in advance what will happen. We are not getting the certainty that we seek.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that the brief that hon. Members had received from the CBI did not show any great expertise in insurance matters. Surely no one would wish to suggest that the CBI does not have that expertise. If the confederation says that there may be cost burdens and additional factors of competitiveness, that should be considered as the view of a respected and responsible body. I wonder whether my hon. Friend meant what he said. Perhaps he would like to rephrase his comments.

I had hoped for a much better agreement from the EEC on harmonisation, based on the general attitude taken by our Government. Aparently that has proved impossible, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on what has been achieved. I hope that our representatives will continue to watch over the interests of British industry in the next 10 years and ensure that we do not have harmonised difficulty to replace existing uncertainties.

8.43 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I agree with my hon. Friends that the proposal has been rushed through. Industry is unhappy about it, particularly because of the short notice at which the debate was arranged.

Following what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said about the Society of British Aerospace Companies, I stress that it represents the whole range of aerospace companies, including Short Brothers and Rolls-Royce, as well as British Aerospace and all the major and minor subcontractors. Those companies have not been consulted about the detailed provisions of the directive. They say:

"While the various drafts in recent times have been handed around in most other Community countries they have only been shown to SBAC in strict confidence".

I understand that open government is operated in Brussels. A hallmark of our Administration has been their concern with open government, but that does not appear to have operated in this case, and that is regrettable. It seems that the proposal will go through, but I hope that the Minister will note that this is not a happy way to proceed.

I welcome the fact that the Minister has ensured that importers will be subject to the same conditions as British industry, but I should like some clarification from him about what will happen when an imported product—a domestic toaster, for example — becomes defective, causes injury and someone sues for compensation.

Unlike the manufacturer, the importer may have only a small operation with £100 capital and his business may merely be importing goods, selling them and making a return on the way. What recourse will the consumer have? What recourse will he have if there is a defect in an imported product that is handled by an importer of insufficient standing? What requirement will there be for small importing companies to insure themselves so that funds are available to meet claims?

I declare an interest as the parliamentary adviser to the Electric Cable Makers Federation. Manufacturers of cable are extremely worried about the implications of the proposal. They produce the cable that goes into appliances such as domestic toasters. If a toaster causes injury, will a cable manufacturer who has merely provided the cable

be joined in an action and be subject to unlimited liability, even though his product meets British standards? All British cable meets British standards. However, an imported appliance, to which cable is attached, may not meet British standards and a United Kingdom cable manufacturer could be joined in an action.

I apply that analogy to the aerospace industry. An aeroplane is an amalgam of thousands, sometimes millions, of components. What will happen if a claim is made against a manufacturer who has incorporated a component that has become defective, notwithstanding the fact that it meets all British standards? Will the manufacturer of the plane be liable? Will he be liable if the component comes from overseas? Planes are seldom made from components from only one country. Equally, could a manufacturer of one component be liable for the failure of others? For example, could the manufacturer of the undercarraige be joined in an action because an aeroplane crashed owing to a fault in the navigation system?

Those are serious questions and I have touched on them only briefly. I hope that the Minister will be able to answer some of them, because there is anxiety on the Conservative Benches that the proposal is being rushed through and that it will have serious consequences for British industry, not only in terms of jobs, but in terms of insurance costs. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure us.

8.50 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): It is difficult to be a small business man these days. The laws and regulations which are constantly brought before the House make it even more difficult. Large corporations have the funds and resources to take on the challenge of producing high quality products. The smaller manufacturer, employing 20 or 30 people, has severe difficulty in producing the right type of quality products. Under this legislation his task will become more difficult.

I speak from experience because in the late 1970s my small company, employing 25 to 30 people, earned a living producing replacement road wheels and car seating for motor cars. The company exported to Japan, the United States and to most European countries.

The problem particularly in America in the late 1970s when product liability was the in thing was that enormous claims were brought against companies such as General Motors and Ford in respect of cars produced 20 years before, after their occupants had been killed in bad crashes. That trend filtered through to the suppliers of accessories such as my firm. Our insurers were hesitant to underwrite us and our products because they argued that, even though we might have tested our products efficiently, given the levels of testing available on this side of the Atlantic, we did not oversee the fitment of the product to the vehicle. The insurers asked, if our product was all right and the car into which it was put was all right, who would be liable for the fitment if all we did was supply the component and the owner fitted it himself. If our product failed, would we be able to fall back on its being incorrectly fitted? It was a grey area which we never resolved because it seemed that everyone successfully fitted our product.

I hope that the legislation will impose some control over the vast quantity of imported products that enter Britain, particularly spare parts. I have in mind alternators, generators, brake systems, brake pipes and so on which are made in the far east and which are packaged in boxes identical to those used by reputable companies in Europe. Even the names are the same. They are sold here under household names. The products are made to reasonable standards and are good copies, but they are liable to failure. I hope that the legislation will bar scurrilous producers in the far east who seek to gain opportunities here and in Europe by peddling components.

The American experience of unlimited product liability was unhappy initially, and I am worried about the state-of-the-art provision. In two or three years perhaps the users of cars produced today may complain if a vehicle is rammed in the side and a fatality occurs. There is no current statutory requirement to side-impact test a car. Front tests into a concrete block are required and most manufacturers ensure a rear shunt test. The side impact test is voluntary.

The American experience shows that it is possible to challenge manufacturers in respect of that which they did not find necessary. The situation is dangerous enough for the small manufacturer, but it is fraught with difficulties for the larger company. Legions of lawyers seek to exploit opportunities to bring large manufacturers to account for tests which they were not aware had to be undertaken. Fortunately, the British and European motor industries have to be competitive to stay in business. Their products have to be extremely well made and engineered; if they are not, they will get a bad name and lose in the market place.

If we are to have rules in Europe, they should help our industry and discourage importers from selling inferior products here. Harmonisation is a small step in the right direction.

8.55 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I approach the order in the role of gamekeeper-poacher as one who was Minister responsible for consumer affairs when discussions began in Brussels in the mid-1970s and who subsequently became the Minister responsible for manufacturing industry.

It is strange that 10 years after the consultation began complaints are being made about lack of consultation. Lest the Minister thinks that he has found an Opposition ally, I must add that, paradoxical though it might seem, his hon. Friends have a legitimate point.

The CBI says that the recent changes have been so sudden that it has not had an opportunity to comment on them adequately. I received a brief early last week from a European consumer group explaining why it thought it wrong that the Government should change its position and allow exemption for the Food Manufacturers Federation's clients. About 48 hours later I received a draft document which said that those clients were now omitted from the legislation.

I received a telephone call today from the Associated British Chambers of Commerce saying that not only had it not been consulted but that it was able to find information only by borrowing a copy of the directive from the CBI. It was in a desperate position, being unable to brief anyone because it had not had time to deal with the changes.

[Mr. Alan Williams]

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, brought to my attention a comment in a report by that Committee which stated:

"The Committee have not had time to consult those who submitted written evidence in respect of the original draft Directive. This would in any event have been difficult as no official text of the revised version of the text is available."

Our watchdog Committee set up to ensure the proper scrutiny of European legislation did not even have a copy of the legislation about which it was supposed to advise the House.

The peculiarity of the Government's position was demonstrated by the fact that I encountered the document at about 5.30 in the evening with a note saying that the Government Whips wanted clearance to put the matter in the hands of a Committee upstairs. I protested because the issue is far too important to be dealt with tucked away cosily in a Committee from which the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) would probably be excluded. However, it is not for me to cause mischief between the hon. Gentleman and his Minister. I am sure that he is perfectly capable of creating his own mischief. It so happens that in this case, as with the case of the scented erasers, the hon. Gentleman has a valid complaint about the failure of the Department to carry out consultation on its final proposals. That is the important point. It is all well and good having consultations on the early stage proposals, but the final proposals are those that are likely to operate. Therefore, it is especially important that everyone who has a point of view, especially hon. Members, should be fully up to date on what the Government have in mind.

The point against the Government in their lack of consultation during recent weeks and the attempt to bounce this provision through the House is justifiable——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the House, through its Standing Orders, has made specific provision that if an EEC document is sent upstairs to Committee any Member of the House, even if not a member of the Committee, can participate in that discussion although he may not vote? I mention that because it is a procedure that gives some safeguard—but not, as my right hon. Friend said, as great as having a debate on the Floor of the House.

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that there has been an increase in frequency in the work of the Scrutiny Committee where there has been an early proposal that is changed quite drastically at a fairly late stage in the deliberations in Brussels, providing the sort of situation facing the House tonight? I have one caveat—frequently that is done by other institutions in Brussels because other nations do not have the sort of scrutiny of their national Parliaments that we have instituted in this House.

Mr. Williams: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that additional information. I fully appreciate his point about hon. Members being free to attend Committees. I strongly suspect that, in the context of the earlier order to which I referred, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) found that in his notification of business for the coming week the relevant item had been erased with one of his perfumed erasers.

We must recognise that there is a difference of interest, inevitably, and also a community of interest between consumer and producer. A consumer wants a product that is safe and as cheap as he can get it, and also wants to be sure that he can be adequately compensated—he does not care who compensates him—if the product should, unfortunately, be defective.

The producer wants maximum productivity. He wants to be able to innovate his product and to have predictability in the marketplace. The Community wants the best of all worlds. It wants the maximum wealth production that can be obtained from the manufacturing sector.

For the consumer, the position has become increasingly difficult. That is not a recent development—it has been the inevitable development of the economic system and the system of production. Products have become more complex — scientifically and technologically and in content and composition. It is therefore virtually impossible for the consumer to assess a product when he buys it.

As a result of the use of sampling techniques in product quality control, there is a risk of errors slipping through the productive system and the consumer becoming the tester of the product — something with which the purchasers of new cars have become thoroughly acquainted. As companies become more international, it becomes increasingly difficult for the consumer to mount an effective case, especially if he has to prove negligence, as he currently must do under our system. Not only is he up against a massive multinational, but one that has, possibly, most of the expertise in the field, the ability to pay for top lawyers and the resources to mount such an expensive law case that it frightens away potential claims. Therefore, the consumer is at a massive disadvantage, something with which the legislation is intended to deal.

It is a little nonsensical that, if a woman purchases an electric kettle and suffers a severe electric shock, she has a strict claim against the seller of the product. Yet if a member of her family, who did not actually purchase the kettle, experienced a similar shock and injury, he would not have the same rights.

Therefore, the law that gives a consumer any defence against the provision of defective products is paradoxical, anomalous and unfair. Thalidomide was the spur that triggered the investigations that led to the current proposal.

As the Consumers' Association has pointed out, because of the escape clause that the Government are providing, even after this legislation is enacted, in the event of another thalidomide tragedy, there will still not be an easier case for the consumer than there was when the concern arose more than 10 years ago. It will be of no help to the victims of Opren who—with 65 dead and more than 3,500 having suffered side effects—are still trying to obtain compensation and recognition from the producer of that defective drug.

There is, clearly, a difference between the Government Front Bench, the Back Benches and the CBI on this issue. The CBI has said that insurance will be a major factor which will add massively to costs. That seems to differ from the view of the insurance industry. Insurers have suggested that they could cope perfectly well with a system of strict liability, even if it meant doubling producers' insurance costs.

"It is estimated by the insurance companies that this would only increase the actual cost of insurance from 0·01 per cent. of turnover to 0·02 per cent."

That was stated in evidence by the Commercial Union Assurance Company in March 1979 to an international conference on pharmaceutical product liability. Further, the Royal Commission on Civil Liability concluded:

"we have no reason to believe that the total effect of introducing strict liability would be more than a small proportion of product costs as a whole. We think this is a justifiable price for consumers and producers to pay for the benefits which the victims stand to gain by it."

We may be told to consider what happens in America, where cases involving massive sums have occurred. The Minister did not go into the detail on that, but there are valid points to bear in mind, such as the fact that the Americans operate a different system. Damages in that country are set by juries, which are notoriously generous to victims. Here, the reverse occurs, with damages set by judges, who are notoriously mean to victims and their dependants.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Williams: When I have finished making this point, I shall give way to both hon. Gentlemen, who can, if they wish, jump to the defence of the CBI.

The second difference between this country and the United States is that there is an inducement for people there to take action because of the contingency fee system that operates in their legal system. There, it is in the interests of a lawyer to look for a wrong and then find a victim of it, in the knowledge that the lawyer will get a cut if he manages successfully to claim from a company or any other defendant, and the more he gets, the bigger his share.

Nor must we forget that in America much of the extra cost has arisen because of what has happened in the medical sphere. Because of the existence—while it is allowed to survive—of the National Health Service in this country, that is less of an element in manufacturers' costs. However, as the Government achieve success with the spread of private medicine—inadequate though it has proved to be, with its lack of back-up and so on—that aspect will cause manufacturers more concern than has been the case in Britain in the past.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: If the right hon. Gentleman is saying that insurance costs are a negligible part of overall costs, he should consult overseas. Will he accept that every insurance company and every underwriter would agree that to increase insurance costs to the extent that the right hon. Gentleman has described would not have a great effect on articles such as shoes, books and hats? However, it would have a devastating effect on products such as aircraft or anything involving advanced technology. The increase in costs would be enormous. The increase in costs might be such that the market might not be able to carry the load. This is being said by underwriters and by the industries that will have to bear enormously increased costs. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to accept that there is a danger of a substantial increase in insurance costs for companies that manufacture complex products.

Mr. Williams: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's argument. If the information is available, it is a pity that it was not put before us this evening so that we could judge it for ourselves. The findings of the Royal Commission and the evidence that has been given by insurance companies seem to conflict with what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but no doubt he knows better than they.

Mr. Cash: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that awards made by judges recently have been increasing significantly. There is something slightly unreal with the American analogy. There is a tendency for a significant increase in the amounts that are being paid out by our courts. This is a factor that will have to be taken into account in future.

Mr. Williams: I am only too happy for consumers that there is such a trend. Even if the hon. Gentleman considers comparisons at the higher levels, as he describes them, he will find that there is an enormous gap between levels in the United Kingdom and those in the United States. In fact, there is no basis for comparison.

I recognise that it is difficult to advance an argument on development risk. However, the Minister eloquently argued on behalf of manufacturers running small businesses. He did not argue on behalf of those running small retail businesses. When referring to the impact of the proposals on small manufacturers, he was describing the fate of small retailers, which will continue until the measure is introduced. That seemed to cause him no deep concern.

Does industry have the right to use the consumer as a guinea pig or as a testing area? The hon. Member for Southend, East shakes his head. I shall present him with an exact example. It is easier to carry out medical experiments on animals in the United States than it is in Britain. On the other hand, it is easier to carry out experimentation on humans in Britain than in the United States. That is the result of the United States strict liability legislation. The Germans have recognised that and they do not want Germany to be used as the test ground for large drug companies. That is why they have introduced strict liability legislation for the manufacturers of pharmaceutical products.

Some of the scare stories do not always bear close analysis. The Japanese Government, for example, have introduced legislation that leads to the withdrawal of products that are deemed to be unsafe. At the beginning of a 10-year period, the Japanese were producing 1 per cent. of new drugs but now, 10 years later—this is despite tighter legislation—they are producing 20 per cent. of new drugs. I suspect that the purpose of many scare stories is to try to frighten us rather than describing what is likely to arise.

The proposals before us would impose a duty on manufacturers to improve the quality of their products. Manufacturers will always tell us that they cannot meet higher quality standards. I remember an occasion when the British television industry was trying to secure sales of components to Japanese television producers in Britain. The British industry argued that the Japanese were sheltering behind a restrictive practice in demanding such high quality of product and component. Eventually, the British manufacturers met the revised standards. That has helped their own component manufacturing. I question whether the consumer should be used as an alternative to proper quality control and quality testing.

First, where does the responsibility lie when a component of a product is defective? Is the case against the producer of the component or against the producer of the consumer product? I assume that it is against the latter, who in turn will have a fall back against the component manufacturer. I do not know, and it is important that we should have an answer. Secondly, if, for example, a

[Mr. Williams]

product is produced in Taiwan, the British consumer will have no case against the producer. However, will he lose the protection that he has at retail level against those who supply the Taiwanese product?

In France, there is a strict liability. Does the British consumer who suffers damage from a French component get the benefit of the French system and therefore have a claim against the producer of an advanced technology product that in this country would use the state-of-the-art defence, or does the British consumer suffer the disadvantages of the system that we shall be operating?

In saying that we give this proposition a fair wind, we recognise that there is a right of derogation and the possibility of review after 10 years. The Government have, however, been rather ham-handed in the way that they have steamrollered this through the House. Had they had proper consultation with the industry and their Back Benchers, there might have been better good will in the House.

9.17 pm

Mr. Fletcher: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that I welcome the views expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. As the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said, this directive has been around in some shape or form for about 10 years. Industry and other interests have been consulted extensively during this period and, following a comprehensive consultation on the 1979 draft, informal exchanges of view have taken place periodically as discussions on the directive progressed. I had a further meeting with the CBI just a few weeks ago.

Although a formal round of consultations on the latest version of the draft was not possible, the points made by the industries consulted over the years were taken into account in the recent redrafting of certain details of the text. Further consultation with interested parties will take place before the implementation legislation is introduced. No one who has been involved in consultation over the years should have been taken by surprise by the contents of the draft.

We have had repeated meetings with the Society of British Aerospace Companies. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked me to confirm that, and I do so. The Scrutiny Committee has already considered this subject more than once and a full explanatory memorandum, together with the revised text of the directive, was provided to the House on 1 July, as the right hon. Member for Swansea, West, will know.

I am surprised that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) does not support the development risks defence. I cannot understand his unwillingness to accept that companies should not be expected to carry responsibility in cases where the extent of technical knowledge at the time the product was distributed could not have detected a defect in the product.

As I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths), he and the hon. Member for Yeovil share the Westland company. I do not know what consultation the hon. Gentleman has had with that firm, but I should be surprised if it had not urged him to support the development.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister will know that we are all subject to a good deal of lobbying, which we accept or reject according to judgment. Does he agree that the state-of-the-art defence is not seen to be required by the German pharmaceutical industry, and that even the German compensation laws are stronger than ours in that they require proof that it was not the manufacturer's defect? Does he further agree that the state-of-the-art defence, which he has allowed to be included, would not protect consumers or those who suffer in cases such as those involving thalidomide or Opren? Is he aware that that is the black hole to which we object?

Mr. Fletcher: I was about to deal with pharmaceuticals in Germany. A defective drug in this context will be one which does not provide the safety which can reasonably be expected of it, taking all of the circumstances into account, including its presentation—labelling, warnings, instructions and manner of marketing. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) talked about reasonable use, although not just in terms of pharmaceuticals. Unreasonable use of a product would be a defence.

A drug would be judged by many factors in addition to its intrinsic chemical and physical properties. It would be for the courts to decide whether a drug is defective in the circumstances of each case. Factors such as the seriousness of the disease being treated and the correlation between estimated benefits and estimated risks will be relevant.

Some people might argue that development risk defence emasculates the directive's provision for strict liability in respect of drugs and that it would let a modern thalidomide off the hook. It should be remembered that the test of the state of scientific and technological knowledge at the time is tough and dynamic. Given our existing knowledge, the manufacturers of thalidomide or of any other product likely to be given to pregnant women and which had not undergone adequate pre-clinical tests for teratogenic potential could not claim the development risk defence if they were to be on the market today. That is the best advice that I have and that I can give the hon. Member for Yeovil.

The regime in Germany does not have development risk defence, but its definition of a defective product contains some of the elements of the state of the art. It is not quite such a black and white comparison as might be suggested.

Mr. Ashdown: I apologise for pushing the Minister further about thalidomide, but I am sure he is aware that it is a matter of great concern. He carefully applied two different time contexts and said that we now have better means of checking products. If another thalidomide case came up under the state of the art, would not those who suffered be covered? Yes or no?

Mr. Fletcher: The hon. Gentleman is presenting his argument starkly and somewhat alarmingly. The directive would go a considerable way to prevent a recurrence. I cannot give a yes or no answer in such circumstances. The directive goes some considerable way to meet the alarm which the hon. Gentleman mentions—an alarm which should not be lightly raised in such matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford mentioned a provision on contributory negligence, especially when warnings are properly given. There is a provision in article 582 for contributory negligence. The importance of warnings and other aspects relevant to the presentation of

the product is pointed out in the definition of "defective product" in article 4. I hope my hon. Friend finds that helpful.

I should like to refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and his attack on the agriculture industry, or the fact that it is not included in the directive. In my opening remarks I gave the reason why. The exemption was considered necessary because farmers could not be expected to take responsibility for the vagaries of the climate, the soil and pollution caused by extraneous factors outside their control, all of which can cause the product to be defective. However, if it goes through any industrial processing, it comes within the terms of the directive. The producer of processed foods would have recourse against the supplier of defective meat, not under those terms, but under the normal contract. For example, if someone canning salmon or beef received a consignment that was off, he could take action against the supplier under normal contract terms.

My hon. Friend was also firm in his comments on the aerospace industry. We accept that there are good arguments for a common regime without any derogations. That is what we are trying to achieve. We can see its importance, not least in the aerospace sector itself, which is international. The composition of the product, like the market, is almost certain to transcend national frontiers. However, the same can be said of other sectors that are dealt with in the directive, such as shipbuilding, drugs, computers and so on.

I have to disagree with my hon. Friend when he says that the increase in insurance on aircraft would be devastating. If that were the case, the United States aircraft industry would have gone to the wall a long time ago. I see no reason why he should assume, in terms of insurance costs, that anything devastating would happen to our aircraft industry. That is one of the reasons why I criticised the comments made by the CBI about the cost of insurance. I do not believe that those exaggerated comments are justified.

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): Can my hon. Friend help us in establishing the truth on the likely increase in insurance costs for the aerospace industry? Has he had any discussions with insurers and can he give us an idea of his views on that?

Mr. Fletcher: I shall make some further comments on insurance in a moment. I wanted to refer to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East.

Our evidence on insurance and the evidence collected by the European Commission came from 35 industrial sectors and conflicts with the remarks made by the aerospace industry itself. We believe that we have gone round all the industries with which we could reasonably discuss the matter and obtained their views as well as the views of the insurance industry, taking into account the situation in other countries and the regimes in those countries affecting product liability.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East also referred to the absence of proper harmonisation creating uncertainty. We believe that the proposed package provides greater harmonisation and certainty and that it is the only realistic alternative to continuing to debate the matter, as we have done for many years, or taking the path of no harmonisation at all. That may suit my hon. Friend, but the Government could not support that view.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend said that he was not creating uncertainty. Does he accept that the derogation can be overturned by a majority vote in the Council of Ministers in 10 years' time, whether or not the Government want it, and whether or not 630 Members of Parliament vote against it? If that is not uncertainty, what is?

Mr. Fletcher: I do not accept that the derogation could be overturned by a majority vote in the Council, because under article 100 of the treaty a unanimous vote is required. [HON. MEMBERS: "Will the Minister stick to that?"] Yes, of course I stick to that. I cannot foretell what changes will take place in the Community during the next 10 years, but any changes would require a unanimous decision. Clearly, my right hon. and hon. Friends, who will consider these matters at a conference which will take place shortly, will take into account, not merely the immediate position of the United Kingdom, but matters concerning our future.

Mr. Cash: As my hon. Friend says, the directive is introduced under article 100, which deals with the harmonisation and approximation of laws, as set out in the title to the debate. I am puzzled that harmonisation under article 100, which requires unanimity, could be changed only if at a subsequent date the voting arrangements in the treaty were amended. What is the point of introducing a provision under article 100 in an attempt to achieve harmonisation when, by virtue of what my hon. Friend has said, it is clear that many member states are not prepared to accept the provisions of the directive? It leaves me with a degree of disquiet that we are following the route of article 100 when the objectives of the directive are not accepted by member states.

Mr. Fletcher: The objects of the directive are accepted by other member states. Two derogations have been agreed — one on financial limits, and one on development risks. My hon. Friend will not wish to exaggerate the position, because the directive achieves considerable harmonisation on product liability within the Community.

Mr. Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Fletcher: I am trying to answer all the questions that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked.

Mr. Taylor: This is my last question. My hon. Friend explained that at present article 100 regulations are subject to unanimous vote, which is an important safeguard. The Government put forward proposals to the Council of Ministers about reducing the impact of the veto and said that we would agree to remove the veto on many issues, except those involving a supreme issue of national importance. Will he assure us that article 100 of the treaty will still require unanimous consent? Is that the Government's position?

Mr. Fletcher: That is the present position. My right hon. and hon. Friends are probably going into discussions on these matters, and I cannot say during this debate what position they will take.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked what would happen in the next 10 years if there were a change of Government. I am sure that he can think of many actions which a Labour or Lib-Lab Government could take which would be much more damaging to British industry than changing this directive, which they could do.

[Mr. Fletcher]

Indeed, if one is producing a list of the damage that such a Government could do to British industry, one would not begin with the subject under discussion this evening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North supported the directive, and I am grateful for that. He was worried about what might happen during the next 10 years. I believe that I have just answered that point. He and my hon. Friends the Members for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) asked whether there might be a burden on business. I answered that point in my opening speech, when I said that it is not an unnecessary new burden on business. It merely corrects an anomaly in existing law and puts the large manufacturer and the importer on the same footing as the small retailer. That point was made by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. My hon. Friends seem to have forgotten that the small retailer is already subject to strict liability under the law of contract.

The question which the House will wish to address in concluding the debate is: who benefits from the directive? The consumer will benefit from the injection of certainty into this area of the law throughout the Community, and will benefit especially from the ability to claim compensation without having to prove negligence. Retailers will benefit, to the extent that consumers will now be able to sue the manufacturer of the product, or the importer, direct, whereas at present only the immediate supplier — usually the retailer — is strictly liable for defective products.

British industry will benefit from the clearly stated development risks defence. Although it will not be given the protection of that defence in export markets, where the importing country does not have such a defence, British industry may have a slight advantage over its competitors in that it will be protected from development risk liability in its domestic market.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9427/79, draft Directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of all Members States concerning liability for defective products and of the Explanatory Memorandum by the Department of Trade and Industry dated 1st July 1985, and supports the Government's intention to have the Directive adopted at the earliest opportunity.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Town and Country Planning (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Question agreed to.

Agriculture

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Agricultural Products Processing and Marketing (Improvement Grant) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 27th June, be approved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Question agreed to.

Chile

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

9.37 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I hope that this debate will finish in good time so that my good and hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) can explain the effects of monetarism in Britain, as I hope to explain the effects of monetarism in Chile during the past 12 years.

In two months' time, we shall commemorate the 12th anniversary of the coup in Chile, when the democratically elected Chilean Government were removed in one of the most vicious and bloody coups that there has been for many decades anywhere in the world. The ramifications of the coup continue to be felt by the people of Chile, and they have had a grave effect on relations between Britain and Chile. That is the subject of my debate.

It is worth recalling that, during the three years before the coup which removed the Government of Salvador Allende from office, there was a process of destabilisation of the Government by multinational companies and by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States. A consistent programme of attacks was made on that Government by many Western European and other Governments, which did nothing to support them and everything to try to remove them from office. Indeed, towards the end of their life, that Government were faced with impossible problems as the military prepared for a coup.

I can quote from an interview between Orlando Saenz and President Allende just before the coup, and published in 1980. When they discussed whether there could be some rapprochement or relationship with the armed forces, he said to the President:

"But, Mr. President, you have nothing to offer. It's a waste of time to make a pact with you. You're a living corpse, you're useless. No politician with a minimal degree of skill will make a pact with you, for the simplest of reasons: he doesn't need to."

He went on to say there was going to be a military coup against the Government, a Government which had been elected by 43 per cent. of the people of Chile and which had gained a great deal of support during their lifetime.

The relationship between the coup, the life of the people of Chile and the Government of General Pinochet is close to the people of this country. Many Chileans sought refuge in Great Britain after the coup in 1973. Many Chilean people live in this country as asylum-seekers and refugees, and they read with horror about the mounting violence and the horror of life that many of the poorest people of Chile face all the the time.

It is worth recalling that the former Minister for Trade visited Santiago in October 1980. In a report which was widely circulated in *El Mercurio Weekly Report*, a Chilean newspaper, he said on his visit to Chile that his experience of the Chilean economy was that it

"is very similar to what we are trying to develop now in Great Britain."

He was asked what aspects of the economic policies he found so similar and he went on to describe his Government's belief in cutting state expenditure, state bureaucracy and taxes on profits, and removing controls and restrictions on prices and wages, the exchange rate and investment overseas. The Minister went on to say that he wished to "break up the monopoly of nationalised enterprises" and he wished the Chilean Government well in their economic experiment.

In many ways, that encompasses a lot of the thinking of the present Tory Government's concern with Chile. A 12-year experiment in monetarism was going on in Chile and the cost to its people has been high. In 1974, just after the coup, the unemployment rate was 9·2 per cent. By 1982 it had risen to 28·3 per cent. The index of real wages was taken as 65·1 in 1974. It had gone down from 100 at the time of the coup and had risen to only 82 in 1982. In other words, the Chilean people were 20 per cent. worse off at the end of a 12-year experiment. Consumption in the richest households in Chile had gone up by 15 per cent., but for the poorest people consumption had gone down by 31 per cent. That again is the result of 12 years of monetarism.

What is the relationship between Britain and this murderous dictatorship in which so many people have died during the 12-year period? There have been states of siege, there has been unrest, and at one stage questions were asked about whether or not the British ambassador should have been restored to Chile in 1980, as he was. The Conservative Government which restored the ambassador to Chile said, and I quote from the then Minister of State at the Foreign Office who is now destroying our railways:

"We have used our ambassadors wherever appropriate or necessary to follow up particular cases involving human rights in a large number of countries; this is an important reason for having an ambassador in Chile. When it comes to human rights, this Government prefers action to words."

If they prefer action to words, why is it that this so-called constructive dialogue has been so monumentally ineffective in influencing the Government of Chile and their behaviour? I can give figures which show the deterioration of human rights in Chile between 1982 and 1984. In 1982, there were 1,789 political detentions in Chile. In 1983, there were 14,515 detentionss in one year. If the equivalent figure of detentions were applied in this country, it would be between 75,000 and 100,000 people detained in one year. In the six months between January and June 1984, there were 2,981 detentions.

I could go on through a whole series of statistics of this kind—for example, the number of people killed either by the police or in so-called confrontations, the number of people who disappeared, and the number of certified tortures, which rose to 432 during 1983, the year when the British Government were supposed to be maintaining a policy of constructive dialogue with the dictatorship of General Pinochet in Chile.

There are specific cases and specific quotes. Many cases have been referred to the Foreign Office and to various Ministers, and I should like to raise the case of Pedro Fernandez Lembach, who is a political prisoner in Chile. His compañero is a member of my union, the National Union of Public Employees, and the British Government have given entry clearance for Pedro to come to this country when he is released from prison. I raise his case not because his life is very different from the lives of many others but because it is a case about which there is great public concern.

I quote the statement made by Constanza, who is also a political refugee. She says:

"Pedro and I were arrested together in May 1980 by the CNI"—

the secret police force—

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

"on trumped-up charges of illegal possession of arms and manufacture of explosives. I saw him tortured, but managed to get released from prison and leave Chile. Pedro is still in jail and is seriously ill. After waiting for three years for his case to come up, he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and four years' exile."

Although he has been granted his visa, he has not been able to come here because he is still held.

Merely to quote the violations of human rights which are so common, so appalling and so tragic in Chile is one thing. The reason that I raise this matter on the Adjournment is not just to give some emphasis to the appalling statistics to which I have been able to refer. It is also to emphasise what I believe is a very close working and constructive relationship between the British Government and the Government of Chile.

During the past few months, a number of documents have been released secretly from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, one of which was sent to me. It was later reprinted in the *New Statesman*. It demonstrates two facts. First, British Government Ministers have a clear policy of maintaining arms sales to Chile. I quote as an example the sale of the Centaur, which is made by Laird (Anglesey) Limited — a part of the Laird group — and which is an armed vehicle used for crowd and riot control. Its purpose is to kill people, yet the British Government expect us to believe that the Centaur is part of the arms trade which is normally restricted to weapons that cannot be used for internal repression.

I ask the Minister to say what the Centaur project is for if it is not for internal repression. One vehicle has been sold, and it is clear from answers in this House and answers to questions from Lord Hatch in the other place that it is the intention to sell more of those armed vehicles to Chile.

Recently a letter was published in *The Guardian* about this matter. During a meeting with the Minister of State at the Foreign Office it was said that any weapon could be used as a weapon of aggression; a pen could be used as a weapon of aggression if someone cared to use it to attack someone else. Mr. Graham Davy said in his letter published in *The Guardian* on 24 June:

"Quite so. And the 300 Centaur half-track vehicles which the Government is considering selling to General Pinochet might be used for taking old ladies on picnic outings in the countryside round Santiago."

They might well be, but their purpose is repression. They are repressive vehicles.

The issue of the sale of arms was raised by staff within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office after the state of siege was imposed in November 1984. I quote from a document sent to the Minister by Mr. Coates in the South America department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He says:

"In response to the recent deterioration in the political situation in Chile, in particular the declaration of a State of Siege on 6 November, the Secretary of State has called an office meeting to consider a policy on our bilateral relations."

That was to be held before the Minister's departure.

"I should . . . be grateful for your comments on . . . the extent to which we can dissuade the commercial banks from making further loans to Chile; the extent to which ECGD can be asked to withdraw existing offers of cover and review its market limits downwards; whether our delegation to the World Bank . . . could be instructed, on political grounds, to refuse approval for new loans to Chile; whether approval given to Fairey Engineering to tender refurbishment of a civilian research reactor could be revoked and future applications refused, on grounds of other than non-proliferation considerations, whether any other trade sanctions could be envisaged."

It also asks whether defence sales to Chile could be stopped. It lists them, and they are very substantial. They include the Centaur, Blowpipe, Seacat, Rapier, ex Royal Navy survey ships, land-based Harriers, Jaguars and naval Lynx helicopters. What will they be used for, if not for internal repression against the people of Chile? Or is it because the British Government wish to have a close relationship with a well-armed Chilean junta that can be used as part of the south Atlantic strategy and the Falklands enterprise? I believe that to be very much the case. It is one of the two reasons why the British Government are prepared to continue to sell arms to Chile and to soft pedal on the considerable abuses of human rights in Chile.

These are very serious matters and it is regrettable, to say the least, that there can be only a fairly short Adjournment debate on this subject. However, in the near future there will have to be a full debate. The British Government will have to answer for their policy towards Chile and all Latin American countries, particularly the Latin American dictatorships. It is significant that the British Government are the only Government to hold back. It is only the British embassy in Santiago that does not condemn the violation of human rights. It is only the British Government who do not condemn the violation of human rights in the strident terms in which it is condemned by so many other European Governments.

The general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union wrote recently to the Foreign Secretary and asked for an undertaking from the British Government that they would cease arms sales to Chile because of the violation of human rights in Chile. The general secretary at that time, Moss Evans, mentioned a number of people who had been murdered recently by the Chilean armed forces. In his reply the Foreign Secretary said:

"I can assure you that we have repeatedly expressed our concern about human rights violations to the Chilean authorities. There can be no doubt about our views . . . You also ask about arms sales: it is indeed our policy not to allow British companies to sell arms to Chile which in our judgment are likely to be used for internal repression."

In 1973 the Moneda palace in Santiago was bombed and strafed by Hawker Hunter jets made in this country and flown by pilots trained in this country. The training of the Chilean armed forces continues in this way. British arms have been used to gun down the Chilean people. It is an absolute disgrace. The British Government should end all arms sales to this odious regime which is destroying the lives of so many people.

A visit was paid recently to this country by a very remarkable woman, Maria Maluenda, who has suffered so much and who has seen so much violence. During the Allende Government she was the ambassador to Vietnam and saw what the B52 bombers were doing to the people of Vietnam. She witnessed the coup in Chile in 1973. More recently she suffered the terror of hearing and seeing her son being murdered at point blank range, his body being mutilated afterwards by the armed forces. She came to this country to seek support for what she is trying to achieve for Chile, which is a peaceful future. When asked what could be done she said:

"I think you can do a lot. If you see the resolution of the European Parliament passed unanimously a short while ago, there are suggestions in that resolution that should be taken up not only by the governments and official organisations but by

people in different countries . . . I would like to say that I am here because I decided to travel to denounce these latest assassinations, these latest crimes. I speak in the name of thousands of women—not only women, but fathers, brothers, sisters, children who have suffered in my country just as we are suffering at this moment. I pray that you do not take my words as the words of one person, but as the words of thousands and thousands of people. The wife of my son had her father arrested eight years ago and it has never been possible to find out what has happened to him."

It is the daily life of many people in Chile to see their friends and loved ones removed from them, to hear of beatings, tortures and rape.

I received a letter recently from Santiago—I shall not give the name for fear of reprisals against that person, which in itself is an indictment—in which that person says:

"They kidnap and make marks in the body of the people after advising them not to say anything to anybody. Fortunately the people have denounced those threats. The new modalities with women are to rape them, as the case of the law student, who was raped and three times kidnapped. To live in this atmosphere is not easy."

I trust that the Minister will tell us why the Government continue to supply arms to Chile, why they continue to allow members of the Chilean armed forces to be trained in this country and why they do not take seriously the many denunciations of the Chilean regime and break our arms link with it. The Government should make sure that our embassy in Santiago takes up violations of human rights rather than the promotion of arms sales by so many private sector arms companies in this country.

9.55 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Chile is an important country, both in itself and in what it stands for, so I welcome the opportunity that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has provided to discuss the country, although I do not agree with everything that he said.

The Chilean situation must be seen in the wider Latin American context and I should like to take the opportunity to report to the House on a three-week visit to Central America from which I have just returned.

My companions on the trip, which was sponsored by War on Want, were the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and Mr. Campbell Christie, the general secretary-elect of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. We visited Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and we had planned to visit Guatemala, but I regret to have to say that we were told that we would not be welcome there.

In politics, as in life generally, one's conclusions tend to follow from one's starting point, so where should we begin our analysis of the vast and complicated imbroglio in Central America?

Should one start, as does the Kissinger report, by remarking on the depth and gravity of the economic and social tensions that grip the region? Should one begin, as do many in Washington, by emphasising the novelty of the intrusion of Soviet, East European and Cuban influences into a formerly undisputedly American sphere of influence? Or should one rather refer as a starting point for our inquiries to that sphere of influence and to the economic, social and political structures that it has created, sustained or merely permitted? I am sure that that would be the starting point of the hon. Member for Islington, North, who has emphasised the importance of the American role in Chile.

I am not sure that it is possible to generalise about those different factors affecting the five republics of Central America. The states share a common origin——

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): Is the hon. Gentleman proposing to direct his remarks to the issue of the debate, which is Chile, or to Central America?

Mr. Jackson: The right hon. Lady will find that I will make frequent references to Chile. The states share a common origin in the Spanish colonial kingdom of Guatemala and each country displays on its arms the image of five volcanos — remarkably apt symbols of their politics as well as their sense that they have something special in common.

The reality of the situation is that these countries are as different from each other as were, say, the city states of ancient Greece.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Halton and Washington): Is the hon. Gentleman absolutely sure about the title of the debate? I understand that it is

"United Kingdom relations with Chile"

That is a specific title and I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is aware of that fact. He seems to be covering a number of states that are unrelated to the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It may help the House if I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) to the subject of the debate. It is on the Adjournment motion, which is traditionally rather wide, but the subject is

"United Kingdom relations with Chile"

and not with Central America generally.

Mr. Jackson: I took the opportunity of discussing with your colleague who was in the Chair before you, Mr. Speaker, my handling of the subject.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Order. The hon. Gentleman is challenging the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am grateful for the protection of the chairman of the GLC——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The debate has a specific title which is

"United Kingdom relations with Chile".

If the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) is trying to delay the House, perhaps he should tell us why. Alternatively, will he direct his remarks to the subject of the debate?

Mr. Speaker: I have already said that. We must stick to the subject chosen by the hon. Member who was successful in the ballot.

Mr. Jackson: I do not propose to delay the House. I think that the hon. Gentleman will not disagree with my conclusions if he will allow me to explain them. I shall make constant references to Chile, but I am talking about the wider Latin-American context, in which the Chilean problem must be seen.

I return to my argument. These countries have something in common, but they are different from one another, as were the city states of ancient Greece.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

[Mr. Jackson]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Mr. Jackson: Politically the crucial differences between these countries seem to flow from the varying degrees to which the central American republics have been able to transfer their power to the civilian middle classes. Costa Rica, a country of purely European settlement with no history of Indian serfdom, is at the most advanced end of the scale. It is a stable, bourgeois democracy, established in 1948, and it dealt with the problem——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying widely now and I must ask him to direct his speech to British relations with Chile and not with the rest of central America.

Mr. Jackson: I shall cease to speak in this debate because I should like the opportunity to report on the visit. I am sorry that Opposition Members have taken exception to my remarks. I do not think that they would have been dissatisfied with what I had to say. I did not intend to delay the House, and I look forward to discussing these matters on another occasion.

10.1 pm

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): I sympathise with the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), but some of my right hon. and hon. Friends wish to speak to the subject of the Adjournment. The hon. Gentleman must look for his opportunities at another time.

I wish to speak briefly in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I had the great privilege of speaking from my Front Bench when we had our first debate in November 1973, following the coup in Chile, when I was able to quote the last speech by Salvador Allende.

We are now 12 years on. Government Members are comparatively uninformed about some of the aspects of julian history. The Government should bear in mind that Chile was a democracy from 1830 onwards. The Government who were brought down by military force and assassination in 1973 were elected within the democratic constitution of Chile.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Dame Judith Hart: Of course I will, if the hon. Gentleman is better informed than I.

Mr. Howarth: I am aware that the right hon. Lady is very knowledgeable about these matters. I know how well informed she is about human rights violations since 1973. Perhaps she can tell us all about the violations before then under the regime of San Salvador Allende, whom she worships, how land was confiscated and how the Allende Government flouted the constitution and congress. Perhaps the right hon. Lady and her hon. Friends, who view everything through their Marxist spectacles, will tell the House about those matters.

Dame Judith Hart: The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) is not only uninformed, but he is trivial and cheap. I do not know whether he went to a public school, but he sounds like a typical Right-wing public schoolboy.

There were no political prisoners at any time during the Government of Unidad Popular. Chile led the way in land reform. I sympathise with the Minister, because he has to cope with a small but vociferous element on his Back Benches.

I am sure that the Minister will say that he sympathises with the human rights cause. He will say that it is good that the siege has been lifted but that many gross violations of human rights continue.

I am sure that the Minister will tell us that the Government have supported all the EEC resolutions condemning the abuses of human rights in Chile. I am sure that he will also tell us—as the Government frequently do—that the Government will not supply arms intended to be used against the civilian population. He will tell us all those things.

But I do not know what the Minister will say to the fact that the Finance Minister of Chile is said to be in London now, or shortly to be so, to discuss with Barclay's Bank the financial assistance that could be made by British banks to Chile. I do not know what he will say about the general reaction from a number of delegations that have been to see the Minister of State, who does not impress those delegations with her deep sympathy for the violations of human rights in Chile.

The Government's attitude has been at least partly influenced by the relationship between Chile and Argentina. Because of the Falklands fracas, the Government are suspended in ambivalence between the EEC's utter condemnation of the abuses of human rights in Chile—and along that front the Government have always followed reluctantly, several days behind—and the American enthusiasm, and, perhaps, our Government's earlier enthusiasm for the monetarist experiment in Chile.

I was fortunate enough to have a meeting today with someone whom I imagine the Minister may know—the vice-president of the National party in Chile who is on a visit to London and who will be meeting the Minister of State tomorrow or the day after. The message from every element in Chile is that there is tremendous progress in building up a unanimity of opposition to Pinochet and that the effort to achieve a return to democracy at this point demands much stronger support from the democracies of the north and the west.

I hope that the Minister, who will no doubt say what he has to when he replies, will take a message to his officials and the Foreign Secretary that we demand more. If we believe in democracy and freedom, more is needed from this Government on behalf of democratic human rights in Chile than we have seen so far.

10.7 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has done a great service to the House. I wish to ask one precise, specific question. On 7 June, the *New Statesman*, under the by-line of Patrick Forbes and Duncan Campbell, published what purported to be a Foreign Office document. My hon. Friend referred to it, and I shall read it as printed. It states:

"Chile: contingency planning.

1. In response to the recent deterioration in the political situation in Chile, in particular the declaration of a State of Seige on 6 November, the Secretary of State has called an office meeting to consider policy on our bilateral relations, to be held before his departure for Peking on 18 December . . . striking

political gesture on our part. But, it could also carry unacceptable penalties. The Chileans would regard an embargo as a major shift of British policy; and this could, in turn, hazard the defence and other cooperation we enjoy over the Falklands. Also relevant here is Chile's agreement with Argentina over the Beagle channel: this could, in turn, make it easier for the Chileans to reduce the level of their cooperation with us if they were so tempted."

My question is, what precisely is the quid pro quo? Does not the House deserve to be told precisely what the agreements are mentioned in the Foreign Office document as between the odious junta of General Pinochet and our country?

It is about time, once again, that there was a certain amount of candour from Governments on such issues. If there is a quid pro quo, if there is an agreement—and no one has suggested that it is not a Foreign Office document—to what are we referring? What exactly is the agreement? What is the quid pro quo? I hope that it is in no way to do with nuclear capability, because that has been said. We want to know precisely what the quid pro quo over the Falklands is and what has been kept from the House of Commons.

10.10 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I, too, am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for selecting this subject for debate, because he reflects the view of many people, inside and outside the House, that the British Government have not responded sufficiently to the events in Chile.

The right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) will recall the occasion when I took part with her in a deputation—there has since been another which she attended, plus another in which I took part with her hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—to the Foreign Office, when we were grossly disappointed by the stone wall with which we were met by the Minister's noble Friend.

We asked for a sign of recognition that we should be doing more and that we should be living up to the standards expected of us by our colleagues in the United Nations and the European Community. We asked, for example, whether the British ambassador to Chile could be recalled to review the state of human rights, following the lifting of the state of seige, to see what possibilities existed to bring influence to bear there through the churches, the opposition political parties and others.

We were anxious to know that the British Government did not intend to go down the road—the hon. Member for Islington, North made it clear that they seemed to be prepared to go down it—of seeking tenders for arms exports to Chile, with the clear implication that they would be sent to Chile, when ordered, in considerable numbers.

We must look to the Minister for assurances on those matters, because we received none from his noble Friend. In view of the nature of the regime there and the fact that arms that might be supplied could be used for suppression and continued violation of human rights, we must be assured that any question of such arms supplies will first be debated in Parliament. The Government must not just take executive action in the matter.

As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) pointed out, the Government must be open with the House, not allow people to come to Britain for consultations—indeed, afford them quasi-official, if not official, recognition—and thereby show to the press of the world that the British Government and the people of Britain are happy with what is going on because everything is being done in an open way. That is far from the truth now, and the Government are denying the people the ability to react in accordance with the standards that we have set ourselves.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in the internal Foreign Office document of November 1984 the civil servants said that on every criterion—trade, aid, military sales, repression and loss of human rights—the Chileans came off badly? It seems, nevertheless, that that Government still enjoy the approval of the British Government.

Mr. Hughes: Not only am I aware of the document, but the hon. Gentleman may be aware that when we, as a delegation, went to the Foreign Office recently, it was not denied that the document, which had been leaked—it was accepted that it had been leaked—clearly made the case that the action by the British Government could be influential, not only on the issue of arms, but on that of human rights. It was accepted that if the British Government said more clearly what they should be saying, that would have a clear political effect.

The only fear, as reflected in that document, was that that would cause people—presumably hon. Members on the Opposition Benches—to ask for more action. That is no justification for saying, "We are not prepared to move at all because there might be demands for us to go further." I urge the Minister to show a chink of light to the families of the hundreds of people who, since Pinochet came to power, have lived with death and in fear.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that when a delegation went to the Foreign Office this morning to present a petition containing about 35,000 signatures—I was a member of it—it was told by a senior civil servant that the arms trade was seen as being effectively neutral in terms of supplying Chile.

Mr. Hughes: Nothing surprises me. One of the tragedies of the Government's foreign policy in the eyes of some of my colleagues, and probably in the eyes of most Opposition Members of this place, is that we can condone trade in arms without realising that that has a direct effect on the human rights of individuals in the rest of the world. The sooner the Government understand that message, the sooner they might respond to their duties to fellow citizens and to those who are far less well off and far less able to express their feelings about these matters than we are here.

10.16 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Renton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on his success in obtaining the Adjournment debate and on choosing the subject of Britain's relations with Chile. I thank the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) for contributing to the debate. Her interest in South America and human rights is very well known. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson)—I note that he is no longer in the Chamber—for his wide-ranging contribution.

The hon. Member for Islington, North referred to 12 years of monetarism in Chile and implied that thar was perhaps one of the main reasons for the economic

[Mr. Tim Renton]

difficulties that Chile faces now. I do not think that we shall enter into a great debate about monetarism, especially international monetarism, in this debate. However, I put the thought to him that perhaps Chile is in economic trouble primarily because of weak copper prices —copper having always been Chile's prime export—and high international interest rates, and not so much because of Chicago-school policies. Perhaps those two factors are more fundamental reasons for Chile's economic difficulties than monetarist doctrines.

The hon. Member for Islington, North chose to initiate the debate under the heading, as it were, of the United Kingdom's relations with Chile, but he elected to spend most of his time—this did not surprise me—on the internal situation in Chile and particular human rights cases. I wish to underline the areas in which the hon. Gentleman, the Government and I personally share agreement. First, the internal situation in Chile, especially human rights, must be of great importance to us in determining the manner in which our relations are conducted. Secondly, the Government fully share the hon. Gentleman's concerns, and those of others who have contributed to this brief but important debate, about human rights in Chile. We do not agree with every allegation in detail but we are extremely concerned about human rights in Chile and we regret that, against the current trend in other South American countries, Chile is not making the fast progress towards the return of democracy that the Government would like to see.

The hon. Member for Islington, North and I differ on the means by which to achieve the end of helping to improve human rights in Chile. The Government do not believe that the isolation of Chile, an arms embargo or even the general economic sanctions for which the hon. Gentleman calls, would be effective. Nor do we think it effective or right to single out Chile for criticism that can be applied equally to other countries. We have normal relations with Chile——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I do not propose to give way. I do not think that it is normal to give way to interventions in the course of replying to an Adjournment debate. Furthermore, I believe that someone else wishes to catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye before the end of the debate.

We have normal relations with Chile, and this allows us, in the way that the last Labour Government denied themselves the opportunity, to make our concern known, at the highest level, to the Chilean Government. As the hon. Member knows, we have had diplomatic relations with Chile since 1980, when we restored representations at ambassadorial level. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who was then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, informed the House of the decision, and the hon. Member for Islington, North has already quoted these remarks. My right hon. Friend said then that one factor in the decision to restore diplomatic relations had been to enable us to present our views on human rights and on other matters at a higher level and with greater impact. This is a good reason—it was valid then, and it is valid today. I ask the hon. Gentleman to think of the reasons for it.

It is obviously important that our ambassador in Santiago should be in a position to speak frankly to senior members of the Chilean Government about all aspects of relations between Britain and Chile — including the impact that events in Chile itself can have on the nature and conduct of our bilateral relations. He has been able to bring home to the Chilean Government, in a quiet and reasoned manner, the very real concern in this country at recent events in Chile and the wish by all Chile's friends that the Government and democratic opposition in that country should get together to agree a programme for the restoration of Chile's traditional pattern of democratic government.

I can give the hon. Gentleman a specific example. Following the lifting of the state of siege, we sent instructions to our ambassador in Santiago requiring him to call, as he did, on the Chilean Foreign Minister, on 11 July, to express our hope that the Chilean Government would be able to move beyond the lifting of the state of siege to more substantial progress in the restoration of full political freedoms. None of this would be possible if—as some hon. Members urge—we were to withdraw our ambassador from Santiago.

The hon. Member referred to the particular case of Senor Fernandez Lembach. I have had representations about this case. As I told the hon. Member on 3 June, Senor Lembach is a Chilean national. We have no formal standing to intervene with the Chilean authorities on his behalf. We have made clear to the Chilean authorities that if Senor Lembach's sentence were commuted to one of exile, we would issue him with a United Kingdom visa. The Chilean Ministry of Justice unfortunately informed our ambassador in April, that it is not yet prepared to consider commuting the sentence. We shall continue to monitor the case carefully.

We make our views known in other ways. When, in February this year, a senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office official visited Chile he made human rights a point of special concern in all his conversations. In March this year, we voted in favour of a resolution critical of Chile at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. We also remain in frequent and close touch with our Community partners about the situation in Chile and take appropriate opportunities to set on record our joint position.

Therefore, I cannot accept the statement that we do not do our part, as a country that has diplomatic relations with Chile, in making as carefully and fully known in Santiago as possible our feelings on the subject, representing the views of the people.

The hon. Gentleman then hinted at the existence of some kind of secret defence treaty with Chile. However, I remind him of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's specific assurance to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 28 January that no treaties have been signed with the Government of Chile since 1981.

The hon. Member for Islington, North and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to papers that have been leaked from the Overseas Development Administration. The hon. Member for Linlithgow quoted from a recent newspaper. The House would not expect me to comment on leaked documents. The documents in question were option papers prepared by officials. I am sure that hon. Members would want me to maintain the

constitutional distinction between Ministers, who decide policy, and civil servants, who submit advice and attend to the execution of policy.

Our relations with Chile include a defence element such as training, visits by senior personnel and the supply of loan service personnel. Apart from a period in 1982——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Renton: No. I am not proposing to give way—I do not think that it is customary in the winding up speech of an Adjournment debate. We have lent only one officer at any one time.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that we should apply an arms embargo. We know that there are firmly held views on this subject in certain quarters. As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, a delegation which included him visited the Foreign and Commonwealth Office this morning to hand in a petition. I have made clear previously, notably when answering the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary questions, that we do not believe that a total embargo imposed by Britain in isolation would be effective. We do not have plans for imposing such an embargo.

Our policy on arms sales to Chile nevertheless reflects our concern about human rights abuses, and rightly so. We take great care not to approve the sale to Chile of items that we believe could be used for internal repression. All such equipment requires an export licence before it can be sold overseas. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we consider each item carefully and exercise our judgment prudently. The procedures are painstaking, responsible and, we believe, appropriate.

The hon. Member for Islington, North asked me about Centaur. I am glad that he did. In the perhaps somewhat different circumstances of January 1984, a temporary export licence was granted for a demonstration Centaur vehicle. It was unarmed and unarmoured and no sale of a Centaur has ever been made to Chile. The vehicle is a half track Land-Rover especially suited to use in deserts such as Chile's Atacama desert. If a firm sale had resulted, a firm application for a new export licence would have had to be made. In that hypothetical case, we should look into the request carefully, taking into account all the circumstances prevailing at the time. The hon. Gentleman has made a good fuss about Centaur. I understood from the company involved that arrangements are in hand to return the vehicle to Britain and that there is little prospect of an order.

We also seek other means of influencing opinion in Chile. There has been some criticism of our recent contact with members of the Chilean National Academy of Political and Strategic Studies who visited Britain at the end of June. I should like to ask Opposition Members who might have been critical of that how they expect such officers to learn about the constitutional role of the armed forces in a parliamentary democracy if they never leave their country and are not exposed to democratic opinion. On the occasion of this visit our visitors' programme included lectures and discussions at London university —the Institute of Latin American studies—and at the Civil Service college.

We should consider whether there is an analogy here with overseas students who come from non-democratic countries, but, when in Britain, have an opportunity to study parliamentary democracy, to see the effect of a free press and to study how our Parliament works. I suggest that there is an analogy. The visitors have an opportunity to explore a wide variety of issues, including the role of the Army in a democratic society. That can only be beneficial to their education and development.

Chile has a long tradition of democracy. That is always brought home to us by visiting representatives of Chile's democratic parties. They have made it clear that, although they welcome our encouragement in keeping that tradition alive, it is for the Chilean people to decide the future course that their country will take. They appreciate contact——

The Question having been proposed at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, Mr. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 23 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL

Order for consideration of motion read.

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered upon Thursday 25 July.

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY *(MONEY)*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Yorkshire Water Authority Bill it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of such money under section 90(6) of the Land Drainage Act 1976.—*[Mrs. Fenner.]*

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 25 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

Sixth Forms

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

1. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 533, if he will specify the compelling educational considerations which would lead him to decide against the retention of a good school's sixth form.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): The compelling considerations are likely to include the impact of falling rolls on all schools in the area and the opportunities, including alternative provision, available to the local education authority in order to provide an effective range of educational opportunities for those of secondary school age.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend agree that the sixth forms of our good state schools provide the best education in the country? Will he confirm that the restructuring proposals available to the teachers' unions include elements that will allow recognition of the skills and talents of the staff that make those sixth forms the best?

Mr. Dunn: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right in the general thrust of her comments. It is our intention to seek to retain all that is good at all levels of educational provision in this country. Our policies and results are in stark contrast to those of the Socialist parties on the Opposition side, which would abolish the grammar schools, the assisted places scheme and the independent schools and would seek to abolish the voluntary controlled schools and do a great deal more damage of an extremist type.

Mr. Lilley: Is my hon. Friend aware that all three opposition parties on Hertfordshire county council, which collectively have a majority of seats, propose to abolish sixth forms in our state schools and replace them with separate colleges? Is he aware that the proposal is causing grave alarm among parents, pupils and teachers? Will my hon. Friend give me an assurance that if any such proposals are put to him he will veto them?

Mr. Dunn: The legal position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not permit me to give such an undertaking. However, I assure my hon. Friend that it is for Hertfordshire county council to review school provision and to make such proposals as are necessary, and they will be very carefully considered by my right hon. Friend if they should come before him.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister accept that we must balance the need for a wide curriculum at A-level, which may necessitate the provision of tertiary colleges, with the need to maintain community schools? Will he, therefore, reject the one-sided and narrow advice of the hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley)?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman falls into the category of a Socialist in education. He wishes to impose one model of provision on all local education authorities.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I said the opposite of that.

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman did not. He implied that a comprehensive system with a tertiary college was by far the best. I say that that is not the case.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Andrew Bennett, question No. 2.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that it has been agreed that we should take this question at the end. Is that correct?

Mr. Speaker: If the Secretary of State says so.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I understood that that arrangement was made with your agreement, Mr. Speaker.

International Youth Year

3. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on International Youth Year and the youth service.

Mr. Dunn: The Government are directly supporting International Youth Year by grant-aiding the four national co-ordinating committees in the United Kingdom. A very wide range of organisations, particularly voluntary youth organisations and local authorities, are involved in activities relating to the year. Many activities in Government programmes have relevance to the objectives of the year. Among positive youth service initiatives this year, the Department has issued an important circular about the planning and management of the service.

Mr. Boyes: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that John O'Leary, writing in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* on Britain's contribution to International Youth Year, said:

"declarations of support and minimal funding smack of tokenism"?
Is the hon. Gentleman concerned about Britain's meagre, pathetic and contemptuous contribution to this fund, especially when small countries such as Australia can give $4 million and Canada $12 million?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman must accept from me that youth service expenditure goes into a number of heads across the whole of local government activity, not just the local education authority service or direct funding by us. Total grant-aid from the four home education departments to International Youth Year national co-ordinating committees in the United Kingdom from the beginning of funding until the end of this financial year is expected to be greater than £500,000.

Mr. Forth: Has my hon. Friend any evidence that these so-called designated years do any good to anyone at any time? Does he share my view that they are an excuse for inactivity and the very tokenism to which the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) referred? Will my hon. Friend give the most careful consideration before committing public funds in future to one of these silly years?

Mr. Dunn: I feel that I should be speechless in the light of that question. However, I share some of my hon. Friend's concern. His point of view will be noted not only by me but by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Foster: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the youth service, because of its rather weak statutory base, is always squeezed when the Government cut education expenditure? How does he justify the type of statements that he has made from the Dispatch Box in International Youth Year knowing full well that the youth service is being severely reduced throughout the country?

Mr. Dunn: I always speak with as much certainty as I can. Aggregate expenditure in the local authority sector on the youth service rose by 8 per cent. in real terms between 1982-83 and 1983-84, following an increase of 5 per cent. in real terms between 1981-82 and 1982-83. That does not support the hon. Gentleman's point.

School Buildings

4. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding funds for maintenance and repair of school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: Within the last few months my right hon. Friend has received the report of Her Majesty's inspectors on the effects on education provision of LEA expenditure policies in 1984 and the 1985 report of the expenditure steering group on education, both of which consider the repair and maintenance of the educational building fabric among other issues. The question of school repair and maintenance was also discussed at this month's meeting of NEDC. In addition, my right hon. Friend and I receive letters on this subject from time to time.

Mr. Pike: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that LEAs are facing a crisis with regard to their buildings? For example, Lancashire county council estimates that it needs to spend £32·7 million this year to put its school buildings in order. The council is able to spend only £6·1 million because of the Government's revenue and capital restraints. Is it not time that the Government provided sufficient money for councils to deal with their buildings and stop deterioration, otherwise there will be consequent effects on education?

Mr. Dunn: The allocation for Lancashire is already the second highest given to any LEA for 1985-86.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is always, even in education, a limited amount of money available within the budget, however sympathetic we may be? Does he agree that if a greater proportion of that money is taken up in wages and salaries a lower proportion will be expended on maintaining school buildings and other vital school equipment? Does my hon. Friend agree also that moderation in pay settlements must encourage local authorities to spend more money on maintaining school buildings?

Mr. Dunn: My hon. Friend's interpretation is right. I am pleased to say that since 1978-79 local education authorities have increased their spending on repair and maintenance of educational buildings. Spending increased by 8 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1983-84 —the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. Freud: Does the Minister accept that some local authorities are incapable of solving their present financial problems in respect of rebuilding and repairing schools? Will he ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to allow them a one-off grant?

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman's comments will be in the *Official Report*, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will probably read them. If costs can be maintained and savings made elsewhere, our plans for 1985-86 should provide scope for some improvement in the level of expenditure per pupil on repairs and maintenance in many authorities.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is important for school buildings to be properly maintained, so that they do not become damaged or derelict? Does he accept that some pupils can contribute to the maintenance of buildings, as I know from experience? Could that be considered?

Mr. Dunn: I am perfectly prepared to take on board anything that my hon. Friend says, in view of his long experience in the education service.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Is the Minister aware that some school buildings which I visited recently are in such a condition that if they came under the offices and factories legislation they would have been closed by now?

Mr. Dunn: I take seriously the concern expressed in the reports and in comments made today about the state of many schools and college buildings. It is clear that that is the accumulated result of inadequate expenditure on repair and maintenance of the building stock for many years.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: When my hon. Friend considers the question of schools which have amalgamated because of falling rolls and which now require larger sports and recreational facilities to cope with the larger numbers of pupils, will he bear in mind that Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Lancashire have meticulously raised money to repair their buildings, and that they cover 50 per cent. of the children in Lancashire?

Mr. Dunn: I understand precisely my hon. Friend's point. However, if the Labour party had its way, there would be no Church schools about which she could be concerned.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: In his opening remarks the Minister mentioned the National Economic Development Council. Does he accept that the Department, in its evidence to the NEDC, stresses that a significant number of our pupils and students are now being taught in wholly inadequate accommodation? What will the Government do about finding extra money for local authorities and to remove the penalties in the present rate support grant system from local authorities which want their children to be taught in decent school buildings?

Mr. Dunn: On the question of making savings in the education service, I direct the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Audit Commission's report, which found that real savings can be made on the provision for school caretaking, cleaning and meals. I commend that line of action to many local authorities, which are at present not doing enough in that respect.

Vocational Qualifications

5. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the review of vocational qualifications currently being undertaken by the Manpower Services Commission.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Peter Brooke): In paragraph 39 of the White Paper "Education and Training for Young People", Cmnd. 9482, the Government invited the Manpower Services Commission, together with the Departments concerned, to review the range of vocational qualifications offered by educational, professional, and industry-based standard-setting bodies. A group has been established for that purpose under the chairmanship of a distinguished industrialist Mr. Oscar de Ville. The Department of Education and Science is jointly involved with the Manpower Services Commission in servicing the group. An interim report is expected in September, and a final report in April next year.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister tell the House what consultation has taken place with those involved in the colleges and other institutions which provide the appropriate courses, and what action has been taken to overcome the fears of many educationists that this is merely another endeavour by the MSC to undermine standards and quality in education and training?

Mr. Brooke: Regarding the first question, the education service was included in a working group, which, between the publication of the White Paper and my right hon. Friend's announcement in July, worked on the scheme. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's second question is that it is a joint review. The MSC was placed in the lead in the review's establishment because of its responsibilities under the Government for the development of training policy. The review deals with standards of training and competence in industry and vocational education qualifications, such as City and Guilds.

Mr. Lawler: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is widespread support in industry for vocational qualifications that are taken at schools, such as the certificate of pre-vocational education, to count towards credits on craft-based qualifications and towards any qualifications that are taken at the end of the two-year YTS scheme?

Mr. Brooke: I assure my hon. Friend that the review which I have mentioned has an interest in qualifications such as the CPVE, not least because of the potential links between that and the youth training scheme.

Youth Training Scheme

6. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the two-year youth training scheme.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has received no direct representations, but the proposals approved by the Government were the subject of extensive consultations with a number of interests.

Mr. O'Brien: Now that the two-year youth training scheme is a permanent feature of education and training, will the Minister take the initiative and support education and our youth by introducing an integrated system for 16 to 19-year-olds? Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the injustice and the inconsistency in providing resources for training/education while still denying certain resources and finances for full-time education? Will he take the initiative in removing this anomaly?

Mr. Brooke: The review group is much involved in considering the ability of trainees under the youth training scheme to emerge from the two-year scheme with qualifications. They will have the opportunity of 20 weeks off-the-job training over two years to seek recognised vocational qualifications.

Mr. Haselhurst: Will the establishment of the two-year youth training scheme, which I heartily welcome, bring into sharper focus the relationship between training and education and the argument that has been advanced by many head teachers that perhaps children younger than 16 years could benefit from some of the elements that are contained in a youth training scheme?

Mr. Brooke: I concur with my hon. Friend that, despite statutory differences, 16 years does not in itself represent a borderline and that there are applications at a lower age level.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

7. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' pay dispute.

9. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the teachers' dispute.

10. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the present teachers' pay dispute.

13. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' pay dispute.

17. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current status of the teachers' pay award negotiations.

19. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current state of negotiations in the teachers' pay dispute.

21. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I very much regret that this harmful and unnecessary dispute continues. The employers have indicated a willingness to increase what is on offer, if the unions are prepared to show flexibility. For my part, I have offered additional Government resources next year for teachers' pay and to help meet the cost of removing midday supervision from teachers' standard duties provided there is satisfactory progress by October towards our objectives for improving the quality and standards in the schools. Only on this basis are the Government willing to see additional resources made available.

Mr. Nellist: In the Secretary of State's attempts to resolve the teachers' pay dispute, how does he regard one of the Prime Minister's answers last Thursday, which told us that a senior civil servant in the Department of Education and Science is to receive a 30 per cent. rise in his wages, which is six times that which is being offered to the teachers? Was that "helpful" intervention by the Prime Minister naïve and stupid, or merely arrogant? Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that that will stiffen the resolve of teachers and their unions to get a just settlement and a decent wage for teachers?

Sir Keith Joseph: Exactly the same purposes as were being served by the Top Salaries Review Body, most of whose recommendations the Government have accepted, are being served by the additional taxpayers' money which I, on behalf of the Government, have been offering for over a year to transform the teachers' career and promotion structure, if they will only negotiate.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, without condoning the strike action that is being taken by some teachers, there are grounds for being concerned about the low level of morale in the profession? Anything that he can say which reiterates his appreciation of the good work that many teachers are doing will be of great comfort to them and to the parents of children at school.

Sir Keith Joseph: I can only repeat what I have said many times, that many teachers do excellent work, often in difficult conditions. As for morale, I wish I could be sure that all teachers realise that the Government have been offering for a year additional taxpayers' money in order to transform promotion and career prospects for teachers.

Mr. Baldry: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is the Government's intention to have a well motivated properly remunerated, well rewarded teaching profession which is able to recruit and retain good quality candidates, so that, for example, good quality chemistry graduates may feel that a career in teaching will be attractive? Will my right hon. Friend clearly state the sort of restructuring proposals which he would be able to commend to his colleagues in the Cabinet?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have made it plain for over a year that the Government are prepared to find additional money from the taxpayer in order to transform the promotion prospects of teachers. I hope that the teachers' representatives and the employers will soon get down to negotiating such a package, so that this opportunity to improve the schooling of our children is not lost for the second year running.

Mr. Dormand: Will the Secretary of State confirm that he was prepared to accept a higher settlement than that which was publicised, and that it was acceptable to the teachers but was blocked by the Prime Minister? Does he not recognise the strength of feeling among teachers, and that the teachers' case is overwhelmingly supported by parents? How much more damage is he prepared to see done to our schools?

Sir Keith Joseph: I respect the hon. Gentleman, but the first part of his question is based on a complete misconception. The hon. Gentleman is wholly remote from the truth in the suggestion contained in the first part of his question. As to the second part of his question, I wish that he and his colleagues in the Opposition parties would address their minds to the Government's overwhelming priority, which is better schooling for all children of all abilities. That is the great purpose that the Government are seeking to serve, and I hope that the Opposition will give their support to that purpose.

Mr. Proctor: Is it not the case that, in negotiations over many previous years, pay and conditions of employment have not gone together? My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on trying to bring pay and conditions together in these negotiations.

Sir Keith Joseph: If my hon. Friend is saying that in recent years pay and conditions have not been negotiated together, I regret that that is the truth. I am grateful to him for encouraging the efforts which the Government are making to bring the two together.

Mr. Flannery: When will the Secretary of State face reality? In the Select Committee this morning I told him that if the Government had given the £250 million to the teachers which they gave gratuitously to Johnson Matthey, we would not have all this trouble. Is it not a fact that, as a result of all the money being paid to generals, admirals and top civil servants, the Government do not know where they are? While talking about the subject this morning, the Secretary of State said the opposite to what the Prime Minister said about vouchers. He said that he was against them. The other afternoon the Prime Minister said that she was for them.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman is misleading himself. If he looks at the record he will find that in the Select Committee this morning I said that vouchers, after careful examination by the Government, were off the agenda. I have not said I am against them. On the first point, I must seek once again to try to recruit the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues for the great purpose of improving schooling for the children of all abilities of this country. If yet another year passes with an indiscriminate increase to the teachers and nothing in return negotiated by union leaders, we shall not make progress to what should be a common purpose, namely, better schooling for children of all abilities.

Mr. Fisher: If the purpose behind the pay offer to which the right hon. Gentleman referred earlier is to recruit, retain and motivate people of the right quality, how can that purpose be fulfilled by two such enormously different pay offers as that to the teachers and that to top salaried people? Is that the reason why, at a conference last week, the right hon. Gentleman's remarks were greeted with cries of "Rubbish", "Shame" and "Crap" — *[Interruption.]* Is it not time that the Secretary of State resigned?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a very nice word to use.

Mr. Fisher: I was quoting from a newspaper report, Mr. Speaker.

Sir Keith Joseph: Even if some remarks of mine are not greeted as immediate revealed truth, I still maintain that the purpose behind the Top Salaries Review Body's recommendations and the purpose behind the Government's offer to the teachers of additional taxpayers' money for the right package are precisely the same—to recruit, retain and motivate, in this case, teachers of the right quality.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend disregard the extravagant and crude language of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and look at the offer of remuneration for midday supervision by teachers, which is very valuable? Is there any reason why negotiations on his offer of remuneration to teachers undertaking midday duties should not be started with those teachers and unions prepared to talk?

Sir Keith Joseph: Even from my hon. Friend I am not prepared to see unravelled the package on which the Government's offer of additional money from the taxpayer is based.

Mr. Radice: Can the Secretary of State say whether, in the Cabinet, he supported the decision to give so-called top people very large increases in salaries?

Mr. Maclean: What did Labour do in 1978?

Mr. Radice: Does the right hon. Gentleman even now not understand the outrage of paying his Department's chief civil servant an extra 30 per cent. to supervise a policy of limiting the pay increases of classroom teachers to 6 per cent. at the most? I have to tell the right hon. Gentleman that, for sheer inconsistency, insensitivity and bad timing, the decision on top people's pay is hard to beat.

Sir Keith Joseph: The answer to the hon Gentleman's first question is yes. The answer to the second part of his question is that in 1978 the Labour Cabinet accepted the recommendation of the Top Salaries Review Body for salary increases of 35 per cent. for the grades covered. Why is what was right for a Labour Government in 1978 wrong for a Conservative Government now?

Mr. Freud: Are not applications to enter teaching training colleges vastly down this year compared with last year, and is that not proof of the argument that we must pay teachers more if we are to attract the right people?

Sir Keith Joseph: Even though the hon. Gentleman's factual assumption is wrong, because broadly the quantity is still at about the same level, he is still right in general to be worried about the quality and types of skills being recruited to the teaching profession. That is why the Government are concerned to find an answer to the long, continued shortage of certain skills in teaching and why we are anxious to make sure that we are recruiting and retaining the right quality and motivation. Those are all reasons why the Government have thought fit for more than a year to offer additional taxpayers' money for a package that will help to achieve all those purposes.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Greg Knight, No. 11. Mr. Michael Colvin, No. 12. Mr. Michael Stern, No. 14.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order afterwards. It takes up time out of questions.

Mr. Thompson: Question No. 8, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I absolutely withdraw. I apologise to the hon. Member.

Burnham Committee

8. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the present and future representation of teachers and local authority representatives on the Burnham committee.

Sir Keith Joseph: On 2 May I announced my decision to review the composition of the teachers' panel of the Burnham primary and secondary committee. All the teacher unions have now submitted relevant membership figures, which are under consideration within the Department. I expect to complete the review before the end of the calendar year. I have no present plans to make wider changes in repesentation or to the negotiating machinery generally.

Mr. Thompson: While I welcome and support my right hon. Friend's reply, may I ask him whether he agrees that the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 is outdated, that the Burnham structure should be abolished as soon as possible and that a new general teachers' council should have the opportunity to advise on matters of pay structure and assessment?

Sir Keith Joseph: I certainly agree that at present the Burnham structure does not seem to have many friends, but that does not mean that it is obvious what could be put in its place, legislative time permitting, which would be better. Nevertheless, the Government are considering the options and will be glad to receive the views of the local education authorities. I am not able to agree with my hon. Friend that a general teachers' council would necessarily be a reinforcement to educational quality, but I am willing to listen to arguments

Mr. Stanbrook: Is there not a better way of negotiating teachers' salaries in place of one which, when there is a disagreement, does so much damage to the children, the teachers themselves and the parents?

Sir Keith Joseph: I think that my hon. Friend is wrong in attaching all those consequences to the structure itself. It is the representatives of some of the teachers' unions who have drawn those damaging consequences upon the children.

Education Prospects

14. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on future prospects for education in the light of the continuing teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's commitment to improved standards remains firm, and we shall continue to pursue the policies for improvement set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" with vigour and determination.

Mr. Stern: In relation to the continuing dispute, will my right hon. Friend confirm that arbitration has been on offer to both sides since virtually the first day of the dispute and that such arbitration, if it took place, would take place in the light of the current circumstances, and with no predisposition to any offer which is now or might be on the table?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend is asking me to agree to that which I cannot immediately accept. Arbitration is available, if both sides agree.

Mr. Leadbitter: Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that the future prospects of the teaching profession and of education depend on an acknowledgment in the House by him that, on present available information, teachers' pay in real terms is below that recommended by Houghton in the mid-1970s? Will he confirm that the present offer still places teachers' salaries, in real terms, below the levels of the Houghton recommendations?

Sir Keith Joseph: I totally reject any idea of a return to comparability. The teachers' increase under Houghton was removed entirely within a very few years, before the end of the life of the then Labour Government, by the inflationary storm to which it helped give rise. Therefore, I think that the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong to encourage more inflation which is itself, in the words of his former party Leader, the father and mother of unemployment.

National Union of Teachers

15. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet the leaders of the National Union of Teachers.

Sir Keith Joseph: I had agreed to meet union leaders jointly with employer representatives on 9 May, but the National Union of Teachers declined. I have made plain my readiness to meet representatives of the teachers' side of the Burnham committee to discuss the proposals I made on 21 May.

Mr. Barron: When will there be such a meeting with representatives of the NUT? One is inevitable. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the NUT how the professionalism that he claims for teachers is reflected in his ideological statements about how teachers should teach and what salary they should get? In view of public opinion, much of it from behind the right hon. Gentleman, which we shall hear again later this week, the Secretary of State must be aware that there is a great contradiction between his treatment of members of the NUT and other people.

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman has made so many points that I do not know where to begin. I am willing to meet representatives of any of the teacher unions, including the NUT. It is they who are emphasising professionalism, not me. I repeat that the Top Salaries Review Body recommendation was supported by a Labour Government. Why was it right in 1978 and not now?

Mr. Fallon: Would the agenda for such a meeting include the second report of the National Council for Educational Standards? Would my right hon. Friend like to comment on that report's findings?

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not want to be tempted too far, but the findings of that report give plenty of ground for thought and analysis.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

16. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to meet the chairman of the Burnham committee to discuss teachers' pay.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Fisher: Without risking quotation, will the Secretary of State seek to gain the agreement of the chairman of the Burnham committee on two points: first, that the dispute should be brought to an end as soon as possible in the interests of children and teachers; and, secondly, that the review body recommendation last week makes that far more difficult to achieve? Will the right hon. Gentleman get the agreement of, or listen to, the chairman of the Burnham committee, who will tell him that only new money from the Government can achieve an end to the dispute? Will the right hon. Gentleman take that on board?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the role of the chairman of the Burnham committee. He fills an entirely independent role and presides over the meetings of the two sides of the committee. He takes no direct part in the negotiations. I am always happy to meet him, but I do not think that such a meeting would contribute directly to a settlement of the dispute.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of the Burnham committee, will he draw his attention to the fact that these so-called independent review bodies produce more problems than they find answers?

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not anticipate a meeting, and certainly not one on the substance of the dispute.

Selective Secondary Education

18. **Mr. Hubbard-Miles** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his current policy towards the retention of selective secondary education.

20. **Mrs. Rumbold** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards grammar schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is content with the existing legal framework, which gives freedom to each local education authority to maintain its existing pattern of school organisation and, if it wishes, to propose changes in that pattern. Using this freedom, some local education authorities continue to maintain selective secondary schools. The freedom to submit statutory proposals to reintroduce grammar schools was restored by the Education Act 1979.

Mr. Hubbard-Miles: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Does he agree that many parents would like the opportunity to consider an alternative? Is he considering any proposals to widen parental choice?

Mr. Dunn: We are always considering proposals to widen parental choice. Our stance is in stark contrast to that of the parties opposite, all of which agree with the abolition of grammar schools and parental choice as Conservative Members understand it.

Mrs. Rumbold: Are there serious plans to reintroduce direct grant grammar schools to help children who are deprived of an excellent education because they come from areas where they are unable to receive an education according to their abilities? If so, when is my hon. Friend likely to produce them?

Mr. Dunn: As I said a few moments ago, we are continuing at all times to consider the various options of organisation available to us. Undoubtedly in the fullness of time certain proposals will be made known, but I am not yet in a position to say what they are.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Can the Minister explain why the Catholic sector in the northern part of the borough of Trafford has no grammar school provision, only secondary modern schools, when Trafford is a selective authority and 40 per cent. of primary school children go on to grammar schools? Does the Minister accept that that effectively reduces the secondary modern schools to "sink" schools?

Mr. Dunn: The Conservative party has always regretted the passing of the grammar and direct grant schools. I assume from what the hon. Gentleman said that he is in favour of the total abolition of selective schools in the borough of Trafford.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Prime Minister aware that her Minister for Housing and Construction, speaking in Newcastle last week, described the board and lodging accommodation used by homeless people as bad, badly managed and filthy? I prefer the description squalid, exploitation and humiliation. Will the right hon. Lady turn her attention to the conditions in which the vast majority of those using such accommodation live and introduce new laws to enforce satisfactory conditions?

The Prime Minister: On the whole, housing accommodation in this country has improved during the lifetime of this Government. That is a fact. The hon. Gentleman referred to the supplementary benefit board and lodging payments. He is aware that it will be a matter for debate in the House later this week.

Sir Edward du Cann: As the British merchant fleet now carries only one quarter of the total of United Kingdom trade—a statistic which has the most alarming implications for our economy and defence—will my right hon. Friend take time during the recess to send for and study the report now being prepared in the Ministry of Defence in response to requests, complaints and anxieties voiced on both sides of the House, with a view to proposing, I hope, early remedial action?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend knows, I am very much aware of the importance of a merchant fleet to the defence of this country. I am taking a close interest in the report being prepared by the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Hattersley: Since the Government have awarded pay increases of up to 46 per cent. to safeguard the quality and morale of generals, judges and civil servants, why will they not allow the additional 1 per cent. which would have the same effect on teachers and help resolve the present damaging dispute?

The Prime Minister: This year the Government have implemented the review body reports on nurses and midwives, at a total cost in a full year of £314 million, on doctors and dentists, at a total cost of £122 million, on the armed forces at a total cost of £205 million, and the Top Salaries Review Body proposals at a total cost of £10 million. We have implemented all the reports of the review bodies.

As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, because he was a member of a Government who similarly implemented such reports, there is an understanding that successive Governments have accepted that recommendations would not be modified unless there were clear and compelling reasons to do so. These have been modified only by being staged where necessary—otherwise all have been treated in the same way.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Prime Minister is so attracted by the 1978 precedent, why has she not chosen to follow it in staging this pay award over three years or more? Why has she disregarded the 1978 precedent, when an inquiry was simultaneously set up into the problems of low pay in the public service? That issue seems to interest the Prime Minister not at all. All that she means, when she quotes the figures, is that she is prepared to subsidise extravagance for the rich but will not afford justice for the generality of people. Has she no understanding that social justice must play a part in economic policy and that if it does not that economic policy is doomed, as the right hon. Lady has demonstrated in the last six years? Will she now answer a simple question—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."]—about the social justice? Will she justify a policy which authorises massive pay increases for the well-to-do on one day and abolishes wages council protection for the very poor on the next?

The Prime Minister: The 1978 report recommended in July 1978 that that report be staged and completed by April 1980—July 1978 to April 1980—whereas this report says:

"We urge the Government to implement our recommendations in full."

I emphasise "in full." That is quite different from what the right hon. Gentleman said. Nevertheless, we have staged the payments; nothing from April, half from July and the rest from March. To answer the other points that the right hon. Gentleman made, the 1978 report gave average increases of 35 per cent., whereas this report on the Civil Service gives average increases of 12·2 per cent.

Mr. Hattersley: Now answer my question.

The Prime Minister: Although those were average increases of 35 per cent. — *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman asked me a number of questions and I intend to answer them.

Mr. Hattersley: Go on, answer them.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman was a member of a Government — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is pointless for right hon. and hon. Members to tell the Prime Minister to answer the question when she is seeking to do so.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), as a member of the then Labour Government, accepted that report, as did Labour Members then supporting that Government, and as *The Times* commented the next day:

"The Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer received general support from Labour MPs for the big increases in pay recommended by the Boyle Committee."

The right hon. Gentleman is guilty of cant and humbug.

Mr. Hattersley: The House and the country will have noticed that the Prime Minister did not even attempt to answer the question that I put to her, from which we must assume confirmation of what we know already, that social justice is not a consideration that enters into the thinking of her party.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's questions were answered, and he does not like that. He was a member of a Government who accepted average increases for the top of the Civil Service, the top salaries review, of 35 per cent. We, on the same basis, have accepted average increases of 12·2 per cent. The whole of the Labour party supported those increases — *[Interruption.]* — as did the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who is now Leader of the SDP, and as did the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who was engaged on the Lib-Lab pact. They supported them because they were reasonable salaries for people with onerous duties to carry out and because they were necessary to retain, recruit and motivate those people.

Sir John Farr asked the Prime Minister if she will list her offical engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Farr: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to study the disgraceful and misleading film on the police that has been produced by the GLC? Does she think it right that ratepayers' money should have been spent in this way? Is there any way in which she can prevent members of the public having the film thrust upon them, particularly people in schools and youth clubs, where it is due to be circulated free of charge?

The Prime Minister: I have seen many pamphlets connected with this matter and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has paid great attention to them. I believe that Londoners will recognise them as the crude political propaganda that they are. It is another reason why the majority of Londoners will be grateful that the Local Government Act, the measure to abolish the GLC, has now passed all its stages.

Dr. Owen: The 1978 Top Salaries Review Body contributed to the sense of unfairness that led to the winter of discontent in 1979 — *[Interruption.]* There is not much hope for hon. Members if we cannot learn from mistakes. I ask the Prime Minister whether she can learn from anything that has been done by anyone else. The sure lesson is that pay comparability with the private sector for top civil servants is all right, but that it is not all right for other civil servants. The right hon. Lady's Government abolished the independent pay research body. That is indefensible. Will the Prime Minister explain what is now to be done about the civil service grades which hitherto have been deprived of comparability?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman fully supported the review body when he was Foreign Secretary, in order to stay Foreign Secretary, but he now contemptuously disowns it in opposition.

Dr. Owen: Is it not possible to make a mistake?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman deserves to be treated with utter contempt.

Mr. Amery: May we have an estimate of how much of the £10 million that is to be paid in top salaries will return to the Exchequer in income tax? Does my right hon. Friend agree that since hon. Members on both sides of the House have voted to improve their financial position they should have some humility in discussing this matter?

The Prime Minister: I cannot give my right hon. Friend a precise estimate. He is aware that the top rate of tax is 60 per cent. The numbers in the Civil Service top grades have been substantially reduced during this Government's lifetime. A total of 814 people were in the top posts when we came to power; now only 654 are in post. Numbers have been substantially reduced. That grade of people costs the country less in real terms now than when we came to power.

Mrs. Renée Short: Is the Prime Minister aware that the West Midlands region, one of the most densely populated regions in the country, has 100 fewer consultants in post than the national average? Is she further aware that the region has issued a priority list of 40 consultant posts which it wants to fill immediately? Will she use her influence with the Secretary of State for Social Services to ensure that resources are made available to make those appointments?

The Prime Minister: The last Labour Government set up the Resource Allocations Working Party and we have continued it. The object was to ensure that the Health Service was as similar as possible in terms of service to people in all areas of the country. That causes problems to hospitals from which resources are removed. Sometimes we do not achieve the credit deserved from hospitals to which resources are given. If there is a discrepancy, as the hon. Lady suggests, I assume that it will be dealt with by the Resource Allocations Working Party.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruinvels: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on successfully concluding the extradition treaty with Spain.

Is it not intolerable that British criminals now residing in Spain will get away with their crimes because the legislation is not retrospective? Will my right hon. Friend call an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister of Spain to arrange for such criminals to be booted out, to come back to this country to face the consequences of their illegal acts?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and his team of officials on the way in which they have negotiated this extradition treaty with Spain. Although, as my hon. Friend said, it will not be retrospective, it will apply to anyone who enters or re-enters Spanish territory after it comes into force. Some of the United Kingdom fugitives in Spain may have to leave the country and re-enter to renew their residential permits. Others may be affected by a new law which gives the Spanish authorities stronger powers to expel undesirable aliens, so it should be an effective treaty.

Mr. Molyneaux: Has the Prime Minister read early-day motion No. 921, and if so does she accept the constitutional principle that it asserts?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is referring to talks that are at present continuing between the Government in Dublin and the Government in the United Kingdom. He will be aware of the communiqué that was issued after Chequers, and of the full constitutional position, which protects the Unionists in Northern Ireland. Discussions continue, and should any agreement be reached, it will be a matter for debate in the House.

Later—

Sir Kenneth Lewis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Member's point concerned with questions?

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Yes, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, may I revert to the question that was put to the Prime Minister by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), when he sought to cane hon. Members for doing rather well out of the previous pay review body? In case it may be misunderstood, may I put it on the record——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a continuation of Question Time, and the hon. Gentleman, who has been here much longer than I have, must know that that is not in order.

Sir Kenneth Lewis *rose——*

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Sir K. Lewis) knows that the whole House disapproves of the practice of continuing Question Time. I am sorry that he was not called.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that we have a great deal of work ahead of us this week, and there is an end of term atmosphere in the Chamber today, but you may have noticed, as I did, that during the early questions on education, when there were few Members in the Chamber, it was nevertheless very difficult to hear the contributions of one or two Members. I am sure that other hon. Members had the same difficulty. Similar difficulties must have been experienced in the Public and Press Galleries. That being so, is it possible to remind hon. Members that they are professional public speakers, and that everyone is entitled to hear what they have to say?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the House has any difficulty in hearing the hon. Member.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Further to my point of order——

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I were to be successful in catching your eye during Question Time and were to pose a question related to someone else's supplementary question and tried to introduce a new topic, you would rightly correct and admonish me.

Bearing in mind the fact that there were howls of outrage from Conservative Members when my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) merely mentioned the name of an American card game, will you, Mr. Speaker, as guardian and protector of the Chamber, do something when the Prime Minister waffles on ad nauseum about any topic other than the subject of the question? Can you constrain her to confine herself to the subject?

Mr. Speaker: I am protector of the Back Benches, but today the Prime Minister was called upon to answer a somewhat lengthy question from the Opposition Front Bench. That is fair enough.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: On another point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, a totally different point of order?

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Yes, Sir. Can you confirm for me that we had to wait five years, because our pay rise was phased over a whole Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot remember.

Corporal Punishment

The following questions stood upon the Order Paper:

2. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about corporal punishment in schools.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): The Government will not proceed further with the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill during this Session and will now consider the appropriate course for the next Session.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Secretary of State confirm that at the moment any teacher who applies corporal punishment to any pupil without the parents' consent would be extremely foolish and would be unprofessional, as he would be in contempt of the European Court ruling? Will he also confirm that it could lead to the Government spending anything up to £120,000—the equivalent of 13 or 14 teachers' salaries—in defending such a case, and to the pupil receiving substantial damages? Will the Secretary of State make it clear that no teacher should apply corporal punishment where the parents disapprove? As the Conservative party claims always to be the upholder of law and order, what steps will the right hon. Gentleman take to implement the court ruling, as the Government have already had four years to consider this matter?

Sir Keith Joseph: The teachers, along with all other citizens, are subject to the law of the land. As for the options before the Government, I have told the House that we are considering, for the next Session, which of the options to take.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): Does my right hon. Friend accept that a large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House, many people in the teaching profession and many parents are pleased that the Bill is going no further? Does he further accept this does not represent some silly, Left-wing plot, and that corporal punishment is not the prerogative of the far Right? Is it not time that far more sense was talked about this issue in the House.

Sir Keith Joseph: I must say in support of my hon. Friend—although only to a limited extent—that there are many parents and teachers who, on the whole, would prefer that the right of moderate corporal punishment should remain within the decision of parents and teachers. That having been said, we have an obligation to the Court, to which we have subscribed, and the Government are considering the options.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Now that the Bill is not going through, which we welcome, will the Secretary of State for Education and Science devote the time that he would have spent on Third Reading and Report to resolving the teachers' pay dispute?

Sir Keith Joseph: I wish that my time alone could solve the teachers' pay dispute.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, contrary to the suggestion of the Opposition, the present law is as it always was and that nothing that has come out of Strasbourg changes the position of this country?

Sir Keith Joseph: That is what I tried to say in answer to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who asked this question.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not utterly disgraceful that the Government should have introduced such an unworkable Bill which everbody knew, ultimately, they would have to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to get rid of? I see that on the Front Bench Ministers are smiling, but did we not in the Standing Committee warn them of the unworkability of the Bill? Is this not proof that the vast majority of the Government's policies are similarly unworkable and that they should withdraw all of them?

Sir Keith Joseph: In fact, the Bill passed its Second Reading in the other place without a Division.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Now that he is quite rightly dropping this ludicrous Bill, will my right hon. Friend look at another option that he rejected on Second Reading, which is to do nothing?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend gets a certain amount of support for suggesting that which this country has never done, that is, to break a treaty obligation.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Has the Secretary of State taken on board the fact that he was warned on Second Reading that his Bill was completely unworkable? Now that he has had recourse to common sense, will he give instructions that no corporal punishment will take place until there has been another debate in this House?

Sir Keith Joseph: Even if I wished to do so, I have no such power. It is this House that controls, subject to the courts, the law. As for common sense, I never pretended that the exemption proposals that lay behind the Bill were without problems. But abolition has its problems, too, since we should not like to override the views of a large minority, if it be a minority, of parents and teachers who would prefer to keep the option.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend not accept that corporal punishment is an essential and vital sanction in schools? Does he not also accept that, without discipline and structure, little progress can be made in education? Will he therefore introduce legislation into this House to enable corporal punishment to continue in our schools, in accordance with the wishes of the majority of teachers and parents?

Sir Keith Joseph: I should like to agree with my hon. Friend, but there are two reasons why I cannot do so. First, many schools seem to achieve order and discipline without the use of corporal punishment. Secondly, we have a treaty obligation.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would it not be fair to say that the Secretary of State has deserved and got, in his own words, a moderate thrashing on this subject? What has he learned?

Sir Keith Joseph: I have learned a proper sense of respect for the decisions of both Houses of this sovereign Parliament.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. Friend accept, without

mincing words, that one of the root causes of football crowd disorder and complete lack of respect for authority is the lack of discipline in the home and definitely in the schools? If that is accepted, would it not be sensible, for once, to defy the conventions of Europe and reintroduce corporal punishment into our schools to try to restore order and discipline to this country?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend's objective, but I do not quite share his self confidence in the diagnosis.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Secretary of State not agree that the freedom of parental choice in these matters, which was secured by the European Court, should not be put in question by any further decision of the Government about the right of petition to the Commission which the Government will have to take in the next Session of Parliament? Will he give a guarantee that, whatever may be the Government's views about renewing the right of individual petition, he will bring the law of this land into conformity with the judgment of the European Court?

Sir Keith Joseph: If we did not accept such an obligation, we would not have introduced the Bill and I would not have spoken of deciding which option we should follow next Session.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the whole episode is a tribute to the wisdom of the other place, and that the role played by the Upper House in our constitution has been more than amply fulfilled by this excellent example? Therefore, will he give very long and careful thought before introducing any other Bill which could run into the same common sense in the Upper House?

Sir Keith Joseph: I say yes, with qualifications, to the first part of my hon. Friend's question, but I can agree with the second part.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): In all seriousness, is it not a sad commentary on Britain, which has such a proud record of civilised values and standing, that almost alone among west European countries we should still be debating this issue? Why does not the right hon. Gentleman introduce a one clause Bill to abolish corporal punishment, and fall in line with all other civilised practices?

Sir Keith Joseph: That would run against the views of a substantial minority of parents and teachers, and I think that this House should hesitate before encouraging the Government to do that.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his job would be much easier if we gave six months' notice to leave the EEC?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend's comment would be more suitably addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, but I have heard it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the vast majority of parents and teachers are opposed to the abolition of corporal punishment, particularly until suitable alternatives have been thought out? Will he resist Labour and Liberal party pressure which is designed to take us to a Swedish situation in which five-year-old children are encouraged to take their parents to court for smacking them?

Sir Keith Joseph: There is ample evidence from this short debate that the differences of opinion here are reflected in the country as well.

Royal Dockyards (Devonport and Rosyth)

3.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the royal dockyards, at Devonport and Rosyth.

On 17 April I outlined a number of options for the future management of the dockyards which have an annual turnover of over £400 million. They ranged from a trading fund in the public sector to full privatisation.

I said at the time that the Government's preferred strategy was for a scheme of commercial management and I initiated a period of consultation with a view to a final decision before Parliament rose for the summer recess. I have now had the opportunity to consider the many representations submitted during the consultation period, including the timely reports of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence.

There is almost unanimous agreement that a significant change is needed in the way that the dockyards are run. Indeed, the House will be aware that action has been called for in reports associated with the Mallabar committee in 1971, with Hughes in 1973, with Brightling in 1978 and with my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) in 1980. Last year we had the PAC stating:

"We regard determined—and if need be radical—action as essential to resolve the fundamental issues still outstanding".

But little has happened as a consequence of the reports, as there was no agreement on how to proceed.

The option of a trading fund would not, in the Government's view, go far enough in freeing management and work force from the restrictions and interference of Government. Full privatisation today, on the other hand, would leave the Government with insufficient influence over a major establishment in the defence field at a time of considerable transition.

Commercial management, on the other hand, has the advantage of freeing the local management from the more restrictive public sector constraints and of enabling the private sector to seek to expand the opportunities in the areas concerned, while retaining a significant degree of accountability to the Royal Navy and particularly of securing a climate of maximum competition.

The option of commercal management remains therefore the Government's preferred solution and we intend to proceed along these lines. I should tell the House that I am much influenced by the fact that this is also the preferred solution of the Navy itself.

The Government are convinced that the right way ahead is to retain ownership of the fixed assets and to bring in commercial management to run them. I therefore intend to seek competitive tenders from competent British companies to manage the dockyards. These tenders, which would be for a period of some years, would be evaluated for their management and pricing proposals and would be expected to contain a strong incentive element. I am encouraged by the number of companies that have shown interest in these proposals, including those of the stature of Babcocks, Balfour Beatty, Costain, Plessey, STC, Trafalgar House, the Weir Group and other major industrial concerns acting either alone or in consortia.

I hope to introduce the necessary legislation as early as possible, with the intention of introducing commercial management no later than 1 April 1987.

Regardless of the longer-term management structure for the dockyards, there must be improvements in efficiency in the dockyards now. These will involve reductions in jobs. We believe that the majority of these will be achieved by means of natural wastage and voluntary redundancy. Compulsory redundancies will be kept to the minimum possible.

I should tell the House that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement has informed my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) that we are making available to the trade unions today a consultative document proposing how best we might improve efficiency in the Marine Services organisation.

In view of the extra work associated with the Trident programme, the problems at Rosyth will be relatively small and shortlived. But there will be a special problem at Devonport. We have already embarked upon a programme to help. We have set up a Devonport development unit which will be the focal point for the activity necessary to generate new jobs, and I have announced our immediate intention to make available for development two small but significant areas of land in prime positions in the city. My Department is examining its expenditure profile with a view to identifying any opportunities for expanding local commercial activity. We are looking urgently at the potential of the historic and attractive site at Royal William yard for development and the creation of employment. It should be possible also to identify other opportunities for expansion.

Each dockyard will have a core programme of essential work as the basis for its long-term future. Commercial management will ensure that that work is carried out in as cost effective a way as possible and that, through greater efficiency, the dockyards are in a position to win orders in a wider market than at present and expand their activities.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The right hon. Gentleman's statement is at least predictable, because, for the second time in a few weeks, he has demonstrated his total contempt for a unanimous report of a Select Committee, which found that there was no evidence for the proposals that he and his Department have put forward. Even worse, the slipshod, cavalier, irresponsible and "inept"—as the Select Committee said—way in which the right hon. Gentleman has treated the royal dockyards has been deeply insulting to those in the Royal Navy who are so dependent upon the expertise of the yards and to the thousands who work in Devonport and Rosyth, who have served the Navy and this country with such dedication and skill over many years, many of whom will apparently join the dole queues in Devonport and Rosyth.

Is the Secretary of State aware that, despite his statements about the Navy — he has produced no evidence to show that the Navy prefers this solution—almost no person in the Royal Navy, the dockyards or the Civil Service would agree, if he were honest, with the right hon. Gentleman's plans? Indeed, the only enthusiasts left are the right hon. Gentleman and Mr. Peter Levene, whose slipshop and shoddy report, produced earlier this year, would not have obtained a D-grade at O-level.

Did not the right hon. Gentleman mislead the House on 17 April when he said:

"The proposal is based upon American experience."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 263.]

As was known then, and as the Select Committee has shown, the naval dockyards in the United States are operative in the public sector through a trading fund. If the right hon. Gentleman did not know that, a telephone call or perhaps a quick VC10 flight to his friend Caspar Weinberger would have told him of the realities. Is it not the case that the figures that the right hon. Gentleman's Department cobbled together for the Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee bear as much relation to realism as the figures contained in a balance sheet of Johnson Matthey Bankers? Is it not a fact that the managerial, accounting and commercial problems in the dockyards—we accept that there are problems—could all have been solved within the public sector without going down this ridiculous road, which will make matters much worse?

The Secretary of State should have had the courage and the grace to accept that he has made a mess of these proposals. He should have accepted that nothing can be done to revive them, taken them away and brought back proposals to make the development and operation of the dockyards better, and not worse, as these proposals will do.

Mr. Heseltine: Of course, I have to reject all the right hon. Gentleman's assertions. This matter has been under active political review by various Governments for a long time. There is now almost universal agreement, first, that the way in which we are managing and accounting for public money on a large scale is wholly unacceptable and, secondly, that there is a need for action. The Government are facing up to the logic of that imperative and taking the decisions that are necessary.

The House may wish to judge the effectiveness of the right hon. Gentleman's response. He talks about the dole queues in Rosyth, but the Labour party is committed to abandoning Trident, on which employment in that area depends. When he has the effrontery to talk about the honesty of those who advised me, as if the Admiralty Board was acting in any interests except those of the Royal Navy, he shows the complete contempt that the Labour prty has for the Armed Services.

The Labour party had every chance to grip the matter when it was in power, but it examined the position and made no decisions. In 1978, having looked at the option of a trading fund, the Labour Government announced that there would be no decision to make progress. Once again the Labour party ran away. It is now desperately trying to oppose what we are doing, although it had no proposals and no integrity to deal with issues of public administration.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement will be greeted with satisfaction by many of those both serving in, and with recent experience at the head of, the Royal Navy? Will he assure the House that at the end of the day sufficient refit capability will remain for our 17 hunter-killer nuclear submarines and our new Trident submarines when, in due course, they need to be refurbished?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. and armed Friend, who takes a wholly constructive view of these matters, and I can give him the assurance that he requires. However, I must say that I am equally concerned that that capability should exist, whether in the various areas surrounding Rosyth and Devonport, or in other areas that have levels of unemployment that are as high, if not higher. Delegations from such areas continually come to my office asking us to put more refit work into the less privileged parts of the north of England and Scotland.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the Public Accounts Committee commented on the savings as a percentage of annual operating costs, which may be as little as 1 per cent. within the margin of error? What does he estimate the net savings as a percentage of annual operating costs to be?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman, who has a great responsibility to account to the House for these matters, will know the difficulties of trying to be wholly accurate in predicting large sums and the changes therein, especially against the background of having to negotiate both with the unions about enhanced efficiency, and with contractors, who will seek to drive the deal that most suits their natural interests. We must be sure, therefore, that we do not put on the table a range of figures that we believe to be possible but which those with whom we must negotiate will see as an opportunity to drive an even harder bargain.

The initial figures that we had in mind, which were based on a 20 per cent. efficiency gain, suggested savings of about £12 million a year rising to £18 million after 10 years. That was about 3 per cent. rising to 4·5 per cent. of turnover of £400 million. In our view that is the worst case, and there are much more optimistic scenarios. A later assessment based on the likelihood of greater efficiency gains showed gains of about £24 million to £26 million a year, rising to about £29 million or £33 million, which is 6 to 7·5 per cent. of turnover.

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): Does my right hon. Friend understand that many of my constituents will find his decision perverse in the extreme since it flies in the face of all the advice offered to him by two Select Committees and many other organisations in Plymouth, including the report of the accountants Peat Marwick Mitchell? Does he also understand that many of the misgivings arise from the fact that there is likely to be a change in leadership at regular intervals if he follows the original plan in the consultative document? What does he mean by "some years", which is an enigmatic phrase, yet a key one?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for taking a real interest in the proposals that we have in mind. I am anxious to keep closely in touch with local feelings. The House will understand that there is a legitimate difference between the essentially local interests of those who represent Devonport, who must be interested in securing the largest possible cash flow into that economy, and the interests of those who have to administer the national purse, which in this context is the defence budget. I have to be sure that the country's interests are regarded by obtaining competitive prices and ensuring that I obtain value for money for the defence budget.

My hon. Friend's remark about the perversity of the decision in the light of the evidence has to be tempered by

[Mr. Heseltine]

the fact that I have received a range of views from those who think that there is considerable benefit from commercial management. These views are expressed by companies that are prepared to become involved in the negotiating process to secure that management. They argue in favour of the proposals. I have to consider the views of the Admiralty Board, which believes that these are the best proposals for the Navy which, after all, is the customer.

I assure my hon. Friend that I understand the concerns that are being expressed locally. I hope that the work that we are doing in the Ministry to try to help further job creation in the area will be seen as our determination to look after that interest. I have also to consider wider defence interests, and I believe that they will be best served by the way in which the Government will decide the matter.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Surely the Secretary of State will accept that the devastating criticism of the Public Accounts Committee has nothing to do with local interests and that no member serving on that Committee had any local interest. The contemptuous brushing aside of the Committee's recommendations and criticisms, and those of the Select Committee on Defence, makes most people believe that the consultative process has been the sham that many predicted at the start. Will the right hon. Gentleman make clear what he means by

"I hope to introduce the necessary legislation".

Will the legislation be introduced in the next Session? If not, will the Government be able to meet 1 April 1987?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman has not been out of Government for so long as to have forgotten that conventions are observed by Ministers when announcing future programmes. It would not be right for me to announce the contents of the Queen's Speech. It is our intention to proceed as fast as we can but in a manner that is compatible with achieving the introduction date that I have mentioned.

I cannot accept the right hon. Gentleman's contention that the consultative process has been a sham. The issue has been under consideration for nearly 15 years and little new argumentation has emerged during the period in which the issue has been at the forefront of public concern. Until now, Governments have failed to take decisions, and I must take into account the words used by the PAC, that there is a need for "radical" and urgent action. We intend to take that action and we are not prepared to run away from the issue, which the Labour Government, of which the right hon. Gentleman was a member, did consistently.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the House that, in any redundancy there may be in Devonport, the employment of those who have served there over many years will take priority over those who have been moved there from Chatham to try to reduce the Government's embarrassment when Chatham was closed? No such transfers must be allowed to take precedence over the claims of those who have put a lifetime of work into Devonport.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has raised an important issue and I shall give it my personal and urgent consideration. I hope that the rundown in jobs that will be necessary to attract the increased efficiency that we want will be secured, to the greatest extent possible, by voluntary redundancy and natural wastage.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Secretary of State claims widespread support for the significant change that is proposed. Is he aware that the relevant trade unions are on record as saying that they are not opposed to change provided that it takes place in the proper consultative atmosphere? He has said also that the problems of Rosyth would be small and shortlived. Is he not minimising, and therefore jeopardising, the maintenance programme of the ballistic nuclear force? Is he sure that his proposals will not impair the Navy's flexibility to cope with emergency work, which was so admirably demonstrated at the time of the Falklands crisis?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is familiar with these issues and they were considered carefully by the Admiralty board before it made its recommendations to me. The board judged that in all the circumstances the relevant factors had been taken into consideration and that it could still advise me to proceed in the way that I did.

The hon. Gentleman has asked me about the attitude of the unions that are concerned. Whenever change is proposed that involves a transfer from the public sector to the private sector, the unions are opposed to it. There is nothing new in that, for that is the essence of their political faith. I respect their entitlement to have those views. However, if I have the feeling that such views are expressed for doctrinal reasons as against practical reasons, I am entitled to take that into account. Whenever the Government privatise something, the unions forecast doom and gloom, and every time they are proved wrong.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the superb contribution made by the naval yards at the time of the Falklands war demonstrates the performance of which are capable? Does that not contrast sharply with the poor level of efficiency and serious level of absenteeism at the Rosyth and Devonport yards. Does he accept that it should be possible for the naval yards to benefit from privatisation in much the same way as other industries have? Surely management, workers and customers should benefit alike?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I have written today to all the dockyards' employees urging them to recognise the constructive opportunities that are now on offer. After the warship building yards were nationalised there were no new sales of frigates. Before nationalisation we had an export market in frigates. Private warship builders in Germany have been selling frigates consistently and we have been failing to do so. Obsessive slavery to the concept of public ownership is positively inimical to the interests of the workers concerned.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the Secretary of State for Defence, who today sounds more like the Secretary of State for defence of the private sector, explain his enthusiasm for these high-cost and high-risk proposals, which have been rejected by every committee that has considered them since the second world war, and which subordinate the interests of national security to those of commercial gain? Will he tell us how many loyal civil servants, recently and rightly praised by Sir Henry

Leach, Admiral of the Fleet now retired, for their professional alacrity, will be summarily dismissed if these unpatriotic proposals go ahead?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that the private sector responded just as magnificently as the public sector when we had to face the Falklands crisis. As I said to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), it is nothing short of scandalous to believe that the Admiralty Board would put the interests of private contractors above Britain's defence interests.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): What proportion of the work force at Rosyth depends on the maintenance of the submarine independent nuclear deterrent, which the Labour party will abolish? What reduction is anticipated in the work force after these measures become effective and how will it compare with the 1979 measures? Finally, what is the length of contract that is envisaged under these proposals?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that the work involved in arriving at the agreed detail of the contract is extremely lengthy and complex. We must now make progress on that and we shall keep the House fully in touch. The detailed examination of any legislation that is introduced will enable the House to be kept informed.

I understand that about 40 per cent. of the Rosyth work force is employed on the nuclear deterrent. We have announced recently large extensions in the amount of work that is to be concentrated at Rosyth in connection with the Trident programme. The potential job losses at Rosyth and Devonport, which come from the management measures to which I have referred, are those that I produced to the House in April when discussing dockyard reorganisation. On that occasion, I spoke of about 2,000 job losses in the 13,000 work force at Devonport and about 400 job losses among the 6,300 who comprise the Rosyth work force.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Is the Secretary of State seriously inviting privatised warship yards such as, potentially, Swan Hunter to tender for work that is now carried out solely at the naval dockyards?

Mr. Heseltine: I think it right and in the best interests of the country for there to be a competitive environment in which companies such as Swan Hunter have the opportunity to tender for the maintenance and repair work of the Royal Navy. Undoubtedly they would be interested in such work. I have seen experiments conducted in respect of frigates and submarines recently and contractors outside the Devonport and Rosyth dockyards are carrying out the work. A competitive environment must be in the interests of workers in different parts of the country and it is certainly in the interests of the defence budget.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Is it not a fact that the agency management concept is speculative and non-proven, in that nowhere in the world is there a comparable model on the scale envisaged? In view of the lack of substantive evidence since the publication of the consultative document, does my right hon. Friend think that is the way to treat the defence and security of this country?

Mr. Heseltine: I realise that my hon. Friend must press me in the interests of his constituents——

Dr. Owen: That is a shameful reply.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will discover whether it is a shameful reply. I am going to answer his question carefully. I have talked to him about these matters and I do not seek to make party capital out of them, unlike the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). If the right hon. Member for Devonport cared about his constituency he would have taken steps to ensure that there were efficiency gains when he had the power to do something about it, as opposed to supporting a Government who ran away from every major issue that confronted them in the management of the dockyards. It is a classic example of the right hon. Member. He wants it both ways on every conceivable occasion as long as he is not asked to make any real decisions about anything.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Hear, hear.

Mr. Heseltine: At least the hon. Member ought to agree with me about that.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, get stuck into him.

Mr. Heseltine: This must be the most unholy alliance this Parliament has ever seen. If I could come back to my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must hear the answer to the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks).

Mr. Heseltine: I am glad to see that the right hon. Member has run out of arguments. My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) says that there is no precedent for this anywhere in the world. It is true that there is no example known to me where a dockyard is managed by commercial contract, but the precedents I have looked at are defence establishments in the United States, which have more people employed, are in the defence industries and which operate a commercial management arrangement. If, for example, General Dynamics can manage production employing 16,000 people on the F-16, there is no issue of principle in saying that one cannot manage a dockyard on the same lines.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Representing, as I do, some of those who work at Rosyth, may we return to the question that the Secretary of State's hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) very properly put on behalf of her constituents? What exactly is meant by the sentence:

"These tenders, which would be for a period of some years"?

Perhaps I could explain the problem. In the west Lothian area we have the problem of Plessey, one of the firms that the Secretary of State mentioned. In complicated circumstances, with which I will not bore the House, it withdrew. How are we to know that on the banks of the Forth the same thing will not happen again?

Mr. Heseltine: Because we would not be prepared to enter into contracts with anything other than extremely substantial companies, and there would be contractual liabilities and commitments to ensure that such a situation did not develop. My hon. Friend was quite right to ask her question and I should like to take the opportunity now to answer it. We have yet to finalise the precise date of the contract and, in a sense, it must be influenced by the nature of the element of competitive pricing within the first contract we draw. We have certainly talked in terms of five years minimum, and there was a suggestion that we should go for longer periods. I expect to keep the House informed

[Mr. Heseltine]

on this matter as the discussions proceed. It must be in our interests not only to get a competitive environment, but to get a degree of stability into the areas concerned.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will endeavour to call hon. Members who have been standing if they have a constituency interest or a direct interest through the Select Committees. Could I ask for brief questions, please?

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): As a member of the Select Committee I was one of those who listed some anxieties and questions to my right hon. Friend in our report. Will he say that he still hopes to address his mind to those questions? On the specific point about the period for commercial management, will he accept that the vast majority of industry—that known to me at any rate—is concerned that five years is far too short? It is not sufficient time on which to obtain a return on that sort of investment and could lead to major problems about work in progress and transition if another company is licensed to carry on. Does he accept this is a serious point and that a longer period appears to be vital?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is quite right. Those points have been put to us by industry, but one would expect industry to look to the longest possible period before it has to face the competitive challenge of an alternative contractor. A balance must be struck, but I am not unsympathetic to a longer period, provided the competitive disciplines and the costing arrangements are sufficiently sharp to meet the national interest. I will bear that in mind. Of course, the Government will be responding to the Select Committee on Defence and to the Public Accounts Committee in the proper way.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau, Gwent): The right hon. Gentleman sneers and jeers in his usual offensive fashion against any of those who were members of previous Governments. Will he not take into account that it was the provision for the royal dockyards and for their maintenance as such which enabled them to perform great achievements during the Falklands war and thereby to contribute to the safety of the nation? That has been one's experience of the royal dockyards in every crisis the nation has had to face. What right has he as a twopenny-ha'penny cheapjack to come along and say, "We will hand them over to commercial interests"? Will he not listen to the people who know something about it? When is he going to face the people in Devonport dockyards and hear what they have to say?

Mr. Heseltine: I give the right hon. Gentleman the unqualified assurance that I will listen to people who know something about it, but this nation made quite clear what it thought about his ability to know something about it.

Hon. Members: Cheap.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us keep the temperature down.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Will my right hon. Friend agree——

Mr. Skinner: The Secretary of State is only a privatised soldier: he bought himself out.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: Does my right hon. Friend agree that his statement today will provide a sense of purpose and direction which has been lacking in the royal naval dockyards for many years? The statement will therefore be widely welcomed. In his comments about the opportunities available for contracts outside the naval dockyards, will he say whether this includes fleet maintenance bases such as Portsmouth?

Mr. Heseltine: The statement I made today covers the two specific dockyards. The maritime services consultation document which I also announced will extend across the country at large, outside the dockyards as well as within them. I have no doubt that there will be examples relevant to Portsmouth, but I will confirm that to my hon. Friend. I appreciate the thought behind his question, because within the dockyards there is great anxiety about being faced with change. But there is a great willingness to recognise that change is necessary, and a great sense of dedication and frustration, which can be put to great opportunity for the benefit of the local economies.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. Gentleman will, in due course, get his own come-uppance, however insulting he may be to former Ministers. But, to my question, Mr. Speaker. To safeguard the public interest, will it be made a requirement that all of the tenderers for management of the docks shall make no contribution hereafter to Tory party funds?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) means that as seriously as a suggestion that any trade unions involved in the dockyards should make no contribution to Labour party funds.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he has no similar plans for the dockyard at Portland in my constituency, and that the jobs at Portland will be preserved against the drafting-in of long-service people from Tiverton and Rosyth?

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot refuse to give my hon. Friend an encouraging answer in the light of the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). I will have to look at these matters, but I can give him an unqualified assurance in the terms of the question he asked that I have no plans before me at present to deal with the installation in his constituency.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State will be well aware that the Select Committee took the view that the Government should not adopt the option of commercial management unless they could demonstrate that the advantages of a trading fund, subject to modification, were outweighed by commercial management. Despite that, the option of the trading fund was dismissed in one simple sentence, to the effect that it did not go far enough in freeing management from restrictions and interference by the Government.

What evidence has the Secretary of State for that, apart from blind dogma? What are these interferences and restrictions, no doubt within his own Department, which he is incapable of resolving?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the hon. Gentleman will know that the option of a trading fund has been looked at time and time again. It has been looked at by this Government and by the previous Government. The previous Government decided not to proceed with the trading fund, and they published their decision in 1978.

One of the reasons why it is so difficult to see the commercial opportunity within a trading fund is simply that the restrictions of the public sector in terms of union negotiations, pay claims and gradings in various areas impose a constraint on management from which it is very difficult to break. If we are looking for the opportunity for the real development of a facility such as the dockyards, we are far better to have local autonomy, local decision-taking, local management and local unions seeking out the markets that suit them, without the need constantly to refer these matters to central Government.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there is a royal naval workshop in my constituency. He will also be aware that a number of royal naval officers who serve on Her Majesty's submarines also live in my constituency and, down the years, they have complained about the management at Rosyth and the long time that it has taken to get their submarines made fit for sea again. They will welcome the changes in the improvement of management and, further, they will also welcome the assurances that we have given on the Trident programme, which guarantees their jobs.

Mr. Heseltine: I think that my hon. Friend will be proved to be far more wise in these matters than many Opposition Members who have spoken. Those who have the ultimate responsibility for the management of the Fleet are in favour of these proposals. As Secretary of State for Defence, responsible for the defence budget, I believe that they are in the best interests of the public.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Since I have a large number of constituents who work in one of these dockyards — the Secretary of State will know this, because he used to represent part of my constituency— will he comment on the numbers of people working in the dockyard who will be made compulsorily redundant? He skated over that somewhat, and I think that he should say how many redundancies he envisages in the next few years.

Will my right hon. Friend also say a little more about the job creation proposals? He mentioned Plymouth, but one of the real problems arises outside Plymouth, especially in Ivybridge where many people live who work in the dockyard. They need new jobs there, and there is a lot of land in Ivybridge which could be used by starter firms and starter businesses to create new jobs. Will he say a little more about that?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend asked me two important questions. The first is about the number of compulsory redundancies. It is my hope that we shall use every endeavour, to secure this purpose, to ensure that the job losses can be achieved by way of natural wastage and voluntary retirement—[HON. MEMBERS: "How many?"] That will be the momentum that the Department now pursues. We cannot know how many people will accept voluntary retirement. In those circumstances we cannot quantify how many inevitably will be made compulsorily redundant. But all our endeavours will be directed to trying to minimise compulsory redundancy.

My hon. Friend then asked where any help that we can give will be located. That will be a matter for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who is personally chairing the Devonport development unit. It is not of concern to us specifically if sites are within the city boundary or outside it so long as there are work opportunities in the area. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will have heard the question, and I have no doubt that he will bear it very much in mind.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State assure the House that, in view of the unreliability of private money, as evidenced recently by a number of events, he will make sure that certain companies are not given licences to operate in the royal dockyards when they get the opportunity? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House, for instance, that Gomba UK, run by Abdul Shamji, will not be given the opportunity to get its dirty fingers down there, as it did when it managed to find itself in an enterprise zone at Strood, near Rochester, a few months before anyone else seemed to know about the existence of the zone? That kind of preferential treatment is to be abhorred by everyone. When, into the bargain they do not pay back the money, what guarantee can the Secretary of State give that none of those people, of whom there are now an increasing number, will be able to move down there, make a killing, and leave the taxpayer to pick up the bill?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman knows that we shall take all proper care to ensure that those who get contracts for this vital part of the defence establishment are of impeccable standards.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that if we are even to maintain let alone increase real levels of spending on defence, the Government will come under increasing pressure to show value for money in their spending? Does he also accept that this privatisation of the dockyards is not only a bold but an imaginative step long overdue, which is part of the drive to ensure that there is value for money in defence spending and which will be welcomed widely throughout the Royal Navy, especially at senior levels, and also in the country at large?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. All the precedents are on his side. Every time that this Government have taken a bold and courageous step to transfer public assets to the private sector, it has been widely welcomed by the customers and by those working for the companies concerned.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Secretary of State now answer the question that he has not yet answered? How many jobs will be lost as a result of this operation, especially at Devonport? Will he also say how much money can be put into the development unit to try to find other jobs?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also answer the question that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) asked? Why is he taking a perverse decision? He said that there had been argument over the past 15 years. Yes, but he is the only person who has not been involved in the argument. He has not put forward any arguments. Indeed, the Select Committee refused to accept what the Ministry of Defence said. By all means let the right hon. Gentleman take decisions. All that we ask is that he takes decisions on a rational basis instead of taking them in the dark and purely on the basis of ideology. The Opposition have always argued that changes are necessary, but all informed opinion believes that the changes can be carried out in the public sector.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

There is one saving grace, however. By the time that the right hon. Gentleman has put through all these different legislative operations, he will not be Secretary of State, and the Labour party will ensure that the dockyards are taken back into public ownership.

Mr. Heseltine: If all these changes could be put through within the public sector, why did the Labour Government announce in 1978 that they had no intention of proceeding with a trading fund and give no alternative way forward? What conceivable explanation is there? There is only one explanation. It is that they could not carry their own people, including the unions, with them towards the enhanced efficiency that we are determined to achieve.

I wish that the right hon. Gentleman had listened to what I have said several times. I have already given the figures. He knows full well that in Devonport there are at present some 13,000 people employed and that the potential job losses involved in the management improvements are of the order of 2,000. At Rosyth, it is 6,300, with job losses of the order of 400. I gave those figures in April and I gave them again earlier this afternoon.

Royal Dockyards

4.28 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Secretary of State for Defence to ignore the reports of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence and to announce his decision before making any substantive response to either of those two Committees."

The matter is specific and urgent because the House is adjourning for the summer recess on Friday. If the Secretary of State is to be believed, although there is some doubt about whether the implementation of his decision will be included in the Queen's Speech, it appears unlikely, were it to be in the Queen's Speech, that there will be any possibility of the House discussing the reports of the PAC and the Select Committee.

I submit that these Committees are not asked to make reports only for them to be brushed lightly aside. The PAC is one of the most respected Committees of the House. It is chaired, as is normal, by a distinguished Opposition Member, and it is made up of hon. Members of the House who certainly do not represent their local interests in the Committee. The Public Accounts Committee has drawn attention to the fact that it believes that the savings that will come as a result of these proposals will total, over a 10-year period, only £40 million, whereas it also estimates that the Government's proposals over a similar period will cost £60 million to implement. Therefore, over a 10-year period it is possible, if the Public Accounts Committee's fears are justified, that the Navy will have to find an extra £20 million to fulfil these obligations.

The report of the Public Accounts Committee also states that the Ministry of Defence provided

"no valid basis to judge whether any materially increased efficiency whatsoever attached to the Government's preferred option".

The Committee went on to say that it had

"severe misgivings about the thoroughness and the accuracy of the MOD's costings".

The Committee concluded:

"The Ministry of Defence has not provided enough evidence to enable Parliament to assess the financial aspects of all the options."

I fail to understand, as, I think, do many fair-minded hon. Members on both sides of the House, how the Secretary of State, against that background of the Public Accounts Committee report, can come to the House and make this decision without producing a shred of evidence or making any attempt to answer the criticisms of the Public Accounts Committee. It is worse than that. The Select Committee on Defence also considered this question and came to a similar conclusion, although not in such a concentrated way.

I think that we owe it to the members of the Public Accounts Committee and to the Comptroller and Auditor General that this provision should not go without an urgent debate. As I understand it, this is the only opportunity for a debate. It is not just a constituency case. I do not believe that the matter can be argued as effectively in a debate on the Adjournment of the House because we wish the Secretary of State for Defence to answer. Although we like and respect the Leader of the House and pay tribute to his

great virtues, I think that he would be the last to admit that he should be cast in the role of defending the Secretary of State for Defence, and many of us hope that his wisdom will stop the inclusion of the proposal in the Government's legislative programme.

This is a matter of great concern. Many people's livelihoods are at stake. It raises the spectre of unemployment but, above all else, it raises the question whether under these provisions the Royal Navy will be as adequately and as well served as it has been in the past.

The House has paid tribute in the wake of the Falklands to the work that has been done by the royal dockyards. I suggest that the House owes it to those people in the royal dockyards in this circumstance to examine very carefully the Secretary of State's proposals before they are carried out. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will grant my request.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the decision of the Secretary of State for Defence to ignore the reports of the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on Defence and to announce his decision before making any substantive response to either of those two Committees".

I have listened with great care to what the right hon. Member has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should have priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter that he has raised meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order, and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

London Docklands (Report)

4.33 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I raise with you, Mr. Speaker, a question which is similar to others which have been raised on this subject in the past? That is, the prior release outside the House of a document which should first come to the House.

Yesterday morning there was an announcement at a press conference held by the London Docklands development corporation of its annual report, which was then presented to the press and public. Four Members of the House represent constituencies covered by the area of the corporation. As you will know, Mr. Speaker, the chain of accountability is through the Secretary of State to the House. As far as I have been able to ascertain, none of the four Members of Parliament was notified in advance or had received—or, indeed, until now, has received—copies of that annual report. Indeed, the first notification which anybody in the House could have had is that there was laid on the Table of the House—and it is recorded in the Vote today—a copy of the annual report dated yesterday, although not obtainable in, and not delivered to, the Library of the House until this afternoon.

The issue raised is the manner in which the Secretary of State for the Environment or his Under-Secretary of State charged with responsibility for these matters is properly fulfilling his duty of prior and primary accountability to the House when a corporation, solely accountable to the House through the Secretary of State, acts to present its information and report outside the House before it comes to the House.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, whatever ruling you may be able immediately to give, that the matter be taken into account by the Leader of the House, who is in his place, and passed on to the relevant Ministers and Secretary of State in the Department, and that yet again you seek to protect the interests of Members of the House by confirming that documents should come first to the House before they go to the press and to other members of the public.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to the point of order. As another Member from the docklands area, may I say that I find this matter particularly disturbing because the London Docklands development corporation is under an obligation to make an annual report to the Minister, and that is the only way in which its actions and activities are made accountable and known to Members of Parliament.

There has been a flagrant breach, in that a press conference was held even before the document was deposited in the House of Commons. I realise, Mr. Speaker, that your own direct duties, rights and capacities in this matter are limited, but I hope that you will take this opportunity to make known your displeasure at this flagrant breach of convention and good manners.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps at this time, it would be appropriate for you, or somebody, to point out that, whenever we get these complaints about leaked documents, which have happened in the course of the 15 years for which I have been a Member of Parliament, if television is allowed into this place, the leaking of documents and all other matters similar to the one that has been raised——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is on a very good point. This is not a leaked document, as I understand it. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who raised the point, well know my strong views on these matters, and I will certainly let them be known in the right quarter.

BILLS PRESENTED

RACE RELATIONS (WELSH LANGUAGE)

Mr. Dafydd Wigley presented a Bill to amend the Race Relations Act 1976 to provide that a requirement relating to use of, or proficiency in, the Welsh language shall not constitute discrimination within the meaning of that Act; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 201.]

BRITISH NATIONALITY ETC. (TREATMENT OF CITIZENS OF PAKISTAN)

Mr. Tony Lloyd, supported by Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Mr. Peter Pike, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. James Lamond, Mr. Robert Litherland, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Stan Thorne, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Ken Eastham, and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, presented a Bill to amend the British Nationality Acts and the Immigration Act 1971 to confer upon citizens of Pakistan resident in the United Kingdom the same rights and privileges to which citizens of Commonwealth Countries are entitled: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 October and to be printed. [Bill 203.]

Local Government (Prevention of Political Corruption)

4.37 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972.

I will deal first with the historical background and then with the present situation and the details of the Bill.

Up to 1972, local authorities were governed by the doctrine of ultra vires, and they were not permitted to do anything not specifically allowed for by statute. This meant that in some circumstances they were put in the embarrassing position, for instance, of not being able to repair a canal bank until they had come to the House for a general powers Act. In 1963, local authorities were given a very limited power to spend money on some projects not specifically allowed for by the House. In Committee at that time, Sir Cyril Black said that he hoped that local authorities would confine expenditure to necessary and modest projects, and would not make it an occasion for spending money merely because they had the power, unless there was some compelling reason for the expenditure.

Those were prophetic words because in 1972 Parliament decided to experiment and give local authorities the power to devote a 2p rate to anything of benefit not necessarily to all the residents of the local authority but merely to some. Parliament felt justified in making that experiment because there was at that time a consensus about what local authorities should be about, namely, professional full-time officers supervised by part-time elected councillors providing services of a direct and practical kind which all residents of that local authority would be deemed to enjoy or hope to enjoy at some future time. Since 1972, that consensus has broken down with the appearance of young full-time hard Left Labour politicians who, denied power in the national arena—often because they voice extremist policies—have turned town halls into an alternative state. They have tried to build up a coterie of tight-knit groups, which are often dependent on the town hall. Such groups often work in a self-supporting circle.

I should like to quote the example of a constituent. Councillor Ben Stallman is a Liberal and I do not support everything that he says but, for many years, he worked satisfactorily for Barnsley borough council, which was Labour controlled. As soon as he became a Liberal councillor, he was hounded and finally forced to retire on grounds of ill health. I believe that he was denied his statutory rights. It is interesting that Barnsley borough council employed Mr. David Blunkett, now the Labour leader of Sheffield city council, and that the late Fred Lunn, Labour leader of Barnsley district council, was employed by Sheffield.

The expenditure that such local authorities have engaged in is so well known that I do not need to go into detail. I have here a sheaf of paper detailing the grants that the Greater London council has made in the past year. The list includes £50,000 for the Troops Out movement, £2,000 for Song for Peace, £1 million for the biased free newspaper, *The Londoner*, and £8,000 for the Peace Year

statue. All of these cases are well known. Some of those groups would be more risible than anything else if there were not such a sinister purpose behind them.

Babies against the Bomb is well known, but it is interesting that the people who received a grant for the English Collective of Prostitutes have the same address as Women Against Rape. Mr. Tony Kerpel, the former leader of the Opposition on Camden borough council, has supplied me with information about organisations such as Lesbians and Policing Project. The women's committee of Camden council sponsored a visit of relatives of terrorists held in Armagh prison.

Such activities are not confined to London. The Labour group on Liverpool city council attempted to allocate £250,000 for a day of action—letting every member of the work force off work to demonstrate. The *Lothian Clarion*, a free newspaper which is paid for by the rates, drew the following response from a judge:

"it was impossible to avoid the conclusion that the article was calculated to promote the election of Labour candidates."

Political corruption is not confined to financial matters. There has been violent intimidation of councillors in Lambeth and Camden, and the extensive co-opting of self-appointed community representatives on those councils.

The difficulty, when framing legislation, is that many Conservative-controlled councils use sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 to spend money on worthwhile projects. My Bill would therefore provide that all ratepayers and residents be given locus standi to take a council to court if they believe that it infringed the Bill.

It would be unlawful for a local authority to do anything which promotes support for or opposition to any political party or its policies, contributes to its funds, or does anything to help any other body to do those things. It is impossible to frame watertight provisions, but my Bill would give the courts a handle with which to intervene on behalf of local residents, with a view to depoliticising town hall spending.

The Bill would amend section 137, so that money could be spent on behalf of all or most inhabitants rather than all or some. It would provide that no person could be co-opted on to any local government committee and retain a vote. In Camden, the ruling Labour group has co-opted more people on to committees than there are opposition Conservative councillors. My Bill would make it lawful, upon application by a member of a local authority, for a police constable to be brought in to maintain order. Only the mayor has such authority under public order legislation, and he is often as politically intimidated as anyone else. It would be incumbent on a local authority to keep a register of every application by bodies that receive grants that would contain the names and accounts of those bodies—exactly as companies are expected to do under the Companies Acts.

My Bill would give redress to ratepayers. It would give them a right to ask the courts to intervene. It would depoliticise town hall spending and break the corrupt political links. I had hoped that the Government would have acted by now, having seen what is happening at grass roots level. We desperately need, in the Queen's Speech, notice of action. It is impossible to provide a watertight guarantee, but at least my Bill is a step in the right direction.

4.46 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The speech of the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) ranged rather wider than the outline of the Bill suggests. The hon. Gentleman's speech is symptomatic of the hysteria that now afflicts most Conservative Members when considering any expenditure under sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972. The same hysteria is reflected in the lunatic fringes of Fleet street. I shall go potty if I hear any more about Babies Against the Bomb — an organisation that received about £300 from the Greater London council three years ago. It seems to be the only reason that Conservative Members can find to abolish the GLC. It is a rather strange case on which to predicate major changes in local government.

The use of the phrase "political corruption", which the hon. Gentleman used in respect of local government, is grotesque. The Prime Minister and her colleagues seem to apply the term to any individual or organisation with which they disagree—and the number of such cases is growing these days. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would hesitate before using the word "corruption" in the context of local government, given the Government's involvement in such recent scandals as De Lorean, Johnson Matthey Bankers and Lloyds. If the hon. Gentleman is so interested in political corruption, I suggest that he look around him, as he is surrounded by past-masters of the art.

The hon. Gentleman is a well-known Right-wing maverick. He supported the Opposition in many divisions in regard to the abolition of the GLC. As a former employee and a member of the GLC, he knows how the system at county hall works.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member to accuse hon. Members of corruption, as he clearly did in the hearing of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I do not think that the hon. Gentleman made any personal allegations.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that decisions on sections 137 and 142 are made in committees. Bearing in mind the readiness of Conservative-controlled boroughs such as Westminster and Bromley to take the GLC to court at the drop of a hat, I should have thought that, if the GLC had been involved in anything remotely corrupt, it would be exposed quickly. The hon. Gentleman also knows that the district auditor is located in county hall so, if the hon. Gentleman's former friends at county hall have complaints, they can nip along the corridor and raise them with the district auditor.

Politicians in local government, especially at county hall, are subject to constant surveillance. Indeed, they are subject almost to harassment by a battery of vicious malevolent hacks working for newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, the *Daily Express* and *The Times*. They would all very much like to expose anything corrupt in county hall, but they cannot find anything corrupt for the simple reason that there is nothing to be found.

Contrast the open way in which decisions are made in local government with the closed, secretive and manipulative world of Cabinet government. I know why the hon. Gentleman and so many of his colleagues are

[Mr. Banks]

obsessed—the reason is GLC expenditure under section 142 on the public awareness campaign. We used that campaign to alert Londoners to the great dangers of abolition of the GLC, and, of course, it has worked wonderfully well. It has exposed the Government's wicked vendetta against the GLC. Frankly, that is what annoys the Prime Minister and her erstwhile letter writer who seeks leave to introduce the Bill.

The total cost, under section 142, to Londoners of the public awareness campaign was £6 million. It was necessary to expend that money to inform Londoners, given the one-sided pro-Government version of abolition put out by the Tory propaganda machine of Fleet Street and compounded by the deceitful and misleading campaign of environment Ministers.

The Tory Government spend well over £100 million each year on advertising, much of which is dedicated to putting over a party political version of the truth. If we add to that the £60 million spent by British Telecom on advertising privatisation and the millions of pounds spent by the National Coal Board on advertising in its effort to break the miners' strike, the money spent by local government in its efforts to protect jobs and services for the people pales into insignificance. The Bill should be seen in that context.

Section 137 empowers all local authorities to raise the product of a 2p rate. In London that produces £38 million. That is a lot of money, but the rate has not changed since 1972. Currently the GLC provides £12·6 million to 628 voluntary and community groups under section 137, which represents 25 per cent. of the GLC's funding to such organisations. The balance is provided under other statutory authorities.

The broad categories of groups under section 137 funding are advice and counselling, monitoring and information, family services, young people, planning and environment, health, housing, settlement and social care, cultural community resources, education, ethnic minorities and training and employment. Yet all the hon. Gentleman can come up with is a few old proposals like Babies Against the Bomb and the English Collective of Prostitutes.

The largest proportion of the GLC's section 137 funding is devoted to employment generation initiatives. Of the projected £38 million that the GLC has raised for 1985-86, £26 million has been allocated to industry and employment programmes, of which £4·8 million will be devoted to the GLC training board project and £18·6 million to the Greater London Enterprise Board.

During the debate on abolition, Ministers said that boroughs would have the resources as well as the powers to take over the funding of projects currently funded by the GLC under section 137. It was pointed out to the Government that section 137 is itself used by the boroughs where there is no other statutory power to spend money. Therefore, abolition of the GLC will effectively result in a reduction from a total of 4p to a 2p limit for the boroughs. Obviously, where authorities spend up to their limit under section 137—and that includes most of the inner London boroughs — that would effectively decimate the money spent on the voluntary sector and on employment and training initiatives. The Government already have sweeping powers to control section 137 under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984. That is further evidence of their determination to centralise power and to eliminate local democracy.

The hon. Gentleman is anticipating the Widdicombe inquiry, which is currently examining discretionary spending by local authorities. The House would do well to await its findings. Such a Bill as outlined by the hon. Gentleman would be based on all the maliciousness that now characterises the Tory Government's attitude to local government, and it is one of the most uncorrupted and efficient systems of local government in the world. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would do well to take some pride in the system of local government that we have in this country, rather than carp and mount the malicious attacks that we have seen in recent years.

The Bill is untimely, unnecessary and unworthy. I ask the House to refuse the hon. Gentleman leave to introduce it.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nomination of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 131, Noes 123.

Division No. 286] **[4.55 pm**

AYES

Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John

Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Terlezki, Stefan
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Teddy Taylor and
Mr. Piers Merchant.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Corbett, Robin
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, M.
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Laurie Pavitt.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Edward Leigh, Mr. Piers Merchant, Mr. Richard Hickmet, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Michael Forsyth, Mr. Peter Bruinvels, Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Tony Baldry, Mr. Michael Fallon, Mr. Peter Lilley, Mrs. Angela Rumbold and Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark.

Local Government (Prevention of Political Corruption)

Mr. Edward Leigh accordingly presented a Bill to amend sections 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 October and to be printed. [Bill 202.]

Immigration

5.6 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement of Changes in the Immigration Rules (House of Commons Paper No. 503).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I have to announce that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Brittan: The statement of changes in immigration rules that we are debating amends the current immigration rules in the light of the recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. The new rules make limited amendments to the current rules. They are not a comprehensive revision of the rules as a whole. They are essentially confined to putting the provisions under which husbands and wives are allowed permanent residence here on the basis of marriage on a common footing.

The current immigration rules reflect the commitment of this Government to apply a tight immigration control, a control to be exercised firmly and fairly. That is a policy for which I make no apology. It is based on a recognition of the strain that the admission of a substantial number of immigrants can place on existing resources and services in this country. We have therefore reduced fresh primary immigration to a minimum.

The figures speak for themselves. Last year, 51,000 people were accepted for settlement. That is the lowest figure since control of Commonwealth immigration began in 1962. It is nearly 19,000 below the figure in 1979. For the Indian subcontinent, the main area from which immigration now comes, the figures are a drop from 25,000 in 1979 to 15,000 last year.

At the same time, we have always maintained the policy of admitting the dependants of those granted permanent residence here. In the last 10 years, about a third of a million wives and children have been admitted. These people were dependants coming to join people who had come here earlier to take work. It was right to allow these dependants to come here. Successive Governments have continued this line.

The rules have always contained some differences in treatment between men and women where such distinctions were considered justifiable. None the less, the Government have recognised that in many areas it was right to work towards a more even-handed approach in the primary legislation. Thus, the British Nationality Act 1981, for the first time, subject to some transitional provisions to preserve the rights of women to registration, placed the sexes on an equal footing in respect of their acquisition of citizenship.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Can the Home Secretary confirm that about 17,800 spouses and children are waiting in the Indian subcontinent for clearance to come here to settle? Does he agree that, even if all of them were let in tomorrow morning, they would represent less than 3 per cent. of the British birth rate and still leave a net migration from Britain? In 18 out of the last 20 years more people have left the country than have come in. The Home Secretary gives credence to the idea that people are swamping the country when really the numbers are small. Wives and children want to be reunited. We are talking about family reunification.

Mr. Brittan: My figures are accurate. Allowing everyone to come in instantly would cause considerable pressure on city centres.

It is against that background that it is necessary to consider the recent cases which were brought before the European Court. Those cases challenged the distinction in the rules between the rights of settled men and settled women to be joined by their spouses. Under the current rules, a wife may as of right join a husband who is settled here, but is not a British citizen, while husbands may only join settled wives who are British citizens. That distinction reflected the Government's concern to protect the domestic labour market, an objective which in itself the court quite specifically endorsed.

Moreover, the court also upheld the Government on several other important points. It found that there was no breach of the convention on the ground of discrimination by birth or race. It held that in these cases there was no violation of the right to respect for family life as such, nor indeed had there been any inhuman or degrading treatment.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Under the convention Britain could, in January next year, give notice that it intends to withdraw from the convention. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will deal with the wider issue of whether Britain should remain within the convention or come out. A number of early-day motions have been tabled in which many colleagues suggest that we should come out. This might be the appropriate moment to deal with the wider issues.

Mr. Brittan: I know that some of my hon. Friends take that view, but others believe that, for all its faults, the convention and the institutions associated with it play an important part in the protection of human rights in this country. More than one view is held on the subject.

I do not propose an extended discussion on the subject because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said, the question of the extension of the right of petition does not fall to be decided now. We are parties to the convention and to the right of individual petition. We are therefore duty bound to make the changes required to comply with the convention as interpreted by the court.

In the context of cases before it, the court said that the advancement of equality of the sexes is today a major goal in the member states of the Council of Europe. According to the court, therefore, very weighty reasons would have to be advanced before a difference of treatment on the ground of sex could be regarded as compatible with the convention. The court did not hold that the goal of sexual equality must always be paramount, but it found that the Government's arguments for treating wives more favourably than husbands in this case did not provide sufficient justification for this distinction in treatment. Thus, while the court accepted the aim of the rules in restricting primary immigration, the effect of its judgment is to require a change removing the differences in the rules between the admission of husbands and wives of those permanently resident here.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The European Court cases arose directly from the right of British citizens to petition the European Commission individually. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now please answer the question put to him by the hon. Member for

Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who has a different view from mine? After 14 January 1986 will it be possible to petition individually? What is the Government's answer? I ask the Home Secretary not to dodge the question.

Mr. Brittan: I am merely informing the House that the Government will announce a decision, but that they are not ready to do that today. They will announce the decision in good time.

Mr. Carlile: Why not today? It is important to the debate.

Mr. Brittan: It is not. We are parties to the convention and to the right of individual petition. We are duty bound to give effect to the Court's interpretation of the convention. The rules give effect to that. I am not able to announce whether there should be a change of policy depriving individuals of the right to individual petition. [AN HON. MEMBER: "We are about to go into recess."] I can assure the House that any such change will be announced when hon. Members are present. There is no difficulty.

We are giving effect to the convention as interpreted. It would not be compatible with the court decision to continue to frame the provisions relating to settlement through marriage in the immigration rules on the basis that men were regarded as heads of households and wives as dependants. The essential choice that had to be made, therefore, was whether to provide that from now on wives could join their husbands here only if their husbands were British citizens, and not merely settled here; or whether to allow husbands to join wives here, even if the wives were only settled here, and not British citizens. In other words, we had to choose between narrowing the basic rule to which the admission of wives is subject, or widening the rule applying to the admission of husbands.

Narrowing the basic rule applying to the admission of wives would have raised formidable difficulties. In the Government's view, they are overwhelming. Successive Governments have been committed to allowing those who have settled here to bring in their wives and dependent children. That right has not been confined to the wives of men who were British citizens. It has been enjoyed by men who are lawfully settled here, even if they are not British citizens. The pattern of immigration was for men to come here in advance of their families and establish themselves. To remove the expectation that they have had that they can apply to bring in their wives in due course would not in our view have been justified.

Individuals settle here from all parts of the world. Many make a significant contribution to this country in a wide variety of ways. They expect, when allowed to settle here, that they can have their families with them. If they were not allowed to bring in their wives, the consequences would be substantial. They would have the dilemma of having to seek British citizenship or of their wives not being allowed to take up residence with them.

We do not, therefore, believe that it would have been right to prevent wives from joining men who have been allowed to settle here. Consequently, we have chosen the alternative basic option that was open to us—permitting husbands to join wives who are settled here, even if they are not British citizens. As a result, therefore, of the court's judgment and of this change taken by itself, we expect that the numbers accepted for settlement each year are likely to rise by about 2,000 a year. However, this increase will, at least to some extent, be offset by the changes, which I shall come to in a moment, concerning the admission of wives and families.

The immigration rules must of course be framed in accordance with the Immigration Act. Section 1(5) of the Act preserved certain entitlements which Commonwealth immigrants and their wives and dependent children had when the 1971 Act was passed.

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. and learned Friend is dealing with the constraints of the law. Is he absolutely satisfied that if individuals petition the European Court of Human Rights against the new rules, there will not be further succesful litigation and the need once again for the House to conform to foreign supervision?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend, as a fellow lawyer, will know perfectly well that it would be a foolish person who would give a guarantee of the kind for which he asks. However, I assure my hon. Friend that it is our view that these rules comply with the convention.

The immigration rules must be framed in accordance with the Immigration Act. Section 1(5) preserves certain entitlements that Commonwealth immigrants, their wives and dependent children had when the 1971 Act was passed. Reflecting the principles on which immigration and nationality legislation before 1971 were founded, the protection provided by section 1(5) distinguishes between the sexes in the benefits it accords. This is inevitably reflected in the immigration rules changes. The saving is confined to Commonwealth citizens settled on 1 January 1973 and their dependents. This is designed to be transitional in character and effect, but the framing of the 1971 Act provision is indeed sexually discriminatory. The Government intend, as part of their response to the European Court judgment, to introduce legislation in due course to put an end to the sexually discriminatory features of this provision in a way that preserves the Government's commitment to firm immigration control.

Allowing husbands to join resident women would meet the finding of violation in the European Court judgment, but to make that change alone would have left other important differences of treatment between husbands and wives seeking settlement on the basis of marriage. So far as the European convention is concerned, these other differences in the provisions would have been open to challenge, although they were not directly at issue in the cases before the European Court. It was therefore necessary to take a second fundamental decision — whether to abandon the tests which applied to the admission of husbands and which had hitherto not applied to wives, or to extend these tests to wives.

The 1980 rules strengthened the tests which our predecessors had reintroduced on the admission of husbands. The current requirements are three: the parties to a marriage must have met; each must have the intention of living permanently with his or her spouse; and, particularly important, the rules require that the marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain admission to this country—the so-called primary purpose test.

Mr. Nellist: With regard to the changes that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is introducing, and the three criteria, do the Government intend to alter the burden of proof for the primary purpose rule? At the moment, a person entering the country has to prove a negative—

[Mr. Nellist]

that the reason for entering the country is not the reason for the marriage. Does the Home Secretary intend to put the burden of proof on the entry clearance officer to prove that the marriage is bogus, rather than on the couple?

Mr. Brittan: The Government have no such intention.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am not sure that I heard the right hon. and learned Gentleman properly, but if I did, he said something significant. Did he say that he intends to introduce legislation to amend the 1971 Act? Is he calling into question section 1(5) and the rights that have been secured ever since Reginald Maudling gave the assurance to men who came to settle here that they would have the right to bring their families? Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that he would amend those provisions?

Mr. Brittan: I said that, as part of our response to the European Court judgment, it was our intention to introduce legislation in due course to put an end to the sexually discriminatory features of the provisions to which the hon. Lady referred. In answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), I point out that he should appreciate that there are a variety of ways in which that can be done, and I am not in a position to announce that at the moment.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Brittan: No, I shall not give way to my hon. Friend.

The provision is sexually discriminatory, as is illustrated by the fact that in making these changes to the rules, we have had to make a saving for those people covered by this subsection of the Act. If the Act did not require us to make such a saving, it would not be sexually discriminatory.

Mr. Nellist: What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saving?

Mr. Brittan: The saving is the provision—the hon. Gentleman will appreciate this if he studies the rules, as I am sure that he will wish to do — whereby the marriage tests that are to be applied in future to women as well as to men do not apply to those who seek and obtain admission as a result of entitlement produced by section 1(5).

Provided the requirements of the primary purpose test are met, a husband is admitted initially for 12 months. He is allowed to take up permanent residence if the marriage still subsists after that period and the parties still intend to live permanently with each other. Like the provisions they strengthened, these requirements apply only to the provisions relating to the admission of husbands. Under the current rules, they do not apply to wives. In terms of past immigration policy, the reason is evident. Successive Governments have been concerned to ensure that men cannot use marriage as a way of getting round the control on immigration for employment. We have not thought it necessary to adopt a similar approach to the admission of wives. They have hitherto been regarded as dependants.

To drop the tests currently applied to the admission of husbands would be to go back on our firm commitment to strict immigration control. We cannot have tight control over the admission of men for employment without having rules which prevent marriage being used to circumvent that control. There is nothing in the European Court judgment which calls in question the requirements which husbands must satisfy. On the contrary, the legitimacy of their objective was specifically endorsed by the court. We cannot expect the European Court to endorse, in the light of the judgment, the continuation of giving wives preferential treatment by not making them subject to the same requirements.

Accordingly, it is entirely reseasonable that, if we are to comply with the principle of the judgment while maintaining strict immigration control, we should admit husbands of women who are settled here, but not British citizens, but should retain the marriage tests applying to the admission of husbands, and extend them to apply on the same basis to the admission of wives. This is what the new rules do. The tests are perfectly proper requirements for people seeking admission on the basis of marriage. The existing rules applying to the admission of husbands are legitimate. They will be equally legitimate when applied to the admission of wives. The rules are directed at establishing that the marriage through which a man is claiming the right to settle in this country is not one which has been entered into with the primary aim of securing admission. It would not be right to allow firm immigration control to be circumvented by the use of marriage. That is what the rules are directed towards. It is an objective which, on grounds of non-discrimination, has to be applied to the admission of wives.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman honestly believe that leaving the burden of proof under the primary purpose rule upon the applicant accords with article 8(1) of the European convention on human rights, which provides that everyone has the right to respect for his family life?

Mr. Brittan: If the hon. and learned Gentleman had read the judgment of the court, he would be aware that no finding of the court challenges the purpose of the primary purpose test. The hon. and learned Gentleman has no basis for stressing such indignation.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: I shall give way to the new face—the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

Mr. Maclennan: The Home Secretary is right that the point about article 8 was not faced squarely in the court, as it was not an issue before the court. However, is it not also the case that the whole issue of sexual equality had not been before the court until this case, which demonstrated that the Government rules were in breach of the convention? By a similar argument, if a case is taken in the future on article 8, the Government's rules are wide open to be struck down again. Therefore, what the Government are doing will be in vain. Why do the Government always wait and then have to be dragged through the courts repeatedly on all these issues before they admit that what they are doing is contrary to the convention?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) is entitled to his view and to his interpretation of the convention, but it should be a

salutary reminder to him, and perhaps an indication of the need for some restraint that in the cases that went before the court those who took the hon. Gentleman's view confidently stated that what the Government were doing under the provision about which complaint was made amounted to racial discrimination, or to discrimination on grounds of birth that there had been violation of respect for family life and that there had been inhuman or degrading treatment. Those who make confident predictions about what the court may do on a future occasion should take into account the fact that on all those grounds the court did not find that the Government were in breach. It found only that the Government were in breach in the case of sexual discrimination.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Brittan: No; I should like to make progress.

I shall now deal now with maintenance and accommodation. The current rules make the admission of wives subject to provision for maintenance and accommodation. This is a requirement which the husband must satisfy. It is in no sense a novel provision. He must show that he can maintain and accommodate his wife as his dependant. The admission of husbands is subject to no such requirement. It accordingly also became necessary to decide how to deal with the sex discrimination which arises from this distinction.

The principle that someone claiming admission to this country should be allowed to do so only if he or she will not become a burden on public funds is an entirely proper one. It would not be right to relax this requirement, but extending it to the admission of husbands puts the issue in a new context. Introducing formal equality would not be realistic. It would hardly be fair or sensible to require a wife whose husband is joining her to show that she can maintain and accommodate her husband.

Accordingly, the new rules introduce a new and more realistic approach by which the admission of either a husband or wife will be subject to the requirement that there shall be adequate provision for maintenance and accommodation for the couple jointly. It will mean that, for example, when a husband applies for entry clearance to join his wife, he will have to satisfy the entry clearance officer that he and his wife will be able to support themselves and will be able to house themselves. This will, of course, be a question of the means the couple already have at their disposal, including any from the wife's employment. Equally important, it will involve considering the arrangements the husband has made, or intends, when he joins his wife. That will be a question of assessing future intentions.

If the man has not already made employment arrangements, are his expectations realistic, given his experience and qualifications and his connections in this country? Likewise with accommodation: it will not be a question solely of what accommodation the wife already has. Obviously, she may well still be living with her parents. The question will be whether the couple have made adequate arrangements; and, if not, whether they have realistic intentions.

The new rules apply similar non-discriminatory provisions to male and female fiancées. This does not follow directly from the European Court judgment, but it would not be sensible in practice or appropriate in principle to have requirements relating to the admission of husbands and wives which did not apply to male and female fiancées. As a further consequence, female fiancées will in future need to obtain entry clearance before coming to this country for marriage. Otherwise, they would be put in the impossible position of having to satisfy the requirements of the rules at the port of entry.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing South): The Home Secretary knows that I am involved with these matters on a daily basis. Entry certificates will now be required for female fiancées. They have been required for a very long time for male fiancés. It can take two years or more to process these cases. All the arguments regarding the admission of male fiancés will now apply to the admission of female fiancées. Is it the Home Secretary's intention drastically to increase the staff who will have to cope with these cases in Delhi, Jullundur, Sylhet, Dacca, Gujerat and Bombay? He may recall that many years ago I was a member of the Select Committee that recommended equality of treatment for the admission of male fiancés and female fiancées, but to cope with their admission we knew that practical changes had to be made on the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Brittan: The House knows and respects the hon. Gentleman's long-standing interest in these matters. The change to which he has just referred will impose an extra burden upon those who have to administer the controls. We shall do our best to ensure that it does not create an unacceptable burden, thereby causing further delay.

The new rules include other related changes, but we have confined the changes almost entirely to those necessary to give effect to the European Court judgment, except for the provisions necessary to take account of the entry of Spain and Portugal into the European Community on 1 January next year.

The judgment of the European Court has made necessary some important and difficult choices both for the immigration control as such and for the country generally. In relation to immigration, choices have to be made not only about individual cases but about policies. The Labour party, when in government, seemed to recognise that. I am not sure that it does now. If I have got it right, it would let in as many people as it could, without the benefit of tests protecting the labour market. That may be a policy to encourage immigration, but it is not one which the people of this country will accept.

We, on the other hand, have faced up to the need to take difficult decisions. We came to office committed to take a firm grip of immigration. We have done so. Primary immigration has fallen. It is against that background that our balanced response to the European Court judgment is justified both in policy and effect. The new rules as a whole will fully uphold the firm policy to which we are committed. Accordingly, I commend them to the House.

5.36 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, leave out 'approves' and insert 'disapproves.'.

It is eight weeks since the European court delivered a judgment declaring that on two counts the United Kingdom was in breach of the European convention on human rights. The court found that the convention had been violated on the ground of sexual discrimination, in

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

that it was easier for a man settled in the United Kingdom than for a woman so settled to obtain permission for a non-national spouse to enter or remain in this country. Secondly, it found that article 13 of the convention had been violated because there was no effective remedy in English law for the first violation.

When Parliament reconvened the following week after the spring bank holiday recess, the Opposition pressed for a Government statement on the European Court judgment, but none was forthcoming. However, the Home Secretary promised an announcement. That was made on 10 July, six weeks after the judgment. The Government had presumably taken their time in formulating their response in order to ensure that that response met the requirements of the judgment in every particular. However, the announcement was made not in an open statement on the Floor of the House but furtively, in a written answer to a planted question. We made a complaint about that, on the grounds that the House should have had the right to question the Home Secretary. That complaint was not simply about a procedural lapse. It was because we had relevant questions to put to the Home Secretary which required detailed answers before the House could sensibly debate the changes in the rules.

I, with others, have attempted to obtain some of those answers by means of written questions, but even after the Home Secretary's speech today—or especially after his speech today—many important questions have still not been answered. The situation is now more obscure, and in many ways more absurd, than it ever has been.

First, there is the crucial matter of the right of individual petition to the European Commission, a matter that has already been raised on both sides of the House. It was recourse to that right which led to the judgment whose consequences we are debating today. All the countries which subscribe to the convention allow such a right of petition but, as has been pointed out, its continuance depends upon maintenance of ratification of article 25 of the convention.

For the United Kingdom ratification is next due in January next year, and the Home Secretary has dodged the questions put by hon. Members about that matter. Therefore, I ask either the Home Secretary now, or the Minister of State when he winds up, to say clearly that the United Kingdom will once again ratify—as both Labour and Conservative Governments have on six occasions in the past 19 years — so that the right of individual petition is maintained.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Does the right hon. Gentleman consider that that is a decision which should be the result of a debate and, if necessary, a vote in this House?

Mr. Kaufman: I am perfectly happy for the House to debate that matter and I think it perfectly proper for the House to vote on it, but in the end it is the responsibility of the Government to decide whether they wish to re-ratify. If the Government decide to re-ratify, it is the business of the Government to ensure that there is a majority in the House for re-ratification.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the right hon. Gentleman, with his welcome enthusiasm for re-ratification, explain to us why in 1976 a Labour Government re-ratified for only five years, on the basis that the experimental period should still run? Will he now tell us that a Labour Government would ratify the European convention without limitation of time and not just on an experimental basis?

Mr. Kaufman: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman can do better than that, because the five-year re-ratification is the longest that there has been. The other periods were three years and — the last time that this Government did it—two years. My own view is that we should ratify on a permanent basis. If the hon. and learned — he can deny it if he likes — Gentleman is now satisfied, I am happy for him.

I was saying that we heard nothing from the Home Secretary this afternoon about what the Government are doing to rectify the United Kingdom's violation of article 13 of the convention by failing to provide an effective remedy in English law against violations of the convention. I am amazed that the Home Secretary should not even have referred to that matter, as it was labelled a violation in the judgment of the court that presumably we all have with us this afternoon. Will the Government provide the remedy without which the European Court says that the British Government are violating the convention? If not, they will remain in direct violation of a judgment of the court.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Kaufman: Not at the moment. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman's hon. and learned Friend the Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), so the alliance has had a fair proportion of the interventions.

The European Court judgments were made in response to the three women who went to the court and in whose favour the court found, but we have heard nothing from the Government about all the other women who, between 1979 and 1985, have been victims of the violations of the convention that were condemned by the European Court. I say 1979 because, although the rules complained of were made in 1980, the Government wrongfully began operating them in November 1979. I say 1985 because, although the 1980 rules were superseded in 1983, the Government have acknowledged, by the substantial amendments to them contained in the document that we are debating today, that the 1983 rules are equally sexually discriminatory. Those 1983 rules are still operative today, in 1985.

Most significantly of all, the Government have at last admitted that the primary purpose rule is sexually discriminatory. That confession is implicit in the Government's purported extension of the primary purpose rule from 26 August to wives and female fiancées as well as to husbands and male fiancés. By doing that, they have admitted that every refusal to a male partner of a woman in the United Kingdom between 1979 and 1985 on primary purpose grounds has been a violation of the convention, just as they implicitly admit, by their changes in the rules to include at any rate token eligibility to the male partners of women who are settled in the United Kingdom but not British citizens, that all refusals to such women here have been violations of the convention. Yet we have not had a word from the Home Secretary to say what the Government intend to do to remedy those injustices for the women concerned, whose precise number is not known but who may number between 3,000 and 4,000.

The changes in the rules provide a theoretical improvement for women who are settled here but not British citizens, if their male partners have been subject to refusal, but such an improvement, however illusory, lies only in the future. Again, the Government provide no remedy whatever to those who have been refused on grounds of primary purpose, since the primary purpose rule remains and the survival of that rule will probably negate in most cases the newly conferred theoretical right of settled women who are not British citizens.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Kaufman: Therefore, I say very clearly to the Government——

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: If the hon. Gentleman catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will be able to make his own speech. Meanwhile, I wish to proceed.

I say very clearly to the Government that unless, before the end of the debate, they promise a review of all refusals of husbands and male fiancés between November 1979 and August 1985, my advice to the women concerned will be to follow the example of Mrs. Abdulaziz, Mrs. Cabales and Mrs. Balkandali, and take their cases to the European Court. They will have a good chance of winning, and the costs awarded against the United Kingdom Government by the court will, equally undoubtedly, amount to several million pounds. So it is up to the Government: either they risk suffering further massive expense and humiliation or they go against their instincts and give long-delayed justice to the women concerned.

If undoubted injustice has been permitted against women and their male partners by the Government for the past six years, can we at any rate look forward to the ending of such injustice as a result of the tabling of the rules? I have to say that the answer to that question is no.

When, on 28 May, the European Court ruled that it was sexual discrimination for a man to be able more easily than woman to bring his marriage partner to settle in the United Kingdom, the obvious remedy was to make it as easy for a woman to do so as a man. What is more, it would not have been an onerous decision. The numbers involved — though each involving individual hardship and heartbreak — amount only to a handful of thousands spread over a six-year period. But the Government, instead of taking the logical and decent course, decided to take the spiteful and vindictive course by resolving to make it as difficult for a man to bring his marriage partner into the United Kingdom in the future as it has been for a woman in the past.

What is more, the Home Secretary has taken the opportunity to make conditions for many applicants more onerous than they have ever been, in ways that could not have been prophesied even by those cynical, or realistic, enough to expect the very worst from this Government.

In the existing immigration laws, certain conditions have been laid down for would-be entrants and their sponsors with regard to reliance on maintenance on public funds. The current rules, for example, lay down that a male fiancé must not have recourse to public funds prior to his marriage; that a female fiancée must be maintained without recourse to public funds both before and after marriage; and that wives and other dependants must be maintained without recourse to public funds. The new rules extend that requirement to husbands and to male fiancés after marriage.

It certainly does not seem to be an unfair condition that people emigrating to the United Kingdom, or those whom they join here, shall not be so indigent or feckless that they become unacceptable burdens on taxpayers already resident here. However, what sounds fair in principle—and what the Home Secretary described this afternoon as realistic—becomes unacceptable in practice, because the new rules define for the first time exactly what "public funds" means. The Government's definition is very wide indeed. It includes family income supplement—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] — which a Conservative Government introduced as a standard benefit and which is paid to 199,000 recipients.

Mr. Nellist: My right hon. Friend may not have heard the interjections from the Tory Benches when he mentioned family income supplement. Tory Members were asking, "Why not?" Will my right hon. Friend take up the point that, on the strict application of the immigration rules, only rich people could come into this country? Anyone who had one of the jobs held by the 9 million people in this country who have to rely on some sort of assistance because their wages are below £100 a week would be caught. In other words, it comes down again to the class question of rich and poor.

Mr. Kaufman: That is true. It also comes down to a race question. One reason why I shall vote for the televising of the House is so that people can see the ugly racialism that bubbles up on the Tory Benches when we debate matters of this kind.

Under the definition in the document, recourse to public funds includes supplementary benefit, which, far from being paid to a minority of scroungers and ne'er-do-wells, is received by no fewer than 4·6 million recipients. People becoming unemployed through no fault of their own will be prevented under the rules from bringing their wives or husbands into this country if their circumstances attract supplementary benefit.

The most grotesque example of public funds whose receipt will exclude male or female spouses from entering this country is housing benefit. When the House debated housing benefit four weeks ago, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security boasted:

"no system compares in any way with the scope, range and expertise of our housing benefit system."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1985; Vol. 81, c. 1142.]

Yet that very scope and range are to be employed as an obstacle to prevent spouses from entering this country. Housing benefit is available to owner-occupiers diligently paying off their mortgages as well as to tenants diligently paying their rents. Recipients of housing benefit total 7·5 million. They are 38 per cent. of all the households in this country. Benefit can be as little as 50p a week, yet under the new rules a recipient of housing benefit can be disqualified from being joined in this country by his or her marriage partner.

The rules even disqualify someone rehoused under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. Someone evicted through no fault of his own and availing himself of his statutory right to be rehoused will be prevented from living in that house with his or her marriage partner. Last year alone, there were 83,000 such households.

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It takes a Government infected with an extraordinary perversion of meanness to lay down such disqualifications. It is a dangerous distortion of the function of government that the Department of Health and Social Security is explicitly to be made an agency for immigration control.

What are the rights that receipt of these benefits nullifies? It is when we examine them that we find that the Government have plunged themselves into a morass of inconsistencies, contradictions and absurdities which demonstrate that the Home Secretary is not only intellectually stunted and administratively incompetent, but morally disreputable as well.

What is more, the changes are all pointless. As I shall demonstrate, the new rules will leave the Home Secretary as much in violation of the European convention as did the old ones. The moment that the first adverse decisions are made under the new rules, there will undoubtedly be a fresh flow of applications which could end up in the European Court and be decided against the British Government.

We have to consider a mistake in the drafting of the new rules which makes nonsense of the provisions in them relating to children. The new paragraph 50A*(b)* says that children under 18 seeking admission shall be admitted

"if they meet the requirements of sub-paragraphs *(e)* and *(f)* of paragraph 50 but for the fact that they are joining or accompanying one parent given limited leave with a view to settlement."

But paragraph 50 of the existing rules posits sub-paragraphs *(e)* and *(f)* as alternatives and it is clear that in the new document the word between *(e)* and *(f)* should be "or", not "and". So the new rules, apparently the subject of so much consideration by the Home Secretary, are bedevilled by a serious drafting error which will have to be amended if the law of this land is to make sense.

We must also consider another serious mistake in the new rules affecting children. Under the existing rules, a child under 18 is normally admitted for settlement, and that is that. Under the new rules, a child under 18 is to be admitted for only an initial period of 12 months.

If the child is aged 17 and passes his or her 18th birthday during that initial period, if he or she gets married or if, due to delays in decisions, the child is already 18 during the initial period, there is no right in the rules for the child to remain.

Moreover, whatever the age of the child, if the parent has had to have recourse to public funds during the initial year, the Home Office will have the power to remove the child. One trusts that that disturbing error is due to sloppy drafting rather than to malevolent intention, but clearly those two mistakes mean that the new rules are seriously defective. On that ground alone, they ought to be withdrawn.

However, there are even more substantial reasons why, if the rules are not withdrawn, the House should reject them. The reasons are such that they ought to commend themselves to all hon. Members, whatever their views on immigration control.

The Government claimed in a written answer to the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 10 July that the rule changes bring the provisions for the admission of husbands and wives into line with each other and thus secure compliance with the judgment of the European court in relation to sexual discrimination. But they do no such thing. The amendments in the new document purport to achieve that equality by extending the primary purpose rule to wives and female fiancées as well as to husbands and male fiancés and by laying down the same requirements for all in regard to recourse to public funds. Yet the recourse to public fund requirement is itself an act of sexual discrimination.

The average weekly earnings of women are only 66 per cent. of those of men. Earnings of women in manual occupations are only 61 per cent. of those of men. The possibility of women having to have recourse to public funds is accordingly 50 per cent. or more greater than that of men, and such recourse is sufficient reason in the new rules for the rejection of an application.

That hurdle is in addition to an enormous exemption from all the new and onerous requirements — an exemption which makes nonsense of everything else that the Government are doing. Section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971, which is the governing Act of the rules, says:

"The rules shall be so framed that Commonwealth citizens settled in the United Kingdom at the coming into force of this Act and their wives and children are not, by virtue of anything in the rules, any less free to come into and go from the United Kingdom than if this Act had not been passed."

That is an overriding privision which cannot be overruled or amended except by primary legislation. It applies only to men and not to women.

The Home Secretary said that it is the Government's intention to introduce such primary legislation. We require an answer to the question, does that statement by the Home Secretary mean that such legislation will remove the section 1(5) guarantee? If it means that, it will be an intolerable breach of repeated commitments by the Government. I name the first one because that section 1(5) was not in the Bill as originally introduced in the House. It was an amendment from the other place. On 19 October 1971, when this House considered the Lords amendments, the then Home Secretary, Mr. Maudling, said of section 1(5), which the present Home Secretary says he is going to amend:

"We provide that in the rules there should be a continuing right for immigrants settled here to bring their wives and children with them. It has been argued that this statutory right should be preserved, and the purpose of the second Amendment is to presever the current statutory right to bring in wives and children".—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 552.]

Are the Government going to stand by that guarantee? If they are, they cannot amend that section in a way that will renew the guarantee. If they amend the section in that way, they will be breaking not only one promise but a series of solemn promises to the House of Commons.

While that section and subsection are on the statute book, however many or however few men are covered by it, their exemption ensures that there cannot be equal treatment for men and women. It therefore ensures that the European Court judgment, and consequently the European convention, are violated.

The Government have decided to make that exemption an excuse for negating to an overwhelming extent any pretence that they mean to treat men and women equally. The phrase

"Commonwealth citizens settled in the United Kingdom"—

the phrase in this section—includes all British citizens born in this country on or before January 1973 and living here on that date, which is the date of the coming into force of the Immigration Act 1971. This means that, of the 27

million males in this country today, 21 million are exempted from the primary purpose rule and the other new obstacles as they affect wives. The exemption covers approximately three quarters of all the males in this country, but about 90 per cent. of men over 18. Those men are roughly of marriageable age and most of them are white. About half the black men here will not benefit from this exemption.

All the women in Britain are affected by the primary purpose rule and the other conditions with regard to husbands, but most of the males are not affected by these restrictions as they affect wives; and that is what this Government mean by sexual equality.

This wilful distortion of the legislation goes completely against what was intended by those responsible for its enactment. The Act is about immigration, and this provision was specifically intended to apply only to immigrants. That was clearly explained by Mr. Maudling in the quotation that I offered to the House. The relevant sentence states:

"We provide that in the rules there should be a continuing right for immigrants settled here to bring their wives and children with them."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 552.]

With these rule changes, the Government are deliberately perverting the intentions of the parent Act. No doubt they are congratulating themselves on doing so for, apart from the little matter of continuing to violate the European convention, they have neatly turned section 1(5) protection into an exclusion favouring almost all white males who wish to bring foreign or Commonwealth wives into this country. Unfortunately, by doing so, the Government have spawned a mass of ridiculous and contemptible anomalies. They have created, whether they realise it or not, a series of divisions among those same white males whom they are seeking to favour, while at the same time penalising most black males. They continue to penalise all women, whether black or white.

The section 1(5) exemption applies only to wives and not to fiancées. This means that, if one of the 21 million apparently favoured males wishes to bring in his wife, he can do so unconditionally, but if he wishes to bring in his fiancée, she will be subject to the primary purpose and public funds obstacles. All these women, whether they are white or black, whether their prospective husbands are white or black, whether their husbands were born in this country, have long ancestries in it or were immigrants, will be subject to the degrading and humiliating question that is inherent in the primary purpose rule.

The section 1(5) protection applies only to those in Britain on 1 January 1973. That seems all right for the time being, since the oldest among the 4½ million males born here since 1 January 1973 are aged between 12 and 13. But time will pass, and in five or six years these teenagers will begin to reach marriageable age. When they do so, they will not enjoy section 1(5) protection and will be subject to the full rigour of the primary purpose and public funds conditions. Elder brothers will be free to marry whom they like; younger brothers will not. None of them, older or younger, will have the freedom that used to be available to bring fiancées to this country.

There will be extraordinary and unacceptable discrimination against British nationals and European Community nationals resident here. Under the freedom of movement provisions of the treaty of Rome, European Community nationals are completely at liberty to work here without any nonsense of primary purpose rules and to bring in not only their wives but their children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Although they do not, in strict terms, have equal freedom to bring in their fiancées, they actually have such freedom, because paragraph 15 of the new rules not only entrenches but extends the right of all European Community nationals—men and women—to enter this country not only to take employment but to seek employment.

European Community fiancées will be able to enter this country freely under this provision and will, therefore, have rights denied to the fiancées of millions of British citizens. I would add "of law-abiding British citizens" for among the European Community nationals in this country who will not be affected by these restrictions when British citizens will be are the Italian Fascist terrorists whose presence in London has been exposed by the press and ITN.

In these absurd and derisory rules, the Government have managed to make one law for men and another for women, one law for white men and another for black men, one law for white men and their wives and another for white men and their fiancées, one law for males born before 1973 and another for males born since 1973, and one law for British men and another for European Community men living in Britain.

All this has been done in violation of the most solemn promises, for the decision to penalise men who were born here or came here after 1973 is a breach of specific pledges made by Conservative Ministers. On 11 November 1982, in a debate on immigration rules, Lord Whitelaw as Home Secretary was asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley):

"If it is not right to allow women who are settled here to bring in husbands, why is it right to allow men who are settled here to bring in wives?"

Lord Whitelaw replied:

"The right for men was established in the 1971 Act. That is the position and I believe that it should remain."

If Lord Whitelaw was still Home Secretary, I believe that he, as an honourable man, would have kept that commitment. It has now been broken.

In the same debate, the then Minister of State, Home Office, who is now the Minister for Overseas Development — the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison)—stated:

"the Immigration Act 1971 . . . entitled men settled in Britain to bring in their wives and under-age children . . . we have always accepted that this guarantee should apply to men settled here since then. That, in my opinion, is the humane decision." —[*Official Report*, 11 November 1982; Vol. 31, c. 695, 753.]

That humane decision is now being violated.

The present Minister of State, addressing the Conservative party conference in 1983, made a courageous speech opposing the racialist resolution proposed by the Billericay constituency. [HON. MEMBERS: "Surprise, surprise."] He said:

"I remind the conference that the Immigration Act 1971 gave to men who have settled here the right to have their families join them. The motion ignores the fact that about two thirds of those accepted for settlement last year were those families, the wives and children of men already settled here, often men settled here since before 1971, and the motion tells us to take away that statutory right. Is that what Councillor Eyre wants when he talks about a respite?"

[Mr. Kaufman]

Those were fine words, but in advocating these rules, the Minister is breaking them. What is he doing by breaking his word? I shall again quote from the Conservative party conference. He said:

"But the motion does even more than that. What it seeks to do, when one examines it, is to deny a British citizen the right to choose a wife from where he wants and live with her here."

The Minister condemned that when others proposed it, yet he and the Home Secretary are doing exactly that tonight.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Either the right hon. Gentleman is deceiving the House, which I cannot believe, or he has completely misunderstood the rules. Nothing whatsoever in the rules takes away from a British citizen the right to bring in a wife. The most that the right hon. Gentleman can say is that if a British citizen wishes to bring in a wife, the wife will have to satisfy the immigration officer that the primary purpose of the marriage is not merely immigration. That is the only way in which the right hon. Gentleman can begin to argue that the rights of a British citizen are being removed. He has obviously misunderstood the purpose of the exercise.

Mr. Kaufman: I have never misunderstood the Minister's intention in these matters. If the wife must only satisfy the primary purpose rule, as he says, why is it that 90 per cent. of all refusals are based on the primary purpose rule, and more than 40 per cent. of all applications, whether accepted or rejected, are refused on the basis of the primary purpose rule? It is a device to negate a right, and the hon. and learned Gentleman knows it.

Three months ago the Home Secretary spoke to the conference of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service in Manchester. He said:

"the Government is firmly committed to allowing the dependants of those already settled here to join them. In 1984, over 16,000 wives and over 11,000 children were accepted for settlement. That is well over half of all those who were allowed to settle here last year. Over the past decade the United Kingdom has accepted about a third of a million wives and children for settlement. I believe that these figures demonstrate that this Government continues to put first the commitment which this country has made to those who have emigrated here."

Tonight that proud boast lies in tatters because the stringent conditions——

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have read the rules.

Mr. Kaufman: How can the Home Secretary say that I have not read the rules when he has two major drafting errors in them, which makes nonsense of them? He did not mention them, and I hope that his civil servants will make it clear how they can be put right.

That proud boast lies in tatters, because the stringent conditions imposed on certain wives and all fiancees under these new rules will negate any theoretical right of entry. Experience of the operation of the primary purpose rule aginst women since 1979 makes that clear. As I said earlier, 90 per cent. of refusals for husbands and male fiancés from the Indian subcontinent are due to the primary purpose rule. That is likely to be the future pattern for wives and female fiancees. Indeed, the Government intend that to be the pattern.

Ms. Clare Short: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is some hypocrisy coming from the Government Benches in that today the Home Secretary has announced his intention to amend the 1971 legislation and to interfere with section 1(5), yet he sits and shakes his head in disagreement when my right hon. Friend says that that will breach an undertaking given by every Home Secretary since Reginald Maudling? The Home Secretary cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Kaufman: Not only can the Home Secretary not have it both ways, but his statistics and what he said this afternoon undermine what he says. An answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) made it clear that the increase in the number of male immigrants as a result of the change in the rules will be more than counterbalanced by the reduction in the number of female immigrants. What is it all for? It is merely to keep out a handful of thousands of husbands and male fiancés, mainly from the Indian subcontinent. Those victims are fewer in number than those who vote in a by-election to fill a local authority vacancy, or the number of delegates at a Tory party conference. They number about one five-hundredth of 1 per cent. of the population. Those are the true dimensions of the alleged problem that has ensnarled the Home Secretary in this discreditable tangle.

Viewed objectively, immigration should be neither a problem nor an issue in Britain. Substantial primary immigration ended at least a decade and a half ago, and there is no prospect of it starting again. In most years there is a net emigration from the United Kingdom. In 1983-84, 45 per cent. of so-called immigrants were Britons returning to the United Kingdom. In that year only 15·5 per cent. of immigrants came from the West Indies, Africa and the Indian subcontinent — the areas from which, according to the Government, there is the greatest pressure to emigrate to the United Kingdom.

The Labour party certainly believes in firm immigration controls — *[Interruption.]* I say to Conservative racialists, who wish it were different, that we believe in firm immigration controls, but, unlike the Government, we insist that immigration controls should be non-sexist and non-racist.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall not give way, because I am about to sit down.

Today we are discussing the right of women and men to marry whom they wish, and to live where they wish with their chosen spouse. Surely that sentiment must appeal to the Prime Minister who in 1981 said:

"not only is the family the most important means through which we show our care for others. It's the place where each generation learns its responsibilities towards the rest of society."

The rules are disreputable and shoddy, and they will lead to administrative chaos and, what is worse, much human misery. They are conceived in prejudice, and will be administered with invidiousness. Two things remain for the Home Secretary to do—one is to withdraw these rules, and the other is to resign. He should do both today.

6.20 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): Immigration is a subject that should not lead to an us-and-them debate. To talk about tightening controls as the prerogative of the majority white population and of liberalising controls as the prerogative of the ethnic minorities, or as an attempt to appease them, is to make false and sweeping

generalisations and perpetuate the status of immigrants, a status that applies no longer to the majority of the coloured population. Ethnic minorities have as much at stake in Britain's future and its social fabric as the white population. I contend that they have a greater interest because they are at a greater social disadvantage than their white counterparts. The ethnic minorities suffer from greater unemployment and a greater degree of bad housing.

Immigration controls are of benefit to the entire community but their operation must not lead to the disadvantage of any section of the community. If immigration controls are to be respected, they must apply equally. The old rules that the European Court rejected were clearly discriminatory and not to the Government's credit. It is a shame that individuals had to go to the European Court to have them corrected.

There is nothing objectionable in applying strict immigration controls to prevent abuse. There is nothing objectionable in the way in which the Government have tackled the judgment of the European Court. There is nothing objectionable in controlling the numbers coming into the country. It is the methods that are used to achieve that object that are objectionable if they are unfair and discriminatory. In the overall context of immigration control, a primary purpose rule is an effective method of controlling entry and deciding reasons for entry. However, is it right that that rule should assume that the applicant is fraudulent unless it is proven otherwise? The figures show that there has been a large increase in the number of applicants who have been refused on account of the primary purpose rule. There has been a commensurate and significant decrease in other reasons for refusal when applications for entry have been made for marriage reasons. If the rules are keeping out those who would otherwise fail in their applications, why submit applicants to the indignity and anxiety that goes with having to try to prove that their marriage is genuine?

In how many of the extra refusals would the entry clearance officers fail to prove a bogus application while at the same time the applicant would be unable to prove that he was making a genuine application to come here for marriage? It is more likely that the inability to prove the genuineness of the application will be because the applicant has the handicap of a lack of resources, lack of intelligence or lack of preparation. The applicant should not be penalised for being in that position and the onus must be put on the authorities.

How many of those who are settled in this country and how many hon. Members could pass the primary purpose rule? The rule might reduce the number of divorces if it were to be applied here. Elizabeth Taylor would have failed miserably on every occasion.

There is a need to review the primary purpose rule and to consider whether the onus of proof should not be returned to the authorities. I hope that the Government will undertake such a review. There is no doubt that the current application of the rule causes applicants to suffer indignity and anxiety.

Another detail of the new rules that concerns me—I am sure that it will cause great concern to many of my constituents — is that which is directed to adequate maintenance and accommodation. Many applicants who apply to bring in husbands, fiancés or wives may be in the fortunate position of having a job. However, before their application is processed they may, unfortunately, lose their employment. They may lose it during the 12 months between their partner entering the United Kingdom and the end of the probationary period. Circumstances completely outside their control might dictate that their application fails. Equally, once their partner is here he or she may have to return to the country from whence they came because of the unfortunate economic circumstance in which they found themselves. The criterion that bears on adequate maintenance and accommodation will effectively rule out those of my constituents who are unemployed or low paid having the chance to marry the person of their choice.

An applicant who enters the United Kingdom will have to prove that he or she has a job that will provide sufficient pay not to make it necessary to claim housing benefit or family income supplement, or that he or she has great qualifications and that it is likely that he or she will be able to take a job. That is the position of an applicant whose partner is in this country and unemployed. Are we to tell a young man that he cannot be allowed into the country because he will have to make a claim on public funds, when he has good qualifications, the probability of finding a job—for example, a trainee chartered accountant—and good prospects? Is that really what we are to tell someone in that position when it is likely that his income initially will be low and he will have to claim housing benefit, for example?

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I have been listening intently to my hon. Friend. If the rules did not exist, does he agree that those intending to enter the country would be tempted to do so for that very reason? Does he accept that they might be tempted to come here to enjoy the benefits which other taxpayers, who have been settled for many years, have provided?

Mr. Lawler: The greatest need and desire of those entering the country would be to get a job so that they would not have to rely on public funds. I have some knowledge of the Asian community and I know that its members are extremely enterprising and hard-working. Those who have to live on the public purse take no pride in that fact. Asians like to live off their own means and provide for themselves. The rules might prevent them being able to do that. In the initial stages, when they are gaining qualifications, becoming better qualified and working towards the stage when they can be self-sustaining, they might have reasons to have recourse to public funds. It is in the initial stage that we shall inhibit them from joining their partners in this country.

Ms. Clare Short: Is the hon. Gentleman perplexed because the Government have not included the application for mortgage interest relief in the provisions that turn on recourse to public funds? The provision of that relief leads to greater expenditure by the Exchequer than that on housing benefit. Does this not show the class bias that underlies the rules?

Mr. Lawler: I do not agree with the hon. Lady. I do not accept that mortgage interest relief should be included in the list of the various claims on public funds. I should prefer to narrow the definition rather than widen it.

A worrying feature of the housing provisions is that the applicants are deemed to live in their own property. This requires clarification. I have come across examples where an uncle or a wealthy friend has offered to provide

[Mr. Lawler]

accommodation. It is not uncommon in the Asian community for someone to own more than one house. If a couple wish to get married and the fiancé, husband or wife is coming here from the Indian subcontinent, I see no reason why that practice should not be allowed to continue. I hope that paragraph 15 will be clarified so that we know whether the practice can continue. My concern extends beyond housing to the provision of money and income by relatives or friends to sustain the couple once they are in the United Kingdom. This practice has been quite common among my constituents and I hope that it will not be brought to an end, especially as a substantial proportion of the Asian population in many of our cities suffer a disproportionate rate of unemployment.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The hon. Gentleman is making a courageous speech. Will he follow it by voting against the Government this evening?

Mr. Lawler: If the hon. Gentleman will wait until I conclude my speech, he can draw his own conclusions.

This detail means that many of my constituents will be worried about engaging in a contract of marriage and inviting over people they wish to marry. That is because they will enter a 12-month period, at the beginning of which they may be in employment. However, at the end, they may not be and they will be worried about their fate. The person in this country may be a British citizen born and educated here, who has worked here for many years and has paid his or her taxes. That person, therefore, has as much entitlement to claim benefits from the welfare state as anyone else.

We must not put that person in a position where he cannot claim benefits because of the fear that his or her partner will be returned to the country whence he or she came, or that the couple will have to leave. A person may lose his job during the 12 months and, as they are phrased at the moment, the rules mean that if a person loses his job at any time after the marriage, the couple will have to return to whatever country they came from.

Another tradition infringed by the rules is the extended family. It is not uncommon for parents, uncles, aunts or friends to take into the family home, whether it is the same house or a house they own, a newly married couple. We should allow and respect that tradition and culture, and not prohibit it as we effectively seem to be doing in the wording of paragraph 15A. The rules as phrased restrict to the wealthy, the clever or the people with good qualifications the right to bring in whom one wants as a partner. But even then there is no guarantee that a person will continue to be allowed to have his partner live with him or her. My constituents will be looking for a change in the rules.

Mr. Waddington: Perhaps I could help my hon. Friend on one point. He has been addressing the House as if the reference in the new rules to accommodation of a person's own or which he occupies himself represents a new provision, a new requirement. The existing rule 46 refers to the need for a husband who is sponsoring the entry of a wife to show that he has accommodation of his own or which he occupies himself. Therefore, there is no change in that.

Mr. Lawler: As I understand it, the new rules will mean that not only must that condition be applied before the marriage but that it must also be applied more or less indefinitely. The existing situation is that a house or accommodation may be offered by members of the family or by friends for an indefinite period. That will no longer apply and once a couple are married they will have to sustain themselves and find their own accommodation.

Increasingly, the desire of the Asian community is to try to choose a partner from within this country. There are many reasons for that, not least of which is that when two people have been educated under the same system they will probably be more compatible than in the case of someone brought in who has had a completely different education and who may not even speak English. While that is an increasing trend, we still must respect the right of members of the community to exercise their freedom of choice. To restrict people coming to this country and to implement strict criteria is fair. It is also fair to implement firm immigration controls and to change the rules in the way they have been changed. But to replace sexual discrimination with wealth discrimination is not fair, and I hope there will be some changes in the rules.

6.36 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): From time to time this House lays on what might be called a surrogate debate. This happens when there are huge and tormenting problems which, for various reasons of embarrassment or prior commitment, we prefer not to have debated openly on the floor of the House. We therefore argue about minor matters on the fringe of those great problems. This debate is a case in point. Its only peculiarity is that we are not trying to avoid debating just one such major problem, but three. There are, so to speak, three sleeping dogs which there is a general anxiety and agreement, if possible, not to disturb. I wish to contribute by kicking each in order into some sort of wakefulness.

These changes to the rules have not been brought forward by the Goverment of their own volition. The Government have not come forward with their own legislation and do not commend it on that ground. They say, "We are obliged by an international commitment to invite Parliament to legislate as follows." The claim of this House to make the law of this kingdom is connected with its representative character. It is because we collectively represent the realm, and because we individually and collectively are held responsible through a well-understood and long-practised political process for the laws that we make, that a law of this country has traditionally been made only by Parliament.

The whole basis of the right and claim of the House to legislate is destroyed if we can be obliged to legislate as a result of an interpretation placed by foreign judges upon a document of extreme vagueness in its formulation. There is no reason why such interpretation of such a document should be acceptable to the opinion or the wishes of our people, or that it should be workable and compatible with the rest of our law and with the circumstances of the people of this country. The obligation is an affront to the whole process of parliamentary government and legislation.

We find ourselves in this position as a result of something which the House has never debated. It has never debated the adherence of the United Kingdom to the European convention on human rights, nor, when the right of individual access to that court was from time to time renewed, has it ever been thought fit for the subject to be debated by the House. So for 35 years we have lived—

without debate, without securing the understanding and agreement of the people in the way in which we seek it by our debates in this House — with a system that is incompatible with the claim of Parliament, alone to make the laws of this country.

Mr. Maclennan: The right hon. Gentleman speaks as if this were unusual, but with his great knowledge of history he will recognise that the treaty-making power of this country is a prerogative power of the Crown which was exercised for centuries before the European convention on human rights was dreamed of. Parliament has always thought it appropriate to legislate to bring its laws into line with the treaties agreed by the prerogative.

Mr. Powell: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman because by his intervention he exposes the peculiarity of our adherence to the European convention. Of course, when a treaty is entered into by Her Majesty's Government which involves any change in the laws of this country in order to be implemented, before that treaty can be ratified the Government must secure from Parliament the necessary change in the law of the realm. That has always been the case from the treaty of Utrecht onwards and no doubt before. What has happened here is that the Government are both empowered and required to approach this House and from time to time, to say, "Thus you must legislate, because a body over which we have no control, taking decisions about which we had no foreknowledge, no possibility of foreknowledge, when we entered into this international commitment, has arrived at a certain ruling." That is the radical incompatibility — which does not exist with any other treaty, except perhaps the European Community treaty — between the legislative power of this House and our adherence to the European Convention. The result is that we shall find ourselves progressively making law which does not have the support or approval of the people, and the Secretary of State for Education and Science had the embarrassment today of having to admit exactly that to the House.

We are contemplating, in the form of these proposed changed rules, one of the consequences of legislative servitude in which we have involved ourselves. It is a legislative servitude we have never sought to justify by debate either to ourselves or to the country, and a servitude of which the renewal has never been thought fit to be brought before the House. One of the benefits of today's debate—there will be others—is that we have secured what I hope can be understood to be an undertaking from both sides of the House that, if there is to be a further extension and renewal of the right of individual access, the opinion of the House will be duly sought in debate before that occurs.

Not unlike the Secretary of State for Education and Science, the Home Secretary found himself in a fix. He was stuck with a set of immigration rules which had been struck down by the court. We have before us today the solution to his problem. Broadly speaking, it was to take that which applied to the admission of male fiancés and male spouses and apply it to the admission of female fiancées and wives. That is the essence of the Home Secretary's solution to the quandary in which he was placed by the decision of the European court.

Much to the Home Secretary's surprise, though not to that of many right hon. and hon. Members, that apparently even-handed justice has been found to be less than satisfactory, and behind this there lies the second of my sleeping dogs—another of these great problems that we have accepted all unwittingly and loaded upon ourselves. It is that of sex discrimination legislation and philosophy, which has been important in its impact upon our citizenship law, though it influenced our immigration law even before it had its impact upon our law of citizenship.

In the British Nationality Act 1981, we succeeded, except transitionally, in eliminating every trace of differentiation between one sex and the other for the purposes of the exercise or transmission of nationality. I do not intend to revert to our debates — some of us believe that this was a profound mistake — during the passage of the British Nationality Bill. However, I want to point out the effect which has run through to these rules.

It is a proposition — and we would view any disagreement with it as repugnant—that those belonging to a country, those settled in a country, those who are citizens of a country, should be free to wed whom they will from wherever they come. It would be difficult to imagine anything more insulting than repudiation of that proposition.

However, as a result of the changes that we have made in our law of nationality, we have endowed both sexes with the capability of conferring the acquisition—or the opportunity of acquisition—of national status and of rights such as the right of abode. The immediate consequence was seen in the rise of the spectre of the male fiancé: it was realised that in those circumstances it would be possible for a woman settled here to confer the right of abode upon a male, whether a fiancé or a husband and immediately defences were erected in the form of the order that has been struck down by the European Court of Human Rights.

The Home Secretary says, "I shall solve the problem. I shall treat both sexes the same. I shall apply the same rules to husbands and wives and to male and female fiancés. What is wrong with that?"

What is wrong with it, is that when we apply those rules, with which we have been living, satisfactorily more or less, over a number of years, to a wife and thus hold a man who is to confer by marriage the status of abode and of citizenship upon his wife to the requirements and he inquisitions of the old rule, we are all aghast and offended by it.

That is not the fault of the Home Secretary. It is our own fault for what we have done in our legislation against sex discrimination. We have legislated a lie, which flies in the face of facts as they really are and which flies in he face of the respective functions and roles of man nd woman in society. We have legislated in the face of he truth and, as always happens when we do that, we find ourselves involved in irresolvable conflict.

So that is the second of the questions which we re endeavouring to hold at bay in this surrogate debate— how long we can sustain the fiction that there is an identy of function and role in society and in nationally between man and woman, as we have been endeavouring to assrt in our legislation.

Ms. Clare Short: I know that the right hon. Gentlemn has followed the development of British immigration law in great detail over a very long period. He has implid today that the right of women to marry husbands fren abroad arises because of the changes that were made ift te recent British Nationality Act. However, that is not te

[Ms. Clare Short]

case, as I am sure he will confirm. We have been arguing for a long time about whether women should have a right to marry husbands from abroad. The right was given in 1968, taken away and then restored in changes to the immigration rules long before the passage of the British Nationality Act.

Mr. Powell: I am obliged to the hon. Lady because she helps me to make my point. It is when marriage is endowed with the ability to confer status that we run into these difficulties. It was the status she possessed of having right to abode; that would be conferred by a women exercising her choice to marry whom she would from abroad, which led us to erect these barriers—or, rather, these sieves—to limit the use which could be made of that right.

So I have come to the last and most ferocious of the sleeping dogs. No one can listen to a debate upon these rules without being struck by their pettiness, their ineffectiveness and their disproportion and irrelevance in what they attempt in relation to the problem with which they seek to cope.

The word "immigration" is still clung to by millions of our fellow citizens as a euphemism which helps them to be protected from the prospect — the reality — which successive Governments have steadily refused to acknowledge or allow to be openly debated on the Floor of the House in its full dimensions. When one third or more of major cities and other areas of the country are populated or will be populated by those who in important respects do not identify themselves with the rest of the population, it is a delusion to imagine that any rules that we try to frame will prevent those populations from being replenished and refreshed from the immense human reservoir with which they are connected in the continent from which they originated. It is a delusion to think that one can have a resident population of millions closely related in sentiment and in every other way to huge populations in the rest of the globe and still prevent the natural consequences of that from following.

Hence, we endeavour by such a debate as this to protect ourselves from grappling with the true magnitude, the true reality of the fact that the new Commonwealth population of this country by reason of its age structure is destined inexorably, apart from any further inflow, to double in the foreseeable future—we endeavour to protect ourselves from acknowledging that fact and from having to spell out to ourselves and to our fellow citizens whether we find it acceptable or not and what we believe its consequences will be. That is the third and greatest of the subjects which we have been holding at bay in this surrogate debate; but one day we shall have to look it in the face.

6.50 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I have not taken part before in a debate on immigration; probably the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is right that we have not debated this subject, and we have been somewhat amiss.

I have listened with great interest to the points which have been made. I would say to my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Front Bench that there is a dictum in the media that, if one is being criticised from all sides of the political spectrum, one has probably got it right. I would commend that viewpoint to the House.

For four years, I was a member of Birmingham community relations council. I found that experience thoroughly enjoyable and deeply enlightening. I was educated into discovering the differences in style and attitudes in a city with dozens and dozens of minorities. I learned about thalassaemia and sickle cell anaemia, and the tragic effects of kinship on congenital malformations in families. I was able in a small way to help set up services for families with sickle cell anaemia, and the first voluntary centre for the elderly West Indians in Birmingham, so I have been much involved in all these services. All of us in the Conservative party in Birmingham learned that putting up a Hindu candidate in a ward where the majority of the electors were Pakistanis was not going to lead to success, particularly when the Labour party had the wit to put up a Moslem. I learned most of all from these people what it means to honour God in their daily lives, and to respect and care for their elderly, and I do really believe that they have a great deal to teach the host community in some asspects of these social services.

Like the first two speakers in the debate, my grandparents were immigrants, but I also had the opportunity of going through an immigration procedure myself some years ago when I decided to go to the United States in order to work and found that, since I could not get a work permit, I had to go through immigration procedure. It took many months to get clearance. That involved interviews in the United Kingdom, for myself and, for my relatives in the United States, and involved them in considerable expense. My family and sponsors in America had to go through all the palaver of swearing their incomes and savings before notaries public to satisfy the authorities that in no circumstances would I become a charge on public funds. Indeed, had I becoine such a charge, I would have been deported at once; that was made quite clear right from the beginning and at all stages of the immigration procedure.

I think that that approach is absolutely right, and I am glad to see that one change tonight is that the existing requirements relating to maintenance and accommodation are being strengthened. As I understand it, in future the entry clearance officer must be satisfied that the couple will jointly provide adequate maintenance and accommodation for themselves and their dependants. If, during the initial limited leave period, they subsequently have recourse to public funds, then their leave may be curtailed or their application for extension of stay refused.

I heard the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—who has now left the Chamber—say that he thought that the families had the right to settle wherever they wanted. There is not a country in the world that is worth living in which accepts that sort of proposition. Almost all nations have immigration procedures, and we are not the only nation to have strict rules. Indeed, in many countries, as my experience in the United States shows, the rules are a great deal stricter.

I was sad to hear the criticism from all sides, and I think that the Government have responded with responsibility and perhaps with some ingenuity to the court's decision. The court said that we were discriminating. The Government accepted the ruling, and they could simply have opened the doors a little wider. Instead, they decided to enforce equality by levelling down, so the figures should not be changed by all that much, and we look forward to seeing exactly what will happen.

There are Conservative Members, and perhaps Opposition Members, who are opposed to the changes simply because they have been forced by the European Court. I have to say to them, and particularly to my hon. and very dear friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Budgen) — *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend was not in fact listening as he was talking to my hon. and dear friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). To be more serious, I say to him that just because the Government are obliged to take action by the European Court does not make such action automatically disreputable. I believe that those of my colleagues who are anti-Europe and take that stand in the debate actually diminish what they say by their approach to Europe.

Then we have the Labour party. I listened with interest to the right hon. Member for Gorton, who tossed the racialist tag rather freely around. I would say to him—and I hope that he reads this in *Hansard* tomorrow—that abuse has never been a substitute for argument. Simply abusing Conservative Members who take a genuine interest and concern in these matters — [HON. MEMBERS: "He is in the Chamber."] I apologise to the right hon. Member for Gorton, who was sitting on a Back Bench, and I refrain from saying that that is where he belongs.

However, the right hon. Gentleman forbore to mention that the law which we have been discusing was that applied by the Labour Government when they were in office. He did not remind us that, in the 1960s, the Labour Government promised to repeal the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962, but in 1968 actually extended its scope, removing from United Kingdom passport holders their right to come here. He complained about the control of entry of husbands and fiancés, but he did not actually mention that in 1970 the Labour Government introduced rules which banned entry of husbands, save at the discretion of the Secretary of State. That was one of the last acts of that Labour Government. He did not say that the last Labour Administration relaxed the husband and fiancé rules after coming into office in 1974 and then discovered, less than three years later, that they could not sustain this position, and the rules were tightened again in 1977.

The Labour party certainly has a view on immigration. The problem is that it keeps changing it. It seems to depend on whether it is in office or not.

Those who might be tagged pro-immigration will naturally be opposed to tightening up the rules in any way. I say to them that I respect that viewpoint, but the British people, including my electorate, my constituents in south Derbyshire, would find that view absolutely untenable.

We invited people to come here in the 1950s. The right hon. Member for South Down was Minister of Health in 1960 when advertisements were still appearing in the West Indian magazines and newspapers inviting people to come and work in our hospitals and in our transport departments and so on, and they came. They continue to do the work for which they came. They do the hardest and meanest jobs in the public services, particularly in the National Health Service. Their contribution to this nation since they arrived at our invitation has been incalculable. In my view, they are entitled not only to stay, but to have that contribution recognised.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): What does the hon. Lady mean by coming here "at our invitation"? As I understand the state of the law at that time, there was no way in which we could have prevented them coming here, because at that stage we did not distinguish between citizens of one country, a member of the Commonwealth, and another. It was therefore, as the inevitable consequence of our failure to define citizenship in this country that this immigration took place. Therefore, it was in no sense in response to a formal invitation of any kind on behalf of the British people that this immigration took place.

Mrs. Currie: In the personal scrapbooks of people who used to be my constituents in Birmingham, I have seen cuttings from magazines to which they responded which were placed all over the Commonwealth, inviting people to come here and work. London Transport particularly put in a very large number of these advertisements, and said not only that jobs were available, but that accommodation would be found and that there were no restrictions on settlement. If that is not encouragement, I do not know what is. The adverts were still being put in by several Government and local authority Departments right through until the door was shut.

I say to colleagues who do not like the rules to be tightened up that, with more than 3 million unemployed, it would be crazy for us to let the control of immigration go in any way. We must have an immigration policy. That has been recognised by every Government since 1961. It is recognised by every nation in the world. With overcrowding and racial tension in our major cities, where our minorities want to go, it is not and never has been in their interests to allow unrestricted access, as some hon. Members would want. I have heard the leaders of such communities say so.

Nor is it in the United Kingdom's interests or within the country's power to solve the problems of other countries by permitting unrestricted access, whether they be Tamils, Hong Kongers or Gibraltarians. It cannot be right and if it were attempted, the outcry here would be considerable.

The constant pressure to enter the United Kingdom is a tribute to the prosperity of this country which can pay all the benefits about which we have heard, and it is a sad reflection on the continued poverty of the countries from which people come. The matter will not be resolved until those countries are able to offer their people a better and more prosperous way of life. The struggle to come to grips with this pressure is never easy and no Government have ever enjoyed putting such legislation before the House. All Governments have tried to tackle the problem. They have succeeded more or less. In 1961, there were about 140,000 immigrants; in 1984 there were about 26,000 from the old Commonwealth and foreign countries and about 25,000 from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan. I regard that as a success. In 18 of the past 20 years, immigration to Britain has been more or less balanced by emigration. I regard that as a success as well, especially when we take account of the fact that movement out of Britain was for many decades, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, the only way in which many of our young people could have a future.

My right hon. and learned Friend's response to the court's decision is wise, responsible and appropriate and it deserves our support.

7.1 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs.

[Mr. Greville Janner]

Currie). I understand that some of her constituents are not what are sometimes described as indigenous. She rightly paid tribute to them and their way of life. She is wrong to claim that the Opposition believe that there should be no immigration rules. I at once associate myself with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said—we believe that there must be a fair, decent and honourable immigration policy. We are against a policy that is unfair, unreasonable, racist, sexist and impossible properly to administer.

My Asian constituents complain constantly not so much about the rules as about how they operate. They also complain about immigration officers being enabled to hold people up at ports of entry, interrogate them—often in a language that they do not understand — create misunderstandings which lead to ill will and, ultimately, prevent a policy created by unfair rules from operating acceptably to hundreds of thousands of British citizens.

I listened with interest to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). It was fascinating to hear the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South talking about people being encouraged to come to Britain. I remember when people in the new Commonwealth were encouraged to come here as nurses and to do jobs which people here were not prepared to do. I seem to remember that the right hon. Member for South Down was anxious that we should have such people. I have been told—I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong—that he was Minister of Health when we were encouraging people from the West Indies to come here as nurses.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The hon. and learned Member has been misinformed. The recruitment was carried out by the regional boards and the hospital authorities. At no stage was I in any way involved in decisions governing recruitment.

Mr. Janner: I understand that the right hon. Gentleman was Minister of Health at the time and I believe that the Minister of Health had some responsibility for the recruitment policies of health authorities. There it is, but anyway, I do not remember his denouncing such policies at the time. I believe that even he would understand that those who are now entitled to live here and be treated equally are entitled also to feel that their treatment is fair and that they have the same rights as all other citizens in regard to being joined by their wives or husbands or children.

Leicester has absorbed a considerable number of people from different cultures and countries in a wholly admirable way. About one fifth of the city's population is Asian. They have entered the life of the city in every respect, including the political life. Their objection is not to immigration rules but to the unfair way in which those rules work. This opportunity to make the rules fairer has not been grasped. I should like to pay my tribute to those people who, behind the scenes, try to help hon. Members to use the rules in such a way as to make them sometimes administered with compassion. I pay tribute to the Minister, who is occasionally able, even within the ambit of the rules, to help us with the fair and kindly administration of the system. Unfortunately, he is bound by the rules. He had the opportunity to change them but has not made them acceptable.

Ms. Clare Short: My understanding of the rules is that they are advisory and do not bind the Minister, who has discretion to allow in whomever he wants to let in.

Mr. Janner: There is a discretion in the rules which is normally exercised only in accordance with general principles. The overall discretion is one which Ministers, with their huge trains and trolleys of cases, exercise with some care. I have no complaint about the exercise of care in the admission of people to Britain. My complaint is that the rules are not basically fair and are not administered in a way which is accepted as fair.

I associate myself with everything that my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said. It was churlish of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South to make her remark about the Back Benches.

Mrs. Currie: That is where he was.

Mr. Janner: I thought that afterwards, she would wish to apologise, but she did not. I suppose that "apology" is not a word that appears in her vocabulary. I thought that my right hon. Friend put the case eloquently, fairly, reasonably and in a statesmanlike way. I wish to add from the Back Benches, where I serve with pride, just two or three questions to the Minister. *[Interruption.]* I have served on the Back Benches with some pride for 15 years but if, after the next general election, I were to receive an invitation of some sort, I should consider it with care.

I should like to ask the Minister serious questions about the status of children accompanying mothers that I do not find easy to answer. Under the current rules, once it is proved that the parent has sole responsibility for supporting the child, the child can enter and is given immediate leave to settle.

New paragraph 50A of the rules provides for the admittance of a child for an initial period of up to 12 months. Presumably that is not to determine whether the primary purpose of admission is whether the child may marry. After 12 months, the Home Office can reconsider the position, but we have no details of what that will involve. It is likely that the Home Office will expect the same conditions to be satisfied after the 12-month period as were satisfied at the British high commission at the time when the application was made. If so, the Minister should say so, because it will create an intolerable position.

At the British high commission, the child must show that he or she is under the age of 18, unmarried and that the parents can accommodate him or her without recourse to public funds. What happens after the 12-month period if the child is then over the age of 18, is married or if the parents cannot accommodate the child without recourse to public funds—perhaps because they are among the 4 million other citizens unfortunate enough to be out of work?

The other major point is in relation to what happens under substituted paragraphs 41*(d)* and *(e)* and 46, which provide that maintenance and accommodation must be provided for the entrant without recourse to public funds. The sponsors and parents would have to declare that they will support and accommodate the child indefinitely. What happens to those who lose their jobs or have been unable to obtain one? What happens to parents who were in employment—many of them for many years—and who become ill? Will the child then be required to leave? If that is the case, it must be clearly stated. If it is not, the Minister must reassure the House, so that hon. Members

on both sides who have to deal with these cases know what to tell those who ask what will happen to their children. I hope that we can give them the assurance that, if children are deported after the 12-month period, it will not be because during that time the parents became ill, unemployed or fell on to other hard times. We would appreciate an explanation of the position.

The most excellent self-help neighbourhood centre in Leicester has asked about the waiting list for entry clearance. What will be the effect, if any, of the new rules? Currently, women have to obtain entry clearance in their country of origin and the waiting time had reached 23 months by the end of 1984. What provisions are the Government making to reduce the already extensive queues? Are people in this category, as in others, being kept waiting in an effort to deter them from wanting to come to this country? Will the Government provide for the increasing number of applications, albeit in temporary and restricted categories, that may occur when the new rules come into force? What will happen to those already in the queue?

I have always believed that if, under the law, people are entitled to come to this country, they should be allowed to do so. They should not be kept waiting in queues—either those that are involuntary or, still less, those that are used to ensure that the waiting time deters people from exercising what they believe to be their right.

This country has a proud, decent, honourable, happy society in which generations and multitudes of immigrants from many lands, dating back over many centuries—including all four of my grandparents—have come to this country and lived in harmony and served the country well, whether in the forces, in public life or in private life. They form part of our society.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): The hon. and learned Gentleman will have heard my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) mention Gibraltar in relation to the number of people wishing to come to Britain. I know of the hon. and learned Gentleman's deep interest in Gibraltar, as his father had before him. The people of Gibraltar are not required to apply for immigration because, during the last Parliament we ensured that they were full British citizens.

Mr. Janner: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his managing to intrude the people on Gibraltar into this debate. I am sorry that he is not staying to take the opportunity of joining the long queue to speak. I have great sympathy with the people of Gibraltar and will be happy to work with the hon. Gentleman to ensure that they are fairly treated.

I ask only that the Minister reconsider these rules so that the opportunity available to him is used to try to give people the feeling that there will be fairness in society for all and an understanding that the rules can be changed to make them firm, fair and reasonable so that they do not discriminate, in appearance and in reality, against sections of the community which are entitled to the same treatment as others, but which under these rules are not getting it.

7.16 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Whenever decisions are made concerning immigration and immigration rules and controls, there is bound to be someone who is not happy. There is always a group of people who have particular circumstances that are not catered for by the rules. That is unfortunate, but I know that my colleagues in the Government are fully aware of many of the problems and do their best to achieve a balance between the problems and the facts. They make many humane decisions, which we all welcome.

I must place on record my thanks to the Minister, who has helped many of my cases in a most humane way. Indeed, he supports and helps all hon. Members with the problems of our constituents. One major fact remains—that while, in a Utopian world, we would like complete freedom for people to move from one part of the world to another with no restriction, in reality that is not possible. Controls are necessary and rules and regulations must be laid down and monitored.

Regardless of what is said about British immigration control, we have a long history of welcoming people from all lands to our shores, but that must be controlled in a disciplined manner. I can confidently say that all sections of the British community support the maintenance of disciplined control. Many ethnic communities—I have a larg community in my constituency with whom I speak regularly — are well established in Britain and their leaders agree that immigration must be controlled or their communities will be put under pressure.

In fact, some of my community think that it should not be necessary now for young women to wish to bring in fiancés. That opinion has been formed by the community leaders, although it is recognised that it will need to continue for some years yet. The pressure will be economic and social and, if not properly managed, could create problems with all the population in the United Kingdom.

The implications of the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights create a position that must be handled with care. It has been said in various quarters that the current immigration rules discriminate on the grouds of sex, and so they do. The House might be surprised to learn that, as a woman, I do not attack the rules on that ground only. We all too often use the words "sex discrimination" without first looking at the basic problems. My view is simple; I agree with the judgment. If a man who is a non-British citizen but has established permanent residence can bring in a wife, clearly a woman who is a non-British citizen but who has established permanent residence should firmly have the right to bring in a husband.

I say that purely on the basis of establishing and maintaining the family unit. As many of us know, to many of our immigrant communities the family unit is slightly different from our own. They have long been used to living apart for many years and then seeking to bring the family together at some time later in life. The stability of any society is based on the stability of the family unit, and we should do all we can to foster that stability. It can clearly be shown that performance and stability are related to the family.

While I agree with the judgment and its implications, we cannot allow the changes to be made without measuring the consequences and creating the right level of control, and I am pleased to learn that under the changes men will be allowed to join women who are settled here.

The primary purpose rule, which, I appreciate, can be very trying in certain circumstances, is an essential safeguard against the abuse of marriage for immigration purposes, and it must be maintained. I know from experience in my constituency that it can be the cause of

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

many problems. However, the leaders of many ethnic communities will admit that it is an essential control that prevents many serious heartaches and social problems for young women. The fact that the primary purpose rule will in future apply to women, to avoid further allegations of sex discrimination, is appropriate and is in line with the thinking on which the case was originally taken to the European Court.

At present, the rules lay down the necessity for men to show that they can maintain and accommodate their wives without recourse to public funds. Presumably, women will now have to show that they can maintain and accommodate their husbands without recourse to public funds.

The new rules impose a strengthened maintenance and accommodation requirement by using the word "adequate." The Minister should clarify the position in that respect because the rules need to be spelt out in detail. Clear guidelines must be given and the Minister should quantify "adequate" in financial terms in relation to maintenance and accommodation. For example, the standard required should be explained. Will the standard required of women be weighted in some way, or will there be strict equality?

The requirement may of itself discriminate against women who wish to bring in husbands, for it is often difficult for a woman to show her financial stability and her ability to provide support for a man. For example, it is frequently more difficult for a woman to obtain a mortgage on property or to get a lease or loan.

I will not go into the whole sphere of the financial problems that women can experience. Nevertheless, those problems must be measured within the rules, if not in their wording then in the spirit and application of the controls.

Accepting the need for clarification of the maintenance requirements, I support the changes. However, I reserve my position to alter my view if the proposals again turn out to be discriminatory in a negative sense.

7.23 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Despite my gratitude for having been called to speak, I hope that hon. Members will not think it churlish if I reflect briefly on the fact that the impetus for this debate came from what I might call the nocturnal stamina of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), who sat outside the Public Bill Office in the early hours of the morning. Unfortunately, the usual channels then got to work, and whatever liquid flows through those murky channels led to the initiative being removed by the Government from right hon. and hon. Members who signed the prayer which was tabled by my hon. Friend. However, albeit in the face of rules which give rise to serious concern, we welcome the opportunity to ventilate some of the issues that relate to immigration and which rise directly from these rules under debate.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) was right to refer to this as a surrogate debate. It is surrogate, above all, because those ethnic minorities whom it concerns are not able to represent themselves in the debate. Because of the vagaries of our electoral system and the fact that they are not represented among hon. Members here, they must rely on such wisdom of hon. Members as there is.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Is the hon. and learned Gentleman saying that he does not represent the ethnic minorities in his constituency?

Mr. Carlile: The ethnic minorities do not have the opportunity under our existing electoral system to represent themselves—*[Interruption.]*—because of the nature of that system, as the hon. Gentleman knows only too well.

The views that many in the ethnic minorities would seek to put forward have already been given to a great extent, not least by the courageous speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler). At least he, though disagreeing with many aspects of Government policy, did not have to put up with the hysterical hyenas of the Tory right who interrupted repeatedly during the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

I remind the right hon. Member for South Down that time has moved on and that there are many in the House and great numbers in the country—I believe that they represent a majority—who cannot accept the narrow and — I use the word in neutral terms — somewhat nationalistic approach that he expressed in his eloquent contribution.

Many of us believe, with the support of the majority of in the community, that narrow nationalism has been the cause of much anguish, bloodshed and unnecessary dispute this century. The supranational responsibility imposed by treaty obligations — such as those we recognise as signatories to the European convention on human rights — provide a welcome and important protection for the citizens of this country—black and white, male and female—against the abuses that the Government may seek to impose on them.

My copy of the European convention on human rights is encased in a dark blue cover. I have a strong suspicion, having regard to the reluctance of the Home Secretary to commit himself further to ratify the right of personal petition to the Commission, that we shall soon see the European convention soaked in blue rinse; for I have a strong suspicion that the Government intend, but are concealing that intention from us, to remove the right of individual petition to the European Commission.

In 1966, a three-year experiment was begun by the then Labour Government. That experiment was renewed by a Conservative Government and later by a Labour Government. However, we are apparently still in the experimental stage, nearly 20 years after the Wilson Government first granted the right of individual petition. Before then it had taken that Government and others many years to come round to the view that the right should be available.

Why have we been in receipt only of the benefit of experimental periods during which we have had the right to petition? I welcome the answer that was given to an intervention of mine by the right hon. Member for Gorton that he at least is in favour of extending that right on a permanent basis. However, I doubt whether many of his hon. Friends would have the courage to say the same; it was obvious that he was making an off-the-cuff remark. We have grave reason to doubt the Government's commitment in view of what the Home Secretary has said. I remind the Home Secretary and the Minister of State that the only countries that do not give a right of individual

petition and that have ratified the convention are Greece, Turkey, Malta and Cyprus. I hope that we will not be added to that list.

The procedures need to be reformed, not least because of the backlog of cases. The British Government, who rightly have shown enthusiasm for cutting the backlog of cases in domestic courts, were not prepared to agree the reforms proposed by Scandinavian Governments at the recent conference of Ministers of the European Commission of Human Rights. I suspect that the British Government's refusal to speed up procedures is yet another attempt by them to stall the effectiveness of the European convention. The British Government have taken a minimalist approach to the convention and show all the signs of continuing to do so.

It is high time that the European convention was incorporated into domestic law. I challenge the Government and the Labour party to say that they will incorporate a European convention into British law so that domestic remedies are available for breaches of the European convention on human rights.

The European Court of Human Rights has made it clear that the United Kingdom is in breach of the convention by not providing domestic remedies. In international law the European Court of Human Rights is correct. I ask of the British Government a small but important step. I ask them to accept the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights and to bring the United Kingdom into line with the many countries that have taken the step of incorporating domestic remedies. Those remedies have proved effective and have not affected the efficacy of Government.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Is there not another advantage of taking that action — that if the convention were the subject of litigation in the English courts it is likely that the judgments would be more in accord with our common law practices and customs?

Mr. Carlile: I agree with the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). I should like a corpus of British law to develop which applies common law principles and incorporates those common law freedoms enshrined in the European convention.

I regret that the new rules do not adopt even one of the 56 recommendations by the Commission for Racial Equality in its report dated February 1985 on immigration control procedures. That followed careful investigation of procedures. The rule changes would have presented an ideal opportunity to rectify the inhumanity and degrading treatment experienced by people throughout the world under the current rules.

The new rules represent the most grudging adoption possible of the European Court of Human Rights rulings. They clearly demonstrate the British Government's lack of will to adhere to the principle of the European convention. The new rules fail to rectify many anomalies. One of the many anomalies which will still exist is that sex discrimination against women will continue in relation to work permits. Women work permit holders will not be able to bring in a foreign husband, but male work permit holders will be albe to bring in their foreign wives. How on earth can the Government say that such discrimination is fair or just and accords with the principles that British Governments have ratified in article 8 of the convention?

Under the new rules, many people face severe hardship. Immigrant couples will not be allowed to marry and live in their parents' homes. They will not be allowed to receive state benefits of any type. If they fall upon hard times or become ill, they will risk being thrown out of the United Kingdom. I see that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) nods with enthusiasm. What a disgrace! If such people fall ill or on hard times and hon. Members write to the Minister about their case, the chances are that even if he decides to change his mind it will be too late.

The legislation that deals with homeless persons will now specifically exclude immigrants under a new provision in paragraph 1 of the new rules which defines "public funds" as including accommodation under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. If people who have come here suddenly become homeless — that can arise for many reasons — they will face the prospect under the new rules of being sent back whence they came. That will apply even if they have been thrown out by a cruel spouse. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington is nodding again. That is absolutely disgraceful.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): The point that I am trying to make is that there is a limit to the burden that the people of this country can face, particularly when it comes to homelessness. Some of my constituents have to forgo access to council housing to make way for immigrants who come here almost destitute. It seems wrong that people should be able to come here, when they cannot go to any other country, to take up public funds whenever the need arises.

Mr. Carlile: The bigotry expressed by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington means that he believes that even if people become unintentionally homeless they risk being sent home.

One of the new provisions enables an immigration officer to extract financial guarantees from a relative or friend of a person seeking entry to the United Kingdom. It specifies that such persons are liable under the Supplementary Benefit Act 1976. As a result, friends and relatives of would-be immigrants will effectively be blackmailed into giving financial guarantees simply because they are due to meet a friend or relative at the airport and are anxious to secure their entry.

Another serious effect of the changes in the rules was brought to my attention by a solicitor in London who specialises in assisting businesses and business people in obtaining entry clearance. Her practice is specifically engaged in providing the British economy with a boost from the entrepreneurial activities and the financial expertise of those who wish to bring their money and skills from outside the United Kingdom for the benefit of the United Kingdom. Substantial foreign companies and business people are affected.

I refer to the change in the rules for entry clearance procedure. The effect of those changes is that nationals of all countries must now make an application for entry clearance in the country where they are living. Up to now, people who were neither what are called visa nationals nor Commonwealth nationals could have an application made on their behalf by an agent in the United Kingdom. For example, a solicitor like my correspondent could apply on behalf of a business or business person for entry clearance.

The existing procedure does not stop the Home Office from making the most strenuous investigation into the bona fides of any applicant, such as a business resident or

[Mr. Carlile]

residents as the sole representative of a foreign company. It has always been open to the Home Office to require that such a person should submit to a consular interview, but there are two important effects of the change in entry clearance procedures in this category. First, a British agent such as a solicitor or an accountant in the City of London can no longer initiate applications of this sort for their foreign clients. Secondly, all those foreign clients are restricted to applying in the country where they live. This can be extremely inconvenient and is often highly inappropriate.

The change produces an absurd result, and I ask the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington to listen to this, because I am sure that he has an eye to the economic interests of the country even if he does not care a fig about immigrants. The change produces the nonsensical result that a visa national does not have to apply in the country in which he lives. That is to say that a Lebanese, an Iranian or an Iraqi does not have to apply in Lebanon, Iran or Iraq. However, a non-visa national, for example an American, can apply for entry clearance only in the country where he lives. A Canadian, a Commonwealth national, under this absurd rule, can apply only in the country in which he lives.

What is more, the letter of consent procedure is no longer available. Thus, it is no longer possible for someone acting on behalf of a foreign company, such as my correspondent, to apply on behalf of the company to this country by means of a letter of consent. So these rules have the effect of frustrating foreign investment in this country.

Further, the even greater nonsense in this change in entry clearance applications is that almost invariably, applications that are made to consular posts abroad are referred to the Home Office for decision, so that there will be no decrease in the work that has to be done in the Home Office, but merely an increase in the work that has to be done in consular posts. Therefore, there will result delays, with a consequent decline in investment in the British economy.

I ask the Minister of State, Home Office, who is here now, and the Home Secretary to examine this matter carefully before taking steps down the road that could lead to disincentives to investment in Britain in comparison with the incentives offered for foreign investment in countries that compete with us.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. and learned Gentleman is raising such a small point that we should dispose of it now. We thought that we were making a sensible change, because the effect of the present system is that our immigration department is used as a mere post office. Applications are lodged with us, but as the person is abroad and has to get his entry clearance abroad, we are merely a post box and the matter has then to be referred abroad, which is a complete waste of resources. That is why we are making the sensible change, which I thought that everybody in the House who understood it would acclaim.

Mr. Carlile: I have passed on to the hon. and learned Gentleman the views of those who are experienced in dealing with such applications. I ask the Government to examine the situation carefully before relying on the glib assertion that has just been made.

As a result of these rules, the Government will have failed signally to meet their treaty obligations under the European convention, because there will remain sex discrimination in family life, which is against the European convention. They will have failed because there will also remain the lack of domestic remedy, which is against the European convention and because of the lack of any provision for the independent right of enjoyment of family life in the United Kingdom in some cases, which, is also against the European convention.

Whether we be signatories to the European convention or not, whether we have domestic remedies under the European convention or not, until British immigration law honours the fundamental rights that are enshrined in the European convention, we shall not be able to hold up our heads in the world and say that we have a fair and just system of immigration regulation. These rules do not give us a fair and just system to govern immigration.

7.46 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) dealt with the two most important points in this debate — two of the sleeping dogs referred to by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) — namely, the details of these immigration rules and the intervention of the European Court of Human Rights.

I have watched or taken part in almost every debate on immigration since I got into the House in February 1974. One of the dogs slept soundly between 1974 and 1979. We were hardly able to debate immigration in that period, because the Labour Government of that time ran as strict an immigration policy as they were able to do, while on the other side the Tory Benches wanted to see ways in which immigration policy could be made stricter. In particular, Lord Whitelaw, who represented the liberal wing of the Tory party, was extremely sensitive to any allegations that either he or anybody else remotely connected with the Tory party might be, in the jovial word of the Labour party, racist.

If anybody made any reasonable suggestion about immigration from the Tory Benches between 1974 and 1979, and if it were then countered by the jibe of racist, the proper response for any well brought up politician was to burst into tears and keep quiet thereafter. It is at least healthier that we are now able to debate immigration and those very difficult questions of, first, the rights of individuals who want to come into the country or, having come into the country, to bring members of their family here, and, secondly, the authority of the state and the will of the majority. At least now we have an atmosphere in which we can debate these things.

I recollect the tension when we had those occasional debates between 1974 and 1979. I recollect the frisson of horror lest somebody from the Tory Benches might be accused of being immoderate. Now we debate these matters in the relatively unmalicious and noisy way that is part of the agreeable custom of this House. This is a much healthier atmosphere and it is an essential part of the duties of any domestic Parliament.

It is fortunate that since 1979 we have debated this issue on many occasions. Immigration rules were introduced immediately after the Tories won the general election in 1979. There were a number of debates about the later immigration rules. I am pleased to say that the Government suffered their only defeat on the Floor of the

House over the immigration rules as part of the compromises and disputes that are necessary in this place in order to reach a lawful accommodation between the demands of individuals and the majority voice of authority.

Ms. Clare Short: For the sake of the record, my understanding is that the rules about the right of women to bring into this country from abroad fiancés and husbands were changed twice between 1974 and 1979, so they must have been debated at least twice.

Mr. Budgen: It is perfectly true that the rules were changed. The way in which they were changed is a tribute to what I was saying about Dr. Summerskill. She was a Minister with whom I am sure the hon. Lady would find much to disagree. It is also a tribute to the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) who understood well the resentment that relatively unrestrained immigration created in this country. As part of the cross-Bench conspiracy on this issue, there was very little debate of either the wider immigration issues or the details. I am sure that the hon. Lady is right in saying that there must have been a debate, but my recollection is that it was only a debate for an hour and a half after 10 o'clock. There was very little general debate on this most important subject. However, in both this Parliament and the preceding Parliament there have been many debates about immigration and at last we have achieved some form of domestic consensus about what our immigration policy should be. Now along comes the European Court of Human Rights and says that something further must be done.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The memory of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South West (Mr. Budgen) is shockingly at fault. I was here when, on a Friday, Mrs. Jeger moved a private Member's Bill. It was not a one and a half hour debate. The hon. Gentleman must not say things like that; he must not think out loud wrongly.

Mr. Budgen: I do not understand the intervention of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). I do not believe that any change in the rules which could have been made by the then Government would have arisen from a private Member's Bill that was introduced on a Friday. Perhaps he will forgive me if I say that according to my recollection of that period there was not so much debate then about immigration as there has been since 1979.

Mr. Flannery: An undertaking was given on a Friday by the Front Bench that the rules would be changed.

Mr. Budgen: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman. At this moment he may be able to remember these matters more accurately than I. I am sure that he is well-respected for his encyclopaedic knowledge of the proceedings of this House, but perhaps I may be allowed to proceed to my second point, concerning the question asked by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), whether the European convention on human rights should become part of our domestic law. The right hon. Member for South Down described the European convention as an international commitment, a description that I find very helpful. One of the difficulties in dealing with the European convention is that in this country it is described as though it were domestic law. A number of very important consequences arise from that misdescription. It has none of the characteristics that are important for domestic law.

First, if one looks—and very few people have looked—at the details of the convention, one sees that it proceeds not by detailed directives about what shall be done in a particular circumstance but by way of general declarations. To give an example which may upset the Opposition, article 10.2 refers to the right to freedom of expression. It says that such a freedom may be exercised within the constraints of what is necessary in a democratic society.

Those of my constituents who disagree with the race relations legislation might be able to petition the European Court of Human Rights and argue, that for example, their right to freedom of expression had been constrained in breach of article 10 of the convention. That illustrates one of the great dangers of the convention: it does not have the quality of certainty which the law ought to have. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary illustrated that point by saying that he believed that the present rules are not in breach of the convention. However, when he was a junior Home Office Minister I remember that the Home Secretary at that time, now Lord Whitelaw, assured the House time after time that the rules were in conformity with the European Convention on Human Rights and that there would be no trouble.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) asserted that the present rules will be attacked with success. What is more, he said that a number of people in the pipeline have been denied some right or other that they wish to claim under the old rules. He said that they ought to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights and that perhaps they would succeed. He may be right. Even the most cursory glance at the convention shows that these articles are drafted in such general terms that there can be no certainty about how the court will rule in any future case.

It is worse than that. What has been described as an international commitment is misdescribed as domestic law. Extremely controversial decisions of a political nature are involved, and such decisions are inevitably attacked. When the law is attacked and when judges are attacked, damage is done to the fabric of our society.

If judges start to decide delicate questions about immigration rules and freedom of speech, and abrogate to themselves duties which should be discharged by domestic Parliaments, it is inevitable that they will be treated with the same lack of respect as politicians. We shall see that increasingly if by chance the plea that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery makes, for the convention to be incorporated into British law, is granted.

Let us think of almost any circumstances in which a British judge might hold that he disagreed with a piece of domestic legislation or an action of the Government, adopt a highly controversial and political position, and then necessarily be attacked.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, provided that judges are politically impartial, the danger of which he is speaking is greatly exaggerated? Does he agree that already we have seen judges steadfastly and determinedly making judgments on human rights and public law issues which have been courageous and maintained without any risk to the security of the judiciary?

Mr. Budgen: I believe that in general the way in which our English laws are framed, in narrow and specific terms, is to be commended, because it relieves judges of wide political discretion.

Article 14 of the convention, in very general terms, prohibits discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion. If judges are intervening on such wide terms, they are taking to themselves discretions which should be discharged by politicians and not by judges. One has only to think of the difficulties encountered when judges are exercising their narrow powers under trade union legislation. When they give a judgment adverse to the labour interest, they are often—and in my opinion dangerously—attacked. How much more would they be attacked if they were exercising a very much wider discretion under the convention?

If we go much further with support for the convention, there will be a further consequence. There are those in this House who are fervent supporters of our continued commitment to the EEC. As a matter of technicality, there is no connection between the Council of Europe and the European convention on human rights and the EEC, but in the public mind the convention is seen as a part of the EEC. The more the convention interferes, the more it makes a fool of itself, and the more we are seen to be ruled by foreign judges, the more resentment we shall find against the EEC. It is unjust but it will certainly happen. I agree that it is nothing to do with the EEC but I assert that it will be seen as such.

Ms. Clare Short: Is the hon. Gentleman against the EEC?

Mr. Budgen: Certainly I am against some aspects of the EEC.

Ms. Short: That is disingenuous.

Mr. Budgen: It is not disingenuous. I am simply pointing out to those who believe that the idealism of Europe is best served by by the present structure of the EEC, that they should attempt to remove peripheral irritants such as the European convention on human rights.

I have learnt a good deal recently from distinguished Ministers in the Foreign Office about Foreign Office gobbledegook. We shall be told that we must avoid offending the international community and that we should remain an important part of the Christian and European heritage. Recently we have given notice of withdrawing from the International Labour Organisation. We could perfectly well withdraw from the European convention on human rights. We could perfectly well withdraw the right of individual petition or, better still, withdraw in total. I assert that it would have no effect on our relations with other European countries.

We have not done too badly in our respect for individual liberty. We do not necessarily have to feel particularly humble towards all other European nations when we compare our recognition of individual rights with countries where the authority of the State is paramount. If we were to withdraw, it would demonstrate that we still had some respect for and confidence in our Parliamentary institutions, and that we respected and had confidence in the innate good sense of the British people.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Unless speeches are short, I am afraid that several hon. Members will be disappointed at the end of the debate.

8.6 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The debate has cast light on three matters. First, both Conservative and Labour Governments have taken bad decisions on immigration laws. Secondly, there is no compulsion or requirement on the British Government to adopt or seek to adopt the changes in immigration law that they are proposing tonight. Thirdly, there is a great feeling among people who are subject to immigration laws that the changes proposed by the Government will substantially intensify their feeling of grievance.

For the Government to secure sexual equality in the way that they are choosing to do has been aptly described as a policy of equality of misery. I believe—and the view is shared by many others—that the proposed changes that we are being asked to approve tonight represent a very bad decision, which will do substantial further damage to family unity and to race relations in the United Kingdom.

As wives and female fiancées will be required to apply for entry clearance permission, a considerable number of women will be refused permission to come here. They will, like husbands and male fiancés wishing to come here, be subject to the primary purpose test. That test, in my view and in that of many others who come into contact with it regularly, is a grotesque administrative barrier deliberately designed by the Government to keep out black and Asian men, and it will be extended to keep out black and Asian women.

We all know that trick questions are now used by entry clearance officers to give them reasons for refusing applicants permission to come here. It is monstrous that the onus of proof lies with the applicant. It is even more monstrous that applicants should be asked to prove that which is incapable of proof—that their marriage is genuine and that the primary purpose of their application is not settlement here.

The primary purpose test, now used to refuse the overwhelming majority of male fiancés, is wholly discredited. I am very sorry that the Government, despite all their claims to support natural justice, have chosen not to remove the primary purpose test but to extend it substantially.

It is important for the Government tonight, and for the Minister in reply to the debate, to say to what extent they intend by legislation to lessen or remove altogether the guarantee given by section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. If they fail to do that, they will leave great worry and uncertainty in the minds of many people who believe that that section of the Act guarantees their position.

Because of my concern for Pakistani nationals who are not British citizens, I sought advice from the Foreign Office about the protection that section 1(5) gives them. I was told:

"I should perhaps add that Pakistani citizens are, however, in a different position in regard to Section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. The wife and children of a Pakistani citizen settled here on 1 January 1973 who became a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies under the provisions of the Pakistan Act would have their rights to enter the United Kingdom unconditionally protected. But where such a man has not become a British citizen and therefore ceased to be a Commonwealth citizen his wife and children would not benefit from the Section. The current changes will not affect this position."

Therefore, I hope that the Minister who is to reply will clarify his intentions, because there are genuine and considerable reasons for anxiety.

Ms. Clare Short: There is one important way in which section 1(5) protects the Pakistani community. Boys born here of people who originated in Pakistan would not have to prove primary purpose if they sought to marry a woman from abroad.

Mr. Madden: I gladly accept my hon. Friend's helpful comment.

There must be concern about the much more stringent rules allowing the refusal of applications on the ground that it is believed that there is prospect of recourse to public funds.

It is also important for the Minister to give us information about how the rules are to be applied. If a man becomes unemployed during the months that he may be waiting for his wife or fiancée to be given permission to join him, will the application be refused?

Will the DHSS be asked to report when a person claims benefits? Will the Department of Employment be asked to tell the Home Office when a person registers as being available for employment? Will councils have to report when someone is given housing benefit?

How will all the information about someone's changing personal circumstances be monitored, reported and recorded? We know that the Home Office has become computerised in recent months, and that must be regarded as significant by many who are already worried about the way the police, the DHSS, the National Health Service and various public agencies seem to be an integral part of immigration control.

We must also be worried about the fact that the so-called Fowler reviews of social security have proposed residency tests. The Government suggest that some people will be able to apply for some benefits only if they have lived in this country for a certain number of years. All those proposals must be seen as part of a systematic pattern of restriction. The Minister must address the serious practical points raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I asked whether the Foreign Office would welcome joint sponsorship applications and I was told by a senior official:

"You also asked about joint sponsorship to help take account of the maintenance and accommodation requirements. The new Rules will require the couple to satisfy the Entry Clearance Officer, or the Secretary of State, that there will be adequate accommodation for themselves and their dependants without recourse to public funds in accommodation of their own or which they occupy themselves, and that they will be able to maintain themselves and their dependants adequately without recourse to public funds. What is at issue is the couple's ability to make adequate provision for themselves and their dependants. We would normally need to be satisfied that they could do so from their own resources. Our present thinking is that assistance such as a loan from a relative or friend would not necessarily meet the requirements, but I suspect we shall have to see how the Rules work out in practice."

That is not good enough. We are dealing with people who are seeking to marry or are married and are genuinely worried about how their applications will be processed and whether they will be approved. It is not good enough for a Government Department to say that we shall have to see how things work out. We need information and guidance now. Our constituents who are directly involved in these matters are asking how the rules will apply to them.

I should like the Minister who is to reply to clarify paragraph 99 of the new rules:

"An application for variation of leave may also be refused if the person has failed to honour any declaration or undertaking given orally or in writing as to the intended duration and purpose of his stay".

Does that mean that if a visitor says at an interview that he or she wishes to stay for three months and subsequently varies the application either to remain longer or to stay as a student, such applications are more likely to be refused? The Minister must answer such questions.

I shall not dwell on the worries about children which have been voiced by a number of hon. Members. There is deep anxiety about the effect of the new rules on children.

There is also concern about how mothers whose husbands have applied to join them will be affected by the stringent conditions on support and maintenance. I can conceive of circumstances where women who are anxious to avoid being held to have had recourse to public funds and have great difficulty in maintaining a family while working will have to make arrangements for their children to be cared for by others or to be sent overseas pending consideration of the husband's application.

The proposals will divide more and more families, even though the Government have said, certainly before the general election, that they are committed to family unity. The proposals will mean that a number of men and women will have to apply for entry visas and wait months or, in some cases years, for interviews.

The Home Secretary made it abundantly clear that he had no intention of increasing the number of entry clearance officers. Therefore, the prospect is that the queues will get ever longer and will be used as an administrative means of preventing those with a right to entry from exercising that right. Even this mean and nasty Government ought to be deeply ashamed of the proposals, which will do serious damage to race relations and will cause great worry among many ethnic communities throughout the country.

The Government will come to regret these shabby proposals, which represent a major further restriction on an already tight and restricted set of immigration laws, rules and procedures. They are firm, but in the view of a growing number of people, they are grossly unfair.

8.19 pm

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): About 25 per cent. of the electorate in my area of Bedford come from abroad and, if they carefully examine these rules, they will not find them of great assistance.

In the future, a number of references may be made to the European Court of Human Rights. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) has said that we could withdraw, but I think that it would be a great tragedy if we threatened to withdraw from that institution. The European Court could guarantee the rights that many hon. Members and the nation would support.

In dealing with immigrants, one is dealing not with statistics and charts but with humanity—individuals who are caught in a difficult position. Recently, a young lady told me that she had been trying for five years to get her fiancé into the United Kingdom but had not succeeded. She had been hit by severe rules. I accept that immigration rules are essential to protect the United Kingdom's economy, but what will happen to that girl? Will she have to go to the end of the list and start again?

[Mr. T. H. H. Skeet]

Under paragraph 41, the onus is on the applicant to prove his or her primary purpose in wishing to come to the United Kingdom. This primary purpose rule is being retained ferociously. Sub-paragraph *(d)* refers to

"adequate maintenance and accommodation without recourse to public funds".

However, in arguing one's case on sub-paragraph *(d)*, one can fall foul of sub-paragraph *(a)*. I do not suggest that the entry clearance officers have to be lawyers, but the questions that they may ask are very sophisticated. A person may be asked, "Would you like to come to the United Kingdom because it is a desirable place?" Obviously, anyone would say yes, but that answer could be interpreted in such a way as to limit entry under the primary purpose rule.

The individual is inveigled into giving the appropriate answers. It is then a matter of interpreting them. A young man who is asked whether he has made any arrangements to work or to get accommodation in the United Kingdom may say that he has worked matters out. However, he is convicted by his own words under sub-paragraph *(a)*. The Government should understand that. A clear statement of intention is needed to ensure that there is justice in the British courts.

I pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, who has been a great help to me in Bedford and has sympathetically listened to the cases that I put to him. One case involved Miss Kashmir Kaur Badham who was trying to get her fiancé, Mr. Sunil Kumar, into the United Kingdom, failed, appealed and won his appeal. One would have thought that he could then stay in the United Kingdom, but the Department appealed to the tribunal and won.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State said:

"we look carefully at every determination to see whether or not the adjudicator might have misdirected himself, either on a point of law or of fact, or could be considered to have been unreasonable in his conclusions. In our view, based on a previous Tribunal determination, the adjudicator in this case erred in attaching too great importance to his conclusion that the proposed marriage was a genuine one and not giving sufficient attention to the question of the primary purpose of the proposed marriage."

I had thought that we wanted to keep out the non-genuine cases and let the genuine ones through, but in this case the adjudicator fell between two stools. He spent his time primarily considering whether the marriage was genuine. I think that he discovered that it was, but fell foul of the Department's views on primary purpose.

These revised rules are being put to the nation for acceptance. Immigration rules must be firm. I am totally against anyone coming to the United Kingdom who tries to pull the wool over the eyes of the nation. I agree that we have great unemployment difficulties. Nevertheless, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to examine the rules and to ensure that they are genuine in their context.

It is perhaps a good feature of British justice that we can be taken to a European court of law that may suggest that our aims are wrong. On this occasion, to comply, we are making the rules a little more stringent as we go along. There is the primary purpose rule, which is a major hurdle, the original intention criterion, which is extremely disturbing, the stipulation that a couple must intend living together permanently—I have no objection to that—and the rule that the parties must have met. In the latter case, the girl may have to spend money to go overseas to see the gentleman concerned, even though that is not the custom of their ethnic group.

In addition to all those requirements that must be satisfied, it is necessary for

"adequate maintenance and accommodation without recourse to public funds"

to be available before and after the marriage. Women do not receive the same salaries as men, and it may be difficult for them to succeed in convincing the entry clearance officers on that score. All this means that women will face an uphill task in proving their case. Their convictions may be genuine and they may want to live permanently with their fiancés like any other European, yet they may be defeated on grounds of purpose regardless of conviction. Is that right?

8.26 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet) on his brave and informative speech. I shall watch with interest how he votes. He made a number of points along similar lines to my argument, which I shall develop further.

I understand the arguments about the European Court and about Britain ratifying the European convention, if only because the convention provides an important appeals system for dealing with the cases that generated this change in the immigration rules. We must accept that this is an extraordinarily slow process. British citizens should not have to rely on it to obtain justice in terms of non-sexist and non-racist immigration laws. The crux of this debate is the fact that the immigration rules have been found to be sexist.

Recently the Home Secretary was described in *The Guardian* as a secret liberal. That staggered many people who read the article. If he is a "secret liberal", his failure lies in giving in to the weaknesses of certain Conservative Members who put the racist lobby in the Tory party to the fore instead of the more civilised voices in the party who want, as I do, a Home Secretary who puts the concept of race relations high on his list of priorities, rather than these tough and inhuman immigration controls which run counter to good race relations and are perceived as such by the different minority communities.

Following press reports of the European Court's decision, a number of young women told me that they believed that it meant that the Government would change the rules to relieve them of the burden of the primary purpose rule when their fiancés had fallen foul of that rule. I said that the Government would not do that, and that their natural instinct was to make the system nastier and more difficult for people, not to operate it in a more humane and satisfactory way. Indeed, that is precisely what the Government have done.

It is incumbent on the Minister to give us adequate details of the proposed changes to section 1(5) of the 1971 legislation. Many hon. Members have requested that. It is staggering that the Home Secretary should announce that in principle he wishes to introduce changes, yet not to say what those changes will be. He has left us guessing, and all the natural worries and fears arise. The Minister may be able to announce those changes—if so, the Home Secretary should have announced them — but if he cannot, the House is entitled to know why the Home Secretary should run that rabbit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) will know that today I introduced a Bill which will give citizens of Pakistan resident in the United Kingdom the same treatment as those from Commonwealth countries. Our immigration nationality laws should move in that direction, not in that pursued by the Government.

Many individuals are massively worried about the catch-all rule which means that immigrants do not have recourse to public funds, and the fact that the regulations include the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. What would happen if someone whose fiancée or spouse came to Britain and who in the first 12 months became homeless? How would they be affected by the new regulations? If someone brought in a two-year-old child and 18 years later that child lived on supplementary benefit, would the sponsor be responsible for repaying the supplementary benefit payments? If so, it means that that individual can never become a full citizen. He will be a marginal or partial citizen and will not enjoy the benefits of our community. That would be not merely ridiculous, but a complete disgrace.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West spoke forcefully about the extension of the primary purpose rule. As it stands, it is a grotesque invention. It is an insult and is offensive to many people. To talk of increasing its ambit to include people who are not at present caught by it is a disgrace.

Hon. Members who have dealings with people whose fiancées attempt to come through the entry clearance system and fall foul of it know the heartache that is caused, partly because of the protracted procedure when it is found that a person is in conflict with the rule. That person must face the adjudicators and the appeal tribunal, but ultimately the decision rests with the Minister. I do not envy him his role. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) said that the Minister exercised his discretion admirably within the terms of poor laws. It is a moot point whether that is still admirable, but the Minister can defend himself. He has my sympathy in having to operate laws, which, almost by definition, try to exclude people on an arbitrary basis.

To say that 40 per cent. of applicants for entry clearance are refused under the primary purpose rule suggests that the rule is not a measure of the state of a marriage, but is used as a crude device to keep out people whose purpose is often genuine.

The representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office freely admitted to the Race Relations and Immigration Sub-Committee of the Home Affairs Committee that applicants were asked hypothetical questions. The only reason for that is to catch them in the trap that we have been discussing tonight. It is not a test of the validity of a person's state of mind. That is almost unknowable. When an individual falls foul of the test, it becomes virtually impossible for him to prove that it is not the primary purpose of his marriage to enter the United Kingdom. For that reason many people, including many of my constituents, find the test objectionable.

Until today it was objectionable that women could come to my surgery and ask, "Why could my brother bring in a fiancée several years ago without any of this rigmarole, which is clearly designed to exclude people, on the grounds not of the genuineness of a marriage, but of racial origins, when I cannot?" I shall now have to tell them that although their older brother did that several years ago, their younger brother will now fall foul of the same disgraceful trap which the Government introduced and which has caught them. The load in our constituency surgeries will double. Apart from the racism of the rule, many genuine human beings are caught up in a system, which they are powerless to change and which will mar their lives to a colossal extent. It is extraordinary to hear Conservative Members justifying the rule's place in our laws.

The impact of these regulations is extraordinary. The Home Secretary is responsible not merely for the administration of immigration rules, but for race relations. The ineptness and devastatingly bad impact of these regulations on race relations means that every hon. Member who has any interest in our society should vote against them tonight.

8.37 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) explained with his customary eloquence that the problems which led the Government to introduce these changes in the rules may have been the consequence of a lack of effective control over immigration by an alien system of law. I hope that when my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announces the Government's decision on the future jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, the decision will reassert the pre-eminence of Parliament as the source of English law. I do not intend to trespass for long on that ground, which is clearly the preserve of hon. Members who are barristers. I shall refer to two other aspects of the changes in the rules—the accommodation and maintenance provisions, and the primary purpose rule.

I give a particularly warm welcome to the tightening of the requirements of accommodation and maintenance, especially to the inclusion of provision for housing and the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 within the definition of recourse to public funds. For a long time it has been a source of justifiable resentment that some newly arrived immigrants can seek financial support and accommodation at public expense. It is nothing short of a scandal that a person can fly thousands of miles without making adequate arrangements for accommodation in advance, and then present himself as homeless and claim that his homelessness is unintentional. I have had considerable experience of such scandalous instances during my years as leader of the council of the London borough of Hillingdon. The council, which has most of Heathrow airport within its boundaries, was forced to shoulder the burden of those arriving at the airport without accommodation and claiming assistance under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

My constituency of Slough is another area where there is considerable pressure on housing and where the operation of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act exacerbates the present difficulties, which are largely the consequence of the considerable prosperity of the area. This prosperity makes it a magnet for people from all areas of the United Kingdom and from many parts of the world. Being cognisant of the problems, in my election address of two years ago I asserted the right of British citizens to live in this country with their families. I advocated much more stringent conditions on the provision of adequate accommodation for dependants. I contended that there

[Mr. John Watts]

should be adequate means of support without recourse to public funds. I am especially pleased that these matters feature in the rule changes that are before us.

I am pleased also that the primary purpose rule has been retained and that so-called sexual discrimination has been overcome by extending the rule to female fiancées. Reference has been made to the down side of the primary purpose rule, which sometimes creates difficulties for those who are wishing genuinely to enter into a marriage and who are not using marriage as a means of circumventing control. These people find themselves caught by the operation of the rule. I accept that there are hard cases but instances have come to my notice in my constituency in which I have concluded that a wrong decision was made on the primary purpose rule. I have had some extensive correspondence — fairly strong on occasions — with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. There are instances when even after his careful and sympathetic consideration I could not be convinced that the decision that was reached was the right one.

Mr. Lawler: My hon. Friend has paid tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address the Chair.

Mr. Lawler: I do not wish to detract from the tribute which my hon. Friend paid. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to take this opportunity to pay a great and sincere tribute to the staff of my hon. and learned Friend's private office, which goes largely unrecognised. Those of us who have dealings with his staff have great regard for their commitment to their work. If the Government were proposing to increase their salaries by 17 per cent., I am sure that no one would have any hesitation in supporting the proposal.

Mr. Watts: I am willing in general terms to join my hon. Friend in that tribute. I am not sure about the last part of his suggestion.

I acknowledge that there are hard cases where the primary purpose rule seems to impinge unfairly. I suggest that it is regrettable but inevitable that in the operation of any rule or regulation anomalies will arise. The existence of hard cases does not necessarily undermine the principles on which the rule is based and the purposes which it is there to serve.

I shall present the other side of the coin and suggest some of the benefits that can flow from the operation of the primary purpose rule. I shall draw from my constituency experience. Over the past 12 months, despite the stringent requirements of the rule, it is clear that abuses continue. In the past 12 months, four abandoned wives have sought my assistance. They have complained that their husbands, whom they brought into the country as financés, were prepared to stay with them only long enough to obtain their own permanent leave to remain here. At the end of two years, when there was no further risk that they could be required to leave the country, they either kicked their wives out or walked out on their wives. Four abandoned wives have asked me whether I can arrange for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Office to remove their husbands, which, of course, cannot be done.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: If that has been the effect of the primary purpose rule in the hon. Gentleman's experience, how will it help to retain the rule?

Mr. Watts: In spite of the stringent requirements of the rule, anomalies and abuses still arise. That suggests to me that there is a need to retain the rule. If it were to be removed, the incidence of abuse would be much greater. There is a real sense in which the effective operation of the rule can provide protection for girls from being drawn into marriage merely to circumvent immigration control. In another case it was clear to me that the girl living in Britain had deliberately given the wrong answer when interviewed about the intentions of her fiancé as a means of escape from an arranged marriage into which she did not wish to enter. There again, the operation of the primary purpose rule served as a protection for a girl, a British citizen, who would otherwise have found herself being drawn into a marriage which she did not wish to contract.

Mr. Dicks: My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) has paid tribute to the staff of the private office of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. Immigration officers have had to suffer abuse from Labour Members and I pay tribute to the work of the officers. They have a delicate and difficult job in determining the honesty and integrity of those who enter the country. It should be put on record that the officers do a fantastic job. I accept that they are paid a reasonable salary, but most of their judgments are right.

Mr. Watts: We cannot spend too much of the time that remains for the debate in paying tributes to Ministers and their officials. My hon. Friend has made his point well.

We must consider the primary purpose rule objectively. It must be recognised that in some instances it works unfairly against genuine applicants. Ministers are sometimes able to help our constituents and to substitute a fairer decision. We must consider also the protection that the rule offers against the abuse of marriage as a means of circumventing our necessary immigration control. It is entirely right that we should continue to seek to prevent that abuse. Our fair and firm immigration control is of prime importance in maintaining good community relations, especially in constituencies with large ethnic communities, such as Slough, where onefifth or more of the electorate are from the New Commonwealth.

8.48 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The changes in rule that we are debating have been introduced to comply with a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. In fact, the Government are failing to comply with the court's ruling and are showing quite serious disrespect for the convention. The court found Britain guilty of sex discrimination in its immigration rules because men and women were treated differently in their rights to marriage and to live in the United Kingdom. The Government claim to be putting right the discrimination but they are doing so in the meanest possible way by, in future, treating men as badly as women. In practice, that will not be the case.

The Government have made one minor and inescapable concession, which is that women who are settled in Britain but not citizens will be free to apply to bring their foreign husbands to join them. But the Government have the primary purpose rule up their sleeve and will be able to ensure that few women will be able to avail themselves of

that opportunity. The levelling down which applies to men is that in future their fiancées will have to apply for entry certificates.

The current waiting time in the Indian subcontinent is 12 months, and the Home Secretary has made it clear that the Government have no intention of putting in extra entry certificate officers. That is a deliberate use of queueing and delay to restrict the theoretical legal right that people have. A leak to *The Guardian* a short time ago said that the Government were deliberately using long queues as a form of immigration control, and here we have another example.

Another test is that the couple should have met, and that currently applies to women. That is unobjectionable and desirable. In the evolving reshaping of the custom of arranged marriages in the Asian community, it is desirable that the young couple should have met each other before deciding to marry. The primary purpose rule is being extended to men seeking to bring their fiancées from abroad. Like so many other Members who have spoken, I agree that the primary purpose rule is the objectionable feature of the Government's immigration policy and it is operating in a way which discriminates crudely but effectively against black people and poor people.

What is being done in our name under the primary purpose rule is shameful. In future, the 12 months condition will apply to men and their wives will not be able to give them permanent right to remain unless the couple are together 12 months after their marriage. That rule is acceptable in relation to husbands coming to join women, because there are a few cases of abuse; the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) tried to draw attention to that. Such arguments in relation to immigration can get fantastically distorted because in any community and in all cultures and traditions some marriages fail. The 12 months condition is a protection and it is not highly undesirable that it should be applied to men.

Another tranche of the new provisions will mean that both men and women will be significantly worse off than they have been hitherto. My first objection is the extension of the meaning of the phrase "resort to public funds". The inclusion of housing benefit as a recourse to public funds will apply to many families working and struggling in low-paid occupations. The Government are keen on lowering wages in low-paid jobs through the process of privatisation and getting rid of the wages councils. As I recall, in Birmingham in 1979 about 11 per cent. of families in council houses were getting rent and rate rebates. Now the number of council house tenants getting housing benefit in Birmingham is more than 70 per cent.

That means two things — a massive increase in unemployment, which affects all communities in Birmingham, including the Asian community, and a massive increase in rent levels, which the Government have deliberately pushed up. Large numbers of Asian families who are receiving housing benefit are hard-working citizens and they will lose entitlement because of this extension of the definition of what recourse to public funds means.

The Government have said that housing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act will be seen as a recourse to public funds. That is despite a decision by one of the Government's adjudicators in 1982 in the case of Bakare, which established that

"housing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act constituted a 'facility' to which those who have entered this country unconditionally on lack of recourse to public funds are entitled. The Adjudicator (Professor Jackson, now Chief Adjudication Officer) argued that public housing does not enjoy a sufficient degree of public subsidy to constitute 'recourse to public funds'. If an immigrant were to be denied access to public housing on grounds of public subsidy, logically they must also be denied the enjoyment of services such as public transport or refuse disposal — all of which the person concerned will themselves pay for through their rent and rates. Yet the Home Secretary would not dream of including such services under the definition of 'recourse to public funds'".

Perhaps there are some Conservative Members who wish to deny immigrants the right to have their bins emptied and would look upon that as a recourse to public funds.

The Government are reversing a decision which went against them in the courts. I notice that the Minister did not respond to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) when he said that, under the new ruling on accommodation, people will not be entitled to live with their families. As he and any of those who have substantial Asian communities will know, in their strong extended families it is a tradition that a young couple will live in the home with the family until they have one or two children of their own, at which time the family will club together to buy them a house.

I hope the Minister will give us an assurance that there is nothing in the new wording on the provision of accommodation which says that accommodation that they own themselves or which they occupy would rule out such a couple living with their parents in the early years of their marriage.

A further extension of the public fund ruling relates to family income supplement. As I have said, the Government are abolishing the wages councils and doing everything to exert a downward pressure on the wage levels of low-paid workers. Asian people will be significantly affected by this, because they have come to work in Britain in low-paid jobs. If such families claim the family income supplement to which they are entitled alongside their neighbours, they may lose all sorts of rights to live in the country under the extension of the public funds provision. That implies that over time there will develop a sub-class of people who will not feel entitled to claim housing benefit or family income supplement. That is an undesirable development that has not previously been seen in Britain. When people settled here, they had absolutely equal rights to all benefits.

The Minister should tell us how long this will go on. If someone comes here as an 18-year-old for marriage, has a good job and works for 20 years and then there is an accident in the family or he loses his job, and perhaps at the time when he got settlement he signed an undertaking that he would not have recourse to public funds, is the Minister suggesting that such insecurity should continue for such a long time? For how long is the Minister going to make this requirement stick? I hope that the Minister will give us a clear answer on that.

This levelling down of the rights of men and women who seek to marry someone from abroad will fail to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. That is because section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971 states that nothing in the rules made under the Act can make it more difficult for the wives and children of men settled before 1 January 1973 to come into the country to join their husbands.

That means that all the palaver and levelling down, and all the hurt that will flow from these changes in the rules, will not comply with the judgment and 70 or 80 per cent.

[Ms. Clare Short]

of the men of marriageable age living in Britain are covered by that undertaking. Therefore, cases will go back immediately to the European Court of Human Rights, which will find that the Government have failed to comply with the judgment because the bulk of men are treated differently from women in their right to marry a foreigner.

It is not possible that the Government have not been given legal advice that this whole process is questionable and that they are failing to comply with the judgment. The Home Secretary told us that he intends to go even further in the meanness and nastiness to which the Government are willing to resort. I hope that the Minister will clarify the remark that the Government intend to legislate to repeal section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. I hope that he will make it clear what the Government intend and whether the intention is to breach that undertaking, given by successive Home Secretaries and Ministers of State ever since the passage of the 1971 Act.

The Government have not complied with the judgment. There will still be the crude sex discrimination between men and women. They have simply levelled down the rights of both men and women. Further, they have not complied with the judgment, in that they have provided no remedy for those who are not getting their full rights under the European convention. Again, I think that that is deliberate. The appropriate part of the convention could have been incorporated in the immigration rules, but then people could have obtained justice fairly quickly. The Government know quite cynically that it will take four or five years for anyone to bring a case before the European Court, so that these unacceptable rules which do not comply with the convention or with the ruling of the court will see them through until the next general election.

The primary purpose of the rule has been referred to by a number of hon. Members. However, a number of Government supporters who do not have substantial Asian communities in their constituencies do not understand what is at stake. We are talking not about a rule which excludes marriages of convenience or bogus marriages but about a rule which the Minister has admitted again and again excludes people who are genuinely married, have children and intend to live together for the rest of their lives.

The rule requires what is outrageous and unprovable. A man coming to join a woman—in future it will apply to some women as well — has to prove to the immigration officer that it is not the primary purpose of his marriage to come and live in the United Kingdom. It is assumed that it must be his primary purpose, and he has to prove that it is not. But that is almost incapable of proof. The line of questioning by our entry certificate officers is roughly as follows: "When did you first get your passport? Do you have relatives who live in the United Kingdom? Are they having a reasonable life in the United Kingdom? Do you hope to have a reasonable life in the United Kingdom?"

What young man planning to marry and to begin his married life will say in any country at any time that he expects his life to be very bad? Everyone, everywhere, hopes to have a better life in the future. It is in the nature of the arrangement that young men happy to come and live and work in the United Kingdom agree to marry young women already living here. Those young men, of course, say, for example, that they have relatives in the United Kingdom, that some of them are doing well and that they themselves hope to do well, and they are then refused admission because it is said that their primary purpose is to come and live in the United Kingdom. The trick questions put to them are disreputable and disgraceful.

In recent months, I have become aware of even worse decisions. I have seen a decision where the couple were well established and it was not at all clear that they offended the primary purpose rule. There is a hardening of attitudes, and the extension of the rule to even more young couples will bring all of us into disrepute.

The Government and their supporters say repeatedly that an awful lot of people in Britain do not want immigrants and have to be appeased. They belittle Britain's black community and decent people who know that immigration for work is over but do not require that the relatives of black people who came here to work should be treated with such disrespect when they come to visit, to look after elderly parents or to marry. It is time that the Government had the guts to give a dignified lead to public opinion rather than seek to appease those low-level attitudes.

9.4 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I understand that it is for the convenience of the House that the replies should begin at 10 minutes past 9. That being so, my points will have to be made briefly.

I agree with the last part of what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said about the primary rule, and I shall deal with that in the course of my brief remarks.

It is obviously right that this Government or any Government should pursue an immigration policy which is both firm and effective, but at the same time it is essential that the immigration policy thus pursued does not constitute an undue infringement on the rights of individuals. If I have to choose between a firm immigration policy and a policy which does not constitute an undue infringement of the rights of individuals, I prefer the latter to the former. I am always in favour of human rights when I have to contrast them with the apparatus of state control. Therefore, I approach the rules, revised as they are, with a degree of scepticism.

I wish to make three brief points only about the rules. First, I believe that the onus is wrong. I do not believe that the burden of satisfying the entrance clearance officer that marriage is not the primary purpose for admission to the United Kingdom should be upon the applicant. That burden, it seems to me, is wrong. I think that the burden should be the other way round. Once the entrance clearance officer has been satisfied that the parties actually intend to live together permanently, then the certificate should be issued, unless the entrance clearance officer is satisfied that the thing is a fraud, if I may put it loosely.

The reason that I come to that view is essentially twofold. First, I am concerned with principles of natural justice. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, who said that it is very difficult to prove a negative. So long as the burden in the negative form rests as it is, the consequence of an error necessarily causes more injustice than would be caused if the burden was the other way round.

I have another three minutes only, and I wish to make two other points. Even if it be right to extend the rather tighter provisions to what are engaged marriages but not

marriages. I do not believe that it is right to extend the same rules to marriages themselves, as is contemplated by paragraph 46 of the new rules. Once the parties have entered into a marriage, they have changed their personal status. Although I am perfectly prepared to believe that some people will do that for an improper purpose—to enter the United Kingdom not intending really to be married—I think that, in the nature of things, that must be a very rare occurrence. Applying the test which I always apply—how do I rate personal liberty as against the convenience of the state?—I always prefer personal liberty. That being so, I doubt the wisdom or the necessity of extending these new and rather tighter rules to marriages as opposed to engagements.

My last point is not one which will commend itself to the hon. Member for Ladywood. It relates to whether the parties to a marriage have met. Once the entry clearance officer is satisfied that the parties to a marriage intend to live together permanently, it matters not at all whether the parties to the marriage have met. I personally would not have wanted to marry in those circumstances, but that is to impose my own moral standards and my own qualitative judgment upon other peoples' values and other peoples' judgments, and I do not see why we should impose our own cultural values upon another community operating a different set of cultural values.

I quite see why we should not allow arranged marriages to be fraudulent, in the sense that we should not allow them to be the method of getting in but, once people are intent on living together, and have so satisfied the entrance clearance officer, I do not give two hoots whether they have met or not. That seems to me to be a matter of culture. Perhaps I do not agree with it, but then who am I to impose my concept of culture upon them?

Having said these things, I personally believe that the rules go further than need be, and I very much hope that the Government will reconsider them.

9.9 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The changes in the immigration rules are a consequence of what the Government and the country must have seen as a major defeat for the Government's immigration policies at the hands of the European Court of Human Rights. The Home Secretary's speech was complacent and he did the House a disservice by not trying to justify some of the significant new provisions embraced by the rules. If the Home Secretary had listened to the debate for part of the afternoon, he would have known that we lacked an explanation of or justification for some of the points in the new rules.

I fully understand how embarrassing all this must be for the Government. It is an embarrassment that other people predicted as the European Court made its decision. Some Conservative Back Benchers have suggested that the way out of the dilemma is to move the goal posts — to remove the right of personal appeal to the European Commission of Human Rights. The alliance, by contrast, decided that the goal posts ought to be made of firm and immovable concrete.

The Government's response has not been to remove the restrictions on women but to decrease the rights of men. When we consider what happened in today's debate we shall realise that it would have been much better if the Home Secretary had brought forward the immigration rules in draft form so that we could have influenced some of the details, if not the principles. I believe that the Home Secretary will agree that several points of detail have emerged which he will find it difficult to justify when he implements the rules.

Time and again, the Government and some Conservative Back Benchers imply that Labour party policy is quite different from what it is. We are not in favour, and never have been, of unrestricted entry. We have said consistently that our aim in government will be to remove the discrimination on sexual and racial grounds which exists in many aspects of our immigration rules and in the Immigration Act 1971. That is not unrestricted entry, but giving justice to the practices under which we allow people to come to Britain.

Many of us welcome the one improvement embodied in the rules—the reluctant concession which means that it will no longer be necessary for women living here to be citizens if they are to be joined by their husbands. They will simply have to be settled here. When I asked the Minister of State about the consequence of the changes in the rules, he suggested that there would be an increase in men from the Indian subcontinent of 600, and an increase of men from other parts of the world of 1,500, making a total of 2,100. He then said that other changes would lead to a reduction in numbers, but he was unable to say how many.

One of our anxieties is to know how the other provisions will be implemented, not because we are worried about the arithmetic of the changes but because we are worried about the principles. We know that the Minister of State and the Home Secretary are concerned about the arithmetic resulting from the changes that they are introducing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and others satisfactorily demolished the primary purpose rule. It is clear that that rule is not concerned with the genuineness of the marriage. A marriage may be absolutely genuine but the primary purpose rule will still prevent the partners from getting together and living in Britain. In a short but effective speech, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) mentioned the burden of proof and those ominous words, "unless the Secretary of State is satisfied" which lay down the need for people to prove something which they are unable to prove. Nobody would be able to prove it. I do not believe that the Home Secretary or the Minister could do it.

Mr. Brittan: Sixty per cent. do.

Mr. Dubs: The Home Secretary may talk about 60 per cent., but the fact that some people manage to persuade officials does not mean that the proposition is provable. Perhaps officials accept particular facts about two people, but I contend that the proposition is not provable.

In 1982, before the onus of proof combined with the primary purpose applied in the way that it does today, 82 per cent. of men refused entry who wished to join wives or women for the purpose of marriage were turned down for objective reasons such as whether the bride or wife was a British citizen or whether the partners to a marriage had met previously. The figure for the latest year for refusals of men wanting to come to Britain for the same purpose was 87 per cent. on subjective grounds, mainly concerning the motives of marriage.

The primary purpose rule is now the major barrier to men coming to this country to join their wives or fiancées.

[Mr. Dubs]

We have turned the officials concerned with these procedures into people doing something for which they have had no training or experience—they must look into the motives of marriage. No hon. Member would like his or her marriage to be subjected to that sort of scrutiny by bureaucrats who have had no training for that function.

The provision regarding recourse to public funds is an area on which the Home Secretary, out of courtesy to the House, could have said a little more. The definition of public funds is clearly stated and wide-ranging and includes supplementary benefit, housing benefit, family income supplement and housing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. As I understand it, the system will be that for the first 12 months, until conditions have been removed, anybody receiving public funds will be in breach of the immigration rules and liable to removal. Thereafter, once the conditions have been removed — and this is to apply in perpetuity — the sponsor of that person would have to reimburse the Exchequer for any supplementary benefit that had been claimed and received by the person he was sponsoring. The onus of proof in the whole arrangement is either with the entry certificate officer or, for people already in this country, with the Secretary of State.

A number of major criticisms apply to those provisions. The first is the method by which people will be able to demonstrate to officials that they will not have to have recourse to public funds. The experience of immigration procedures generally, as evidenced by the report of the Commission for Racial Equality and from other sources, suggests that that process of scrutiny and interrogation is liable to be arbitrary and a means whereby people seeking to come into this country can be prevented from doing so. It would be difficult for Parliament or an individual Member of Parliament to find a means of querying the procedures under which someone is refused entry under that heading.

The second major criticism is the Catch 22 provision, which has already been mentioned by one or two of my hon. Friends. If a man is seeking to enter this country, he will either have a job already lined up—in which case he is caught by the primary purpose rule because people will say that he is coming here merely for employment purposes—or, if he does not have a job, he is liable to be a burden on public funds and will be prevented from entering the country. For the life of me I find it difficult to see how people can avoid that Catch 22 problem unless the Minister issues guidelines to prevent that happening. I hope that he will comment on that when he replies to the debate.

My third criticism is that the recourse to public funds provision will last for ever. It seems that there will never be a time in the life of the individual when he or she will not be subject to that provision. Indeed, sponsors may become unemployed or even pensioners, yet the burden will still hold good. People who are legitimately and legally here will be denied rights that exist for their fellow citizens. That is extraordinary and unacceptable.

My fourth major criticism concerns the invidious position in which local authorities will be placed, and I have a constituency case which exemplifies the point. If it is necessary for an individual to have more housing accommodation than he or she now has—if the person in question is to be joined by his or her spouse—that person is again in a Catch 22 situation.

If more accommodation is needed, the local authority will not provide it until the other members of the family have arrived in the country. On the other hand, the Home Office will say, "Until that accommodation is available, there is no evidence that the people will not be a public burden because housing is not there for them."

Should the Government be in doubt about that, I cite the case to which I referred in my constituency. A man wishes to be joined by his children and needs more accommodation. The local authority has said that that accommodation will not be forthcoming until the children have arrived. The Home Office has said that the children will not be allowed in until the accommodation is available.

My fifth criticism is of the processes by which these matters will be checked. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradfor, West (Mr. Madden) raised this issue. By what process will the Home Office be satisfied that an individual is not having recourse to one of the public funds to which I referred? Will there be a procedure by which automatically the DHSS, local authorities and others will have to refer claims to the Home Office to check the immigration status of any individual?

Alternatively, may we have an undertaking that that will not happen? Otherwise many anxieties will be caused as a result of the new procedures. People will feel that additional efforts will be made by, in particular, the DHSS and local authorities, as it were, to report people because there are doubts about their immigration status.

My sixth criticism is about the wide-ranging nature of the provisions. So wide are they that they could affect the children of any Member of this House. If they wished to marry and be joined by their spouses in this country, the provisions will apply to them.

The provisions applying to housing benefit and homelessness give rise for concern. An average owner-occupier who is reasonably affluent may still be entitled to a rate rebate under the housing benefit provisions. But even those provisions will be denied to certain people under the immigration rules, if they prove to be enforceable.

We are speaking of present rates of income of up to £140 a week gross for a family with, say, four children. Such a family would be entitled to rate rebate. To qualify for rent rebate, one's earnings need be only £2 or £3 short of that. Thus, many people are entitled to housing benefit. Indeed, about 7 million people are entitled to housing benefit of one sort or another, though under the new immigration rules such benefit will be denied to those coming here.

We must consider, in relation to the provisions on homelessness, what will happen if there is a marital breakdown and one partner becomes homeless and needs to be accommodated by the local authority. Will that immediately put that person in breach of the immigration rules? The Minister will doubtless answer yes, if the person has not been here for a year, but suppose that happens after that period. Will local authorities have to continue to make checks on passports?

I am asking the Minister for a commitment on two specific matters. First, can he define the circumstances in which an undertaking will be required to provide support and accommodation for spouses? How will that

undertaking be requested and how will people have to meet the immigration rules requirements? Secondly, in what circumstances will families be refused indefinite leave after completing a stay of months here? What will they have to prove for the restrictions on their stay to be lifted?

The provisions for children seem to be ill thought out and a bit of a mess. As I interpret the rules, children allowed to come here who reach the age of 18 within 12 months of their arrival will technically be ineligible to stay. Perhaps that is not the intention and I hope that common sense will intervene, but there is nothing in the rules which says that such children have the right to stay. I doubt whether that is the intention. I think that the rules have been sloppily drafted.

What of the young person who comes here and is married at the age of 16 or 18? Technically that young person would not be allowed to remain here. That is one interpretation of the rules. I ask the Minister to clarify the intention.

Paragraph 98 of the new rules causes me anxiety. It states:

"A person's leave may be curtailed or an application for variation of leave refused if false representations have been made"—

this is the key point—

"or material facts not disclosed".

That possibility was covered in a legal judgment on 10 February 1983 in the House of Lords case of Khawaya and Khera when Lord Scarman said:

"To allow officers to rely on an entrant honouring a duty of positive candour, by which is meant a duty to volunteer relevant information, would seem perhaps a disingenuous approach to the administration of control. Some might think it conducive to slack rather than to sensitive administration. The Immigration Act does impose a duty not to deceive the immigration officer. It makes no express provision for any higher or more comprehensive duty. Accordingly I reject the view that there is a duty of positive candour imposed by the immigration laws and that mere non-disclosure by an entrant of material facts in the absence of fraud is a breach of the immigration laws".

That was a clear decision by Lord Scarman in the House of Lords.

Paragraph 98 of the new rules attempts to reverse or undermine that House of Lords' judgment. At the least we should have more specific proposals and a more specific basis for debate. We should not slip in the provision in one of the immigration rules, which are not the consequence of the European Court decision but cover new ground.

It is shabby and reprehensible that the Home Office should seek to slip in the provision. The Home Secretary did not mention it. The provision means that if people do not disclose something, even if they have no reason to think that it is of interest to the immigration officials, they are liable to be thrown our for being in breach of that paragraph of the rules. Is that a fair and just way to approach immigration?

Those of us who are concerned with immigration cases many times a week know that the Home Office turns down an individual if it can suggest that some deception has taken place—there are other reasons, but when all else fails, that is the one. The Home Office definition of deception is not the normal English dictionary definition. If it can find a slight discrepancy in the story, the Home Office says that a person has been deceiving and therefore cannot come to the country.

The words:

"or material facts not disclosed"

are an open door for the Home Office to turn down virtually anybody if it can find some fact that the individual did not know that he should reveal at some point in the interview. This is not the way that the country and the House should approach matters as serious as immigration.

The Home Secretary made one point that caused many of us a great deal of surprise. The Home Secretary knew that he would be accused of not complying fully with the European Court of Human Rights decision because sex discrimination still remains in the provisions regarding people who came here before 1 January 1973. Many of us have been puzzling about the Home Secretary's contentions. He seemed to suggest that he would introduce legislation that would change the commitment that has been entered into for people who were here before that date.

It is difficult to come to any other conclusion than that the promises and commitments entered into by successive Governments and Ministers, and which I heard the Home Secretary reiterate in a speech to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service conference in Manchester, are to be reneged on. That is what the Home Secretary appeared to be hinting, but if he wishes to deny it, he has access to the Floor of the House. If that is what the Home Secretary is saying, that is significant. It is a sorry day when a Minister as senior as the Home Secretary comes along and says, "Forget what I said in Manchester a few months ago and what successive British Governments have said because we shall tear up our promises and do something different." The right hon. and learned Gentleman has just shaken his head, but why does he not stand up and deny the charge? Why does he not say that he is not going to renege on the commitment into which he entered? He knows that he made the hint, and we heard him make it. His silence can be taken to mean only that he will tear up the commitments that he has made.

I end with my overall conclusions about this sorry mess. These provisions give more power to the bureaucrats and administrators and take away power from Parliament and the courts. Some weeks ago, we had revealed to us the secret Home Office guidelines which set out the use of long queues and administrative procedures as a way to control the numbers coming in in any one year. Our suspicion is that the further provisions in these amended rules will add to the opportunity that the Home Office has for controlling the numbers coming in and denying entry to those who, up till now, will have had the right to come in. The Home Secretary is replacing the objective test by a subjective test. He is giving more rights to bureaucrats at the expense of the individual. He is putting forward shabby and petty proposals, which will still be seen as racially discriminatory by many people.

The trouble with these procedures and proposals is that they are giving a signal to the people of this country as to the type of society that the Home Secretary wants to see. It is one where the values and rights of the individual are given second place to the Government's shabby wishes to keep down the numbers at all costs. It is a sad day for the House that we have these proposals here. I hope that the House will throw them out unceremoniously because we need a better way to approach immigration.

9.35 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr.

[Mr. David Waddington]

Dubs) has a proper sense of proportion. He was not wildly enthusiastic about the rule changes, but his dislike of them was not sufficiently great to get him out of bed and to the Table Office before the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud). The result was that this incompetent Opposition did not even get a prayer against the rules on to the Order Paper. Although, therefore, I was not expecting congratulations from the Opposition for our having responded so quickly to the judgment of the court, I expected no more than a mild rebuke from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). The whole thing would obviously be "odious," because it always is, but beyond that I thought that the right hon. Gentleman's response would be as generous as that which he gave yesterday when we discussed telephone tapping. I was wrong. We were subjected to a tirade of abuse. For doing what? For doing precisely what the court required —making the rules for the admission of husbands the same as those for the admission of wives.

The Opposition are no doubt furious at our not having done what they expected. They thought that we were going to achieve equality by taking away from settled men the right to bring in their wives. They thought that they would be able to play "uproar", but they are now like a baby who has had its rattle stolen from it. They are as cross as two sticks because they cannot play, as they had hoped, the game of "uproar".

The Opposition express indignation at our having extended primary purpose to women, but the logic of their argument is that if we are to keep primary purpose at all we must, in view of the judgment, apply it to both sexes. We should have been very foolish if we had tried to achieve equality by doing away with primary purpose for men. To do so would have been a complete betrayal of our commitment to stop the abuse of marriage for immigration purposes.

I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) said about this matter. I know how difficult some of these cases can be for constituency Members. I noted also what my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) had to say about it. The rules require the applicant in every other respect to satisfy the entry clearance officer or the immigration officer of his entitlement. There cannot therefore be anything wrong in principle in requiring the applicant who is an intending spouse, or who is a spouse, to prove his entitlement. I cannot therefore agree with the criticisms. I do not agree that the test is unfair and I do not believe that unreasonable questions are asked by the entry clearance officers. Nobody who does my job for long can fail to realise that the primary purpose test can be a protection for young women.

A great deal has been said about the European Court. It is not loved by all. It is certainly not loved by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell); nor is it loved by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). Few people say that we should abrogate the convention. We provided much of the inspiration that underlies it, and as a country we have been a champion of human rights.

Mr. Budgen: During my hon. and learned Friend's period in politics, can he say how many people have asked him to discuss the European convention on human rights?

Mr. Waddington: Not very many, but a good many have discussed it tonight.

I have no doubt whatever that there are many in this House who say that, so bizarre and so far from the intentions of the original signatories have been some recent judgments of the court, that we should either cease to recognise its jurisdiction or take the step of not renewing the right of individual petition. This is not the time to enter into that debate, which could go on for a long time.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*—

Mr. Waddington: I may be able to satisfy the hon. and learned Gentleman, if he will wait a moment.

The Government are currently considering whether to renew the right of individual petition under article 25 and, if so, for what period, and will announce their decision in good time before the expiry date. It must be before the end of this year.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) seems to have a very suspicious mind. I remind him that we extended the right of individual petition in 1981, not for two years, as was suggested by the right hon. Member for Gorton, but for five years.

Several hon. Members have mentioned incorporation. That question raises complex constitutional issues. It is obvious from our debate that opinions are divided. I inferred from what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham that he was very much in favour. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West was obviously very much against. Many think that it could lead to considerable difficulties in the relationship between Parliament and our courts. Certainly the Government have no plans for incorporation.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and the right hon. Member for Gorton had much to say about article 13. We do not accept that lack of incorporation puts us in automatic and continuing breach of the convention. The decision in the present case means no more than that, as there was a breach of substantive provision, there was also a breach of article 13 because we had not incorporated. If there had not been a breach of a substantive provision, there would not have been a breach of article 13. When we remedy the breach of the substantive article, we shall no longer be in breach of article 13.

I am very surprised that the right hon. Member for Gorton should be advancing the argument that we are in automatic and continuing breach of article 13 as long as we do not incorporate the convention, because I do not remember that it was ever stated to be the policy of the Labour Government that they should incorporate the convention. That is well known to all of us.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that article 13 provides that everyone whose rights and freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy before a national authority. Will he now tell us which national authority in the United Kingdom gives that effective remedy to ensure that there is no breach of article 13?

Mr. Waddington: I will help the hon. and learned Gentleman to this extent. It seems to me that the lawyers have two views about the matter. I am told that the hon. and learned Gentleman should look at the case of Silver,

which seemed to suggest that there was no automatic and continuing breach of article 13 if a member state did not incorporate the convention.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) seemed to be suggesting that there should be a reference in the rules to the European convention, presumably in the same way as there is a reference to the United Nation convention on refugees. That would present immigration officers with an impossible task. The convention is couched in the most general terms. How on earth an immigration officer would be able to decide, at the point of entry, whether in a particular case there would be an infringement of article 8, I do not know.

Many wild statements have been made this afternoon about the effect of the judgment. First, the court acknowledged that a state has the right to control the entry of non-nationals into its territory. Secondly, the court acknowledged that there is no general obligation on a state to accept a non-national for settlement. Thirdly, there is nothing in the court judgment that calls in question the primary purpose rule.

Ms. Clare Short: But it was not before the court.

Mr. Waddington: Exactly. I remind the hon. Member for Ladywood, who may be looking for crumbs of comfort in other parts of the discussion, that the nearest that the court came to the subject was to say that the "must have met" requirement was not racially discriminatory and that the aim of the 1980 rules, which included primary purpose —protection of the labour market—was legitimate. To the extent that the court touched on the marriage tests, it said that they were legitimate to protect the labour market.

The court said that if there are rules restricting the rights of women to bring in husbands for settlement, the same rules must apply to men wanting to bring in wives, unless there are very weighty reasons for the distinction.

Mr. Dubs: Oh!

Mr. Waddington: I am using the words in the judgment. The judgment also says that sexual discrimination is not always wrong. According to the court, it is wrong unless there is an objective and reasonable justification or very weighty reasons for it.

There has been some discussion of secton 1(5) of the 1971 Act. Its effect is that we cannot apply the marriage tests to women seeking to join Commonwealth citizens settled before 1 January 1973. That is because of our domestic law. Our rules must correspond with that.

However, we do not believe that, given the intention stated by the Home Secretary to introduce legislation to put an end to the sexually discriminatory features of the provision, the court's judgment requires us in the present rules to exempt from the primary purpose test men joining women settled before 1 January 1973. The provision in the Act is, of course, transitional in character and effect. We shall legislate in due course.

Many questions were raised about the maintenance and accommodation requirement and some misconceptions may have arisen as a result of hon. Members failing to realise that the test will bite principally before entry. It involves an assessment at that time of the prospects of those seeking entry.

Paragraph 125 of the rules, which deals with the case of a person who has entered and aims to stay after the probationary period, does not require the passing of the maintenance and accommodation test at that point, although there is the overall provision in paragraph 98, which is an amended version of the old paragraph 97.

We must start by looking at the principal problem, which is how the rule will be applied before entry. I agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Slough (Mr. Watts) and for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) that it is surely not unreasonable to expect people who want to bring a spouse into this country, rather than live with the spouse abroad, to show that the family unit will be able to look after itself and not be a burden on the state.

I note what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North said, but there has long been a maintenance and accommodation test in the rules and I do not believe that many who have studied the situation will doubt the need for it. I believe that it needs to be strengthened.

I have looked recently at the situation in Tower Hamlets. Men living in single persons' accommodation marry women overseas, bring them to this country and expect the council to rehouse them. The council cannot, and the couple then have to be put up in hotels. In April 1985, 418 families—virtually all with one parent an immigrant—were being maintained in bed and breakfast accommodation in Tower Hamlets at an annual cost of £5·5 million. I do not think that any sensible person would fail to realise that there is a real problem.

The test, which previously applied only to women joining men, will now be applied also when men are joining women; but what will be looked at is the ability of the couple — the new family unit — to maintain themselves "adequately". In answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), let me say that it is not our intention to conduct detailed inquiries in every case. If one party has a stable job or realistic prospects of a job which can reasonably be expected to maintain the two of them and their dependants, the test will normally be met.

The present rules require that, when a woman is entering, the accommodation of the sponsor must be his own or occupied by him. I remind the House that the words that have been discussed in this debate are not new; they were in the 1980 and 1983 rules. To be "adequate", the accommodation must be capable of accommodating the couple without a level of overcrowding that would be contrary to statutory provisions or those laid down by the relevant local authority. Detailed instructions will be given to entry clearance officers.

I want to stress a point which was raised by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). Inquiries will not be made as a matter of course into maintenance and accommodation at the end of the probationary period before an applicant is granted indefinite leave to remain. I repeat that paragraph 125 does not make that requirement. There are general powers in new paragraph 98, which amends old paragraph 97, for a person's limited leave to be curtailed if a person has failed to maintain and accommodate himself and any dependants without recourse to public funds during that probationary period.

Important questions have been raised about the admission of children and new paragraph 50A. It is sensible if a parent arrives with a child and is given limited leave to enter that the child should be given leave on the same terms. The child is not, of course, on probation, but if, for instance, the marriage breaks down and the parent is going to return home — perhaps as a result of paragraph 125 — it is sensible that the parent and the

[Mr. Waddington]

child should return as the family unit which they were before. I emphasise that, in the vast majority of cases, the mother—almost invariably it will be the mother who comes with the child—will be granted indefinite leave to remain after the 12 months, and that will be the end of the matter.

I assure the House that no child will be refused indefinite leave to remain at the end of the 12 months granted under new paragraph 50A on the basis that, during the period, he has become 18 or has married. I think that that assurance will clear up these problems.

I was asked about entry clearance on the Indian subcontinent. If we add more people—for example, the husbands of settled women—to those already qualified to enter, more people will claim to come and more claims will be tested. Those who want more categories of people to be qualified to enter had better recognise that what they want has consequences for entry clearance work. They cannot have it both ways. Resources are not unlimited. It is certainly a possibility that, because of these changes, some applicants will have to wait longer for an interview. Efforts will be made to keep increases in delays to a minimum through the redeployment of staff and other measures.

I have been asked about numbers. It has already been said that extending to settled women the right to sponsor the entry of husbands could, without any other changes, mean an increase in the annual settlement figure from the world as a whole of 2,000, of which no more than 600 will come from the Indian subcontinent. We cannot say what the impact in terms of numbers of the new maintenance and accommodation test will be. We can estimate the effect of extending the right to settled women because we can look back to the number of applicants for entry prior to 1980, but obviously there is no scope for making a similar estimate for the new maintenance and accommodation test.

I assure the House that the right hon. Member for Gorton, who claimed that the court's ruling meant that 3,350 men had been wrongly excluded since 1980, was talking nonsense. Only 100 husbands and 400 fiancés have been refused for lack of the birth qualification between 1980 and 1983, or the citizenship qualification between 1983 and the present date.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary reminded the House of the position regarding numbers. The House can consider the changes that are now being made in the context of the dramatic decline in immigration since the Government took office in 1979. In 1978, 72,300 people from the whole world were granted settlement, of whom 42,000 came from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan, and 26,000 from the Indian subcontinent. In 1984, the world figure decreased to 50,000, the new Commonwealth and Pakistan figure decreased by almost half to 24,000, and the Indian subcontinent figure decreased to 14,000. Everybody can rest assured that the Government have been as good as their word, and have exercised firm and fair control.

Hon. Members have sometimes said that the House fails to take cognisance of the fact that more people leave the country than come to it. That is not entirely true. In 1983 there was more immigration that emigration. Generally speaking, I agree that in recent years that has been the case. In any event, it does not begin to provide an argument against immigration control. One must consider the skills of those who leave and those who come, the areas from which people depart and the areas to which they come—almost invariably city centres—and the strain which can be put on the social services, the education service and housing in some areas as a result of a considerable number of immigrants.

We have presented the House with a balanced package. The reaction of the official Opposition has been singularly unbalanced. The Opposition are entirely out of touch with the anxieties felt by ordinary men and women that there should be firm immigration control. The public can judge from the utterances today what mischief the Opposition would wreak if, by some misfortune, they were returned to office. They tell us that they would not intend to scrap immigration control, but all their proposals seem to lead to that end. This afternoon we have done what the vast majority of people would expect us to do. We have complied with the judgment and, at the same time, maintained firm immigration control.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 307.

Division No. 287] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Deakins, Eric
Anderson, Donald	Dewar, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Dixon, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy	Dobson, Frank
Ashton, Joe	Dormand, Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Dubs, Alfred
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Duffy, A. E. P.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Barnett, Guy	Eadie, Alex
Barron, Kevin	Eastham, Ken
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Beith, A. J.	Fatchett, Derek
Bell, Stuart	Faulds, Andrew
Benn, Tony	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Fisher, Mark
Bidwell, Sydney	Flannery, Martin
Blair, Anthony	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Forrester, John
Boyes, Roland	Foster, Derek
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Foulkes, George
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Freud, Clement
Bruce, Malcolm	Garrett, W. E.
Buchan, Norman	George, Bruce
Caborn, Richard	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Godman, Dr Norman
Campbell, Ian	Golding, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Gould, Bryan
Canavan, Dennis	Gourlay, Harry
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis	Hancock, Mr. Michael
Cartwright, John	Hardy, Peter
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Harman, Ms Harriet
Clarke, Thomas	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Coleman, Donald	Haynes, Frank
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Conlan, Bernard	Heffer, Eric S.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Corbyn, Jeremy	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Craigen, J. M.	Home Robertson, John
Crowther, Stan	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Hoyle, Douglas
Cunningham, Dr John	Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Dalyell, Tam	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*

Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Aye:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael

Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 194.

Division No. 288] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Straff'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsborough)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John

Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Robin Corbett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Statement of Changes in the Immigration Rules (House of Commons Paper No. 503).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Child Abduction and Custody Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Immigration Rules (Statement of Changes)

10.26 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I beg to move,

That the Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules (Cmnd. 9539), which was laid before this House during the Spring Adjournment, be revoked.

It has been several weeks since the leader of the Liberal party and other Liberal Members first tabled a prayer against the proposal. We are glad that members of the Labour party have added their names to our motion and that the Government have finally found time for a debate. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has explained that, for extremely good reasons, he cannot be present for the debate.

The main purpose of the rules was to impose a visa requirement on citizens of Sri Lanka wishing to enter the United Kingdom. That, as the Minister sadly knows, was the first time that Commonwealth citizens had been subject to visa requirements. When the new requirement was first announced, Parliament was in recess and hon. Members were thereby prevented from questioning Ministers.

Only 10 hours' notice was given before enforcement was made. That contrasts with the position at the time of the Iranian revolution when a substantial number of asylum claims were made and one week's notice was given. I do not complain about it, but it contrasts with the treatment of a Commonwealth country which was given only 10 hours' notice.

Members on both sides of the House must surely agree that the British Government have a historical responsibility for the inter-racial disharmony in Sri Lanka — perhaps not a direct one, as we cannot carry these burdens for ever, but it was the British who amalgamated Tamil and Singhalese kingdoms for their own administrative convenience in 1833 when they captured the area from the Dutch.

The present violence began in July 1983 when an attack by the so-called Liberation Tigers of the Tamils, dedicated to creating a separate Tamil state, attacked a convoy of Singhalese soldiers in a Sri Lankan army unit. That sparked off reprisal attacks from the south. Soon after, virtually the whole island was engulfed in communal rioting and it was estimated that in one week between 400 and 800 Tamils were killed.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): While not associating myself with the activities of any of the 30-odd organisations to one of which the hon. Gentleman referred, does he agree that it is equally fair to say that that convoy was attacked because on the previous day three young Tamil-speaking girls had been kidnapped, that two of them had been raped and that the people in the area where the convoy was attacked had responded not just on the day of the attack on the convoy but in incidents up to 48 hours before the convoy incident?

Sir Russell Johnston: As I shall show, the problem with intercommunal disputes is that inevitably examples of terrible occurrences can be quoted on both sides. I was dealing briefly with the historical background. There is no doubt that after that outbreak of rioting tens of thousands of Tamil houses and businesses in the south and west were destroyed or damaged and that about 250,000 people were made homeless, at least temporarily.

Since 1983, violent episodes continued, growing in frequency and severity in early 1985. Hon. Members will recall that in February 1985, the hon. Members for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) visited Sri Lanka on behalf of the parliamentary human rights group. I warmly recommend a reading of their report. Their task was extremely difficult, but they succeeded in producing a balanced and fair report.

I was about to say when the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) interrupted that in all intercommunal disputes rooted in history wrongs are to be found on both sides, and I do not want in this debate to set myself up as some sort of judge on what has happened. The nub of the problem was clearly stated on the first page of the report of those hon. Members, when they said:

"For many years the Singhalese community felt that the Tamils were unduly favoured, in particular in educational provision and in obtaining jobs in government and commerce. After independence, the majority Singhalese, regardless of party political persuasion, implemented a series of measures, most notably the replacement of English as the official language by Singhalese, which in their view sought to remedy injustices in society but which the Tamil community saw as part of a plan to diminish their rights and their status."

After the hon. Members left the country, there occurred the ghastly episode at Anuradhapura, when, on 14 May 1985, the so-called Tamil Tigers shot 146 Singhalese civilians. Reprisals, according to many eye witnesses, were often unselective and harsh. On 24 May 1985, Amnesty International, which is well respected by hon. Members in all parts of the House, issued a statement repeating its call to Governments throughout the world not to send back to Sri Lanka members of the Tamil minority who feared return to that country. It said that if returned to Sri Lanka Tamils faced the risk of

"Arbitrary killing by members of the security forces in reprisal for the killing of their own men or of members of the Singhalese community. . . Arbitrary arrest and possible long-term incommunicado detention, particularly of young men, their relatives often remaining unaware of their whereabouts for weeks or months after arrest. . . ill-treatment and torture after arrest."

It noted that a number of prisoners had disappeared. It described incidents

"currently being investigated by Amnesty International which it has reasonable grounds to believe may be extrajudicial killings."

Those involved the murder of 188 civilians, apparently by members of the armed forces, in four separate incidents in different parts of the island between 9 and 18 May 1985.

In May 1985, the number of Tamils seeking refuge in Britain drastically increased. It is important to put in perspective the number of Tamils seeking asylum in Britain. It is only about 2,500, as against 100,000 in India, which is understandable as they came from there originally, 20,000 in Germany and 19,000 in France— neither of those countries has any historical responsibility for or relationship with the Tamils — 3,500 in the Netherlands and, of all places, 2,500 in Switzerland, which has a population of only 5 million. Britain accepted

17,000 Hungarians in three weeks in 1956, and we have managed, with all praise to successive Governments, to accept some 20,000 Vietnamese since 1975.

Few of the Tamils reaching Britain have been accorded refugee status as defined by the Home Office. In 1984, there were only two, and that means that the Tamils here are in an insecure limbo. The United Nations convention on the status of refugees says that a refugee is a person who

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

When Tamils started to flee to Britain in 1983, they were refused asylum and were returned to Sri Lanka.

This year, in May, things came slowly to a head. First, on 20 May, the Home Secretary announced that each case would be considered individually and a recently arrived Tamil expressing fear of his return would be granted a 12 months exceptional leave to remain only if there is reason to believe that he would suffer severe hardship if he were to return to Sri Lanka. If he is unable to satisfy the test, he will be returned to Sri Lanka.

I do not criticise the immigration officials. They have a desperate job to do, trying to interpret the regulations that the House lays on them, and about which they are supposed to use their discretion. Of course, some of them make a bog of it sometimes, and they are sometimes harsh, but I do not intend to use this debate to make an attack on people who have a desperately difficult task to do.

Further measures were then taken to restrict the rights of Tamils. In particular—I complain about this, as all hon. Members should—Members of Parliament wishing to intervene on behalf of those who have been refused permission to stay, often after fairly brief interviews, were told that representations must be submitted within 24 hours of a sign of interest in a case. That is a tight requirement, and does not accord with normal procedure. Then, on 29 May, the rule was laid.

The Government announced that such visas would be granted only if applicants could show that they were suffering severe hardship and that circumstances warranted the exercise of discretion in their favour outside the immigration rules. These restrictions were criticised by all the main refugee organisations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Poul Hartling, said that the visa requirements could restrict flight from difficult situations and therefore he did not like them. The director of the British Refugee Council, Martin Barber, described the Government's response to the situation in Sri Lanka as "deeply disappointing". The general secretary of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Fiona Mactaggart, described the visa requirement as

"a callous and unprecedented move against Commonwealth citizens."

She said that the Government's panic had added to the danger faced by Tamils seeking to leave Sri Lanka, since they were now sitting targets for the persecution that they fear, precisely because they are seeking but failing to leave the country. Many Tamils had bought tickets but were refused permission to board flights to Britain. Many were scared to leave Colombo airport because they were afraid of reprisals if they travelled home. There was an incident when a Tamil queuing for a visa outside the high commission was arrested and beaten up by the police.

Despite the allocation of three temporary and two permanent extra staff to the high commission, many visa applications were not processed. Applicants began to queue in the middle of the night, but only the first few people in the queue were seen; the others were turned away. Therefore, those who were attempting to flee had to expose themselves to risk every day. That does not make sense.

As the Minister of State, Home Office will doubtless say, other European countries have visa requirements, but they are not enforced. Only Britain, with its island borders and airline collaboration, is able to impose an almost unbreakable visa régime.

I should like to make three points about the way in which this flow of refugees has operated that have not been sufficiently highlighted. First, young male Tamils are often exposed to threats from their own extremists that are equal to, if not more severe than, the more publicised actions of the Sri Lankan Government's security forces. They are told that they should be out there fighting for their independence and freedom. If they refuse, there is the danger that they may be strung up. Many of these young Tamils are peace loving. They simply want to get on with their ordinary lives. But they are being squeezed from two sides. If they are not refugees, who in Heaven's name are?

Secondly, in the sad world of refugees it is fascinating to observe how powerful is the influence of rumour about the right place to go. Rumour about where it is safe to go has played a significant part in the dispersal of refugees. The rumour is that France is a good place to go to, so head for France; Britain is not "on". Hon. Members may reasonably say that all European countries have visa requirements, so what is wrong about Britain having them? Leaving on one side the fact that Britain has never before had visa requirements, what happens is that the refugees come via eastern Europe. An enormous number of refugees landed in east Berlin. The east Germans are prepared to keep in their own nationals, but they let out the nationals of other countries. A strange fact about the channel, the sea gap, is that it makes a tangible difference to the way in which people behave.

I do not deny that some Tamils are economic refugees, but it is difficult to say who is an economic refugee and who is a political refugee. Is it fair to be a refugee because one feels that one cannot lead a reasonable life because of the economic situation, or does one have to hold strong ideological views that are being repressed? There are some Tamils who are not at risk. Tamils are still serving throughout the Sri Lankan administration. But that is not true of the vast majority of Tamils who come, otherwise why are they going in such large numbers to live in impoverished conditions in refugee camps in south India and in Germany? I mentioned earlier the 20,000 refugees in Germany. They do not live in the lap of luxury. They live in what amount to prison camps. They are not allowed out, except for limited periods. It is not what one might call a reasonably happy existence, but they prefer it to the fear of arbitrary death.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I apologise to the hon. Gentleman if he has already made this point; if he has not, he might like the opportunity to do so, because it is very important. If a Tamil is under stress and duress in Sri Lanka and is at the end of his tether and has to get out, why should he decide to come to the United Kingdom rather than go to India?

Sir Russell Johnston: I accept that all the points made by the hon. Gentleman are extremely important. I did deal

[Sir Russell Johnston]

with that matter. If the hon. Gentleman is assiduous, as I am sure he always is, he will find that I said that over 100,000 Tamil refugees are in India now, having come directly from Sri Lanka.

The Liberals, Social Democrats and Labour Members are opposing the new rules tonight because they seem to us to be more concerned with limiting Asian immigration than, in the words of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, with

"humanitarian principles which led Britain in the past to gain a reputation for generous treatment of people seeking refuge from oppression abroad".

It is in stark contrast to the treatment of Poles—I very much approve of their treatment—who were in Britain at the time of the declaration of martial law in Poland. They were immediately covered by an automatic policy of 12 months exceptional leave to remain, annually renewable.

As a signatory to the United Nations convention on refugees, Britain should welcome Tamils seeking temporary refuge outside their country while the situation there remains volatile. At the very least, the Government should withdraw the new visa requirements. Therefore, I commend the Prayer to the House.

10.46 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): It is not my intention to speak other than briefly, because I know that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Nor is it my intention to enter into a great deal of detail about the merits and demerits of the internal situation in Sri Lanka.

There is ample evidence from Amnesty International and from several other reputable organisations that if Tamils come here because they are in fear of their lives, they have justification for doing so and for saying, "We are in danger and would like to have asylum in Britain". The evidence of the Amnesty International report in particular is very convincing.

It is not a new problem; sadly, for Sri Lanka, it has existed for a number of years. In 1983, just under 400 Tamils sought asylum in Britain; in 1984, there were nearly 500. In May this year, 1,260 came to Britain. I think it was that number that panicked the Home Office into the measures that we are discussing this evening. A trifling number of people — 1,260 — is not a sound justification for the major changes in Britain's practice and attitudes that are embraced in the immigration rule changes that we are now discussing.

The UN convention on the status of refugees defines a refugee as a person who

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country".

That is a fairly broad definition and seems to cover many of the Tamils, if not all, who have come to Britain and asked for asylum. However, the Home Secretary produced a rather narrower definition. We call it his hardship definition. The factors were defined, in answer to a parliamentary question, as being

"whether the applicant or his immediate family has recently suffered physical injury or serious material loss as a result of a disturbance in Sri Lanka; the area of Sri Lanka from which he comes; and the extent of any political involvement he has had in Sri Lanka".—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 220.]

That is much narrower and more difficult than the United Nations test. I question the need for that more restrictive policy.

The Home Secretary has also departed from normal practice by making it much more difficult for hon. Members to intervene on behalf of refugees from Sri Lanka by providing that written representations must reach the Home Office within 24 hours. That is an unprecedented restriction on the right of hon. Members to make representations on behalf of their constituents or relatives of constituents in immigration cases. There is no justification for that provision. If hon. Members receive an urgent request on Friday evening or Saturday, it is unrealistic to expect them to get written representations to the Home Office within 24 hours.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I agree with the hon. Gentleman's definition of refugees, but will he explain which country has responsibility for taking in a person who claims to be a refugee?

Mr. Dubs: There is a simple answer to that question. Under international practice, virtually all countries share responsibility. As the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said, India has taken 100,000 Tamils, but responsibility has been shared by many European countries and the figures show that we have played a lesser role than many other countries. We compare badly, particularly as we have a traditional Commonwealth link with Sri Lanka which suggests that we should have been in the forefront of accepting refugees. Traditional links are often a major determining factor in sharing responsibility.

In the light of the situation in May, the Home Secretary imposed a visa requirement. It was the first time that any Commonwealth country had had imposed on its people the requirement that anyone coming here for a short stay should have a visa. The difficulty is not merely the bureaucracy involved in that requirement but the fact that Tamils have to go to our high commission in Colombo and wait while visa applications are dealt with. We know that they have to go through army road blocks on the way to Colombo and are sometimes told that there is no certainty that they will be allowed back to their villages to await the outcome of their application.

We are making difficulties for the Tamils and that contrasts with our much more relaxed attitude to refugees from other countries. Poland has been mentioned, and even with Iranians we did not impose requirements as quickly and stringently as we have with the Tamils. In a recent decision, Mr. Justice Taylor warned the Home Office not to use "artificial and inhuman criteria" when deciding whether Tamils fleeing from violence in Sri Lanka should be granted political asylum. The judge overturned the Minister of State's refusal of asylum and directed that he should reconsider the case.

As I said, 100,000 Tamil refugees have been accepted in southern India, and other countries have played their part. Perhaps some Tamils are economic migrants, but I find it difficult to believe that people who have left good homes and jobs and cars—some students have left just before they were due to take examinations—can be mere economic migrants. Many Tamils have left behind something that they will find it hard to attain in this country, even if they are allowed to stay here long enough to get jobs and establish an economic well-being.

I particularly regret that fact that the visa requirement was imposed at short notice and that no warning was given. Our policy towards Tamil refugees is a major departure from our traditional offer of hospitality and asylum to people from any country who are in danger of their lives. This is a regrettable step. We have taken it against people from a fellow Commonwealth country, and that makes it more regrettable. I should like the Home Secretary to drop the visa requirements as quickly as possible and to state clearly what he intends to do when the six-month period of exceptional leave expires for many of the Tamils who arrived earlier this year. We shall have to make some difficult decisions. I urge the hon. and learned Gentleman to allow the people to stay until the position in Sri Lanka is properly resolved. It is up to him to make it clear that he will not send anyone back until there is an absolute assurance that the people will return in safety.

10.55 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I look upon this debate as being at least as important as the one that preceded it. People who are not refugees and do not belong here have not much to complain about if we say that in this small overcrowded country we have no room for them. But people who are not just coming here for a better life but are fleeing from persecution are entitled to special consideration, and we have always given such people that consideration. Our tradition of giving sanctuary to those fleeing from persecution goes back many years. Recently, as the House knows and as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said, we have given sanctuary to Poles, Iranians and citizens of many other countries who have made new lives here.

I remind the House that the refugee statistics do not tell the whole story. Often we are told that we are not taking as many refugees as other countries. In addition to those granted asylum on the basis of individual applications, we have admitted large numbers of refugees under specific programmes, most recently the 19,000 Vietnamese who do not appear in the refugee statistics as such. Many people who are not granted asylum are nevertheless allowed to stay exceptionally because of the conditions in the countries from which they have come.

There is a serious misconception which I must point out to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). When my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was talking about the considerations that were borne in mind in deciding whether exceptional hardship would be suffered by a person if he returned to Sri Lanka, he was referring to the criteria that would be applied in the case of someone who had already been found not to be a refugee. Those criteria were to go only to the question of whether a person who had been found not to be a refugee within the terms of the convention should still, be allowed to stay exceptionally.

As the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said, we have to look at the history of this matter. I shall not go back as far as he did, but I shall go back to July 1983 because one has to set the scene. In July there was a serious outbreak of intercommunal violence. It was not the first outbreak, but it was the most severe for many years. Tamils already here and those who came here from Sri Lanka in the immediate aftermath of that violence and expressed a fear of return were not sent back while the situation there remained dangerous and uncertain. By September 1983 the situation had improved sufficiently for normal immigration procedures to be applied, but in the spring of 1984 conditions deteriorated again. In April 1984 it was again decided to defer returning Tamils who expressed a fear of return while policy was reviewed in the light of developments.

By April this year we faced a situation in which some Tamils had been here for as long as 12 months on temporary admission in uncertainty about their future. This clearly could not continue. We had to decide whether the situation in Sri Lanka required a general policy of granting exceptional leave to remain to any Tamil who expressed a fear of return, or whether some less all-embracing policy was by then appropriate. Our assessment at that time, based on regular reports from our high commissioner in Colombo, was that, although intercommunal problems remained severe, there had been no repetition of the widespread violence against Tamils that occurred in 1983. There had been a series of terrorist attacks and some reprisals against the Tamil community; but a large proportion of the Tamil population, including Indian Tamils in the centre of the island and the large Tamil community in Colombo and its environs, were relatively unaffected.

Mr. Nellist: Regarding the high commissioner's report, did any of the staff of the high commission visit Jaffna or the eastern province, or did he rely on Government reports about the position in the north and east?

Mr. Waddington: The high commissioner certainly did not rely only on Government reports. Representatives of the high commission travelled, but I cannot give the hon. Gentleman more details than that.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): In an answer from the Minister and information from the Home Office, he said that the high commission had not visited Jaffna at any time this year. Are there any plans for high commission staff now to travel to Jaffna and the eastern provinces so that we can have an accurate report of the position?

Mr. Waddington: What I said to the hon. Gentleman in no way conflicts with his comments. I must remember my responsibilities. All I can do is pass on his observations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

As a result of those circumstances in Sri Lanka, the Home Secretary announced on 20 May that Tamils who arrived on or before 20 April would be granted six months leave to remain, and that their cases would then be reviewed, with those who would suffer severe hardship if returned being granted further leave to remain. Those Tamils who arrived after 20 April 1985 would not be granted the automatic initial six months, but their cases would be studied individually, and those who would suffer severe hardship if returned would be allowed to stay.

Meanwhile, in the latter part of April and early May there had been a sharp increase in the number of Tamils arriving in the United Kingdom and claiming asylum. About 550 arrived in the first three weeks of May, including 101 in a single day on 17 May. After the Home Secretary's announcement, they continued to arrive in increasing numbers. In the week beginning 20 May, more than 500 came. On a single day, 29 May, 244 arrived,

[Mr. Waddington]

making a total of 1,330 for the month. The flow showed every sign of continuing with the immigration service and refugee agencies being put under increasing strain. In those circumstances, my right hon. and learned Friend decided to impose the visa requirement of which there has been a great deal of criticism.

Sir Russell Johnston: Did the Home Secretary hold discussions with other European countries about the type of flows that they were experiencing?

Mr. Waddington: We were well aware of the flows in other European countries, and we had no choice but to take that decision. Others may have viewed with equanimity the prospect of literally hundreds of Tamils continuing to arrive every day, but not many were in that relaxed frame of mind.

I remind the House that the Home Office is often criticised for keeping people in places such as Harmondsworth. I have little doubt that many Sri Lankan Tamils were glad to have a place in Harmondsworth because they had nowhere to go, and I hope that hon. Members realise that. I pay tribute to the efforts by all those concerned, including the Tamil community, to find and provide accommodation to enable Tamils, often with no friends or relatives here, to be granted temporary admission rather than be detained. Eventually all were granted temporary admission and none remained in detention. The House must realise that we passed a few difficult days when there was nowhere to put those people who were arriving with nowhere to go.

The applications of those who were granted temporary admission are now being considered in the normal way. Of those who arrived in the latter part of April and May, 500 have had their cases considered. Refugee status has been granted in two cases, exceptional leave to remain in 35, and the remainder have been refused in principle and referred to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

Since 20 May one Tamil has been removed to Colombo, 13 to western European destinations, five to India and two to countries in the middle east. Significantly —the House will be interested in this—about 13 have withdrawn their applications, and embarked voluntarily, —at least eight direct to Sri Lanka. That has a bearing on the assessment of how many of them had come in a state of complete terror unwilling ever to return to their homelands.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Clearly the issue is whether or not Tamils would be returned to Sri Lanka against their will. Can the Government, as in the case of Iranians, make it clear that they are reluctant to return individuals to Tehran? Can they give the House a similar assurance on Tamils to Sri Lanka?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman must have read the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. The applications of all those who claim asylum are examined extremely carefully. If the conclusion is reached that they do not qualify, a second decision has to be reached, which is whether they would suffer exceptional hardship if they were returned to Sri Lanka. If we find that they would, they will not be returned. If we have first found that they do not qualify for refugee status under the United Nations convention and if we find, secondly, that they would not suffer exceptional hardship if returned to Sri Lanka, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that they should not be allowed to stay here if they do not qualify to do so under the immigration rules.

It has been said that other western European countries have accommodated considerably larger numbers of Tamils. That is true, but it is not a situation that those countries welcome. To a large extent it has been forced on them because of their geographical situation. In particular, large numbers of Tamils have entered West Germany via East Berlin and there is little that West Germans can do about it. But in imposing a visa requirement, we were fully in line with the position in most other western European countries. I am aware that in recent months other western European countries have returned only a small number of Tamils to Sri Lanka. The same goes for us, and I do not believe that the assessment of other Governments differs very much from our own.

Recently the Dutch Government, for instance, reported to the Netherlands Parliament that the situation in the south of Sri Lanka had returned to normal and Tamils were migrating from the north to the south, particularly to Colombo, where they were not exposed to violence. As a result, the Dutch authorities are now considering each case on its merits, as we are, and on 4 July 1985 they announced that any Sri Lankans arriving in the Netherlands en route to other destinations would require a transit visa, and that those who did not have a visa would be returned to their country of origin. Belgium and Luxembourg have also imposed transit visas.

We were, of course, saddened to have to impose a visa requirement, and it was only with great reluctance that we did so. But visa requirements between Commonwealth countries are by no means unprecedented. British citizens are required to obtain visas before travelling to Australia, Bangladesh, India and Nigeria. We shall, as my right hon. and learned Friend promised, keep the visa requirement under review, in the hope that it can be lifted in due course as a result of a lasting solution to the intercommunal problem in Sri Lanka.

I am glad to say that since the imposition of the visa requirement there has been some easing of the situation in Sri Lanka. A ceasefire was announced on 18 June and apart from a few isolated outbreaks of violence it has held since then. The Government have authorised the release of some 600 Tamils held in detention, travel from Jaffna to Colombo is now easier and a curfew imposed in the northern areas has been removed. There is nothing to prevent Tamils who wish to apply for a visa from travelling to the high commission in Colombo. There was much talk at the beginning about the difficulties which people might experience if they queued at the high commission. The situation has been coped with magnificently at the high commission and I gather that there is an appointment system. People can wait inside the building until they are seen. So far, there have not been enormous problems.

Mr. Corbyn: Reports were received that people were turned away from the high commission when they arrived in the morning to queue. An allegation was made that one person was taken off that queue and later assaulted by the police who had seen him queueing to try to get a visa to

come to this country. We ought to be quite clear about the arrangements for the safety of people who attend the high commission to apply for visas to come here.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Member has mentioned a matter about which, if my memory serves me rightly, I wrote to him. It is true that, for the first day or two there were queues outside the high commission, and that is why the system was altered in order to accommodate those who wished to apply for visas. On the other matter mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, he has been put right by letter, and I hope he will accept what we have said and not continue helping to spread a rumour which had no foundation.

There was a rumour about police beating up people in the queue, but on the day in relation to which this complaint was made, two incidents occurred. In the first a British subject of Sri Lankan Singhalese origin who has a record of visiting the high commission and becoming abusive and violent towards the staff, was removed by the police at the request of the staff. He was taken to the police station opposite the high commission and was seen to leave about half an hour later, apparently unharmed. He certainly was not a Tamil. In the second incident, a youth was seen to run away from the queue when approached by the police. The high commission is not aware that he was subsequently arrested or ill-treated. Those two incidents outside the high commission seem to be the origin of the various rumours.

In his statement of 6 June, my right hon. and learned Friend said that the imposition of a visa requirement would not prevent the entry of those Sri Lankan citizens who qualified for admission in the normal way — for example, as visitors or students — although they would of course have to obtain visas before travelling. I am pleased to say that experience of dealing with visa applications in Colombo has fully borne this out. Between 30 May and 18 July, some 2,000 visa applications were received in Colombo. Of these, 760 applications were made by Tamils, of which 490 were granted. So much for all the talk about people being unwilling to go to the high commission because they were terrified to do so. Two hundred of the applications were refused and the remainder were referred to London for further consideration.

On 6 June the Home Secretary also announced that it would be open to a Tamil who did not qualify under the immigration rules to apply for a visa on the ground that he was suffering severe hardship, and the circumstances—including, for example, family links with this country—warranted the exercise of discretion in his favour outside the normal immigration rules. I repeat what I said earlier to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs): that that had nothing whatsoever to do with judging a person's entitlement to refugee status.

Up to 18 July, 42 such applications have been made. Twenty-one have been refused and the remainder are under consideration, but decisions in some of the outstanding cases will be made shortly. Additionally, we have dealt sympathetically with a number of Tamils arriving here without visas where there have been compassionate circumstances.

The hon. Member for Battersea referred to the decision by the Home Secretary to ask hon. Members to make representations within 24 hours. There was a considerable influx, and it seemed to us right to ask hon. Members to help in this situation by putting in their representations as quickly as possible.

I am sure that all hon. Members will accept that I am helpful about representations by hon. Members, but I can assure the House that some hon. Members stretch my patience to the limit. Many hon. Members say that they wish to make representations, and nothing is heard from them for weeks and weeks. Often hon. Members say that they will be making representations, we write back to them, and they say that they will not make representations after all. Apparently they approached my Department in the first place only to gain temporary admissions.

There is a real difficulty here. Given a very large influx, we could not allow any hon. Member perhaps to take weeks and weeks investigating the case of an individual Tamil. It was only fair to ask hon. Members to put on their skates and let us know what they had to say as soon as possible. But I should not like hon. Members to think that we had applied the rule inflexibly. There are hon. Members present tonight who know that we have not. If hon. Members came back to us saying that they could not prepare their representations in 24 hours and that they wanted a little more time, we did not apply the rule inflexibly. But we wanted to make the point that this was exceptional and that we could not allow hon. Members to expect us to wait literally weeks and weeks to hear what they wanted to say to us.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Surely there is a difference between delays of weeks and weeks, presumably on the part of some hon. Members who may or may not be present, and 24 hours. If the Minister had said that he required a submission to be in within a given number of days, that might have been reasonable, but 24 hours is virtually impossible, not only because of the possibility of an intervening weekend but because of the problems of establishing a written submission—not least because, in so many cases with deportation notices, we have found, perhaps by coincidence, that they arrive on Friday evening or even on a Saturday.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman has a touching faith in human nature. I think that saying that we wanted representations in 24 hours concentrated the mind wonderfully in the case of one or two hon. Members, and that if we had said that they should be made within a few days, it would more likely have taken a few weeks. I thought that it was sensible to make the point that we faced exceptional circumstances and that it was very important for hon. Members to let us know as soon as possible what they had to say.

Sir Russell Johnston: In the Iranian case, a week was given. A week is reasonable; it gives sufficient time and is sensible. There was a crisis then too. There was a flood of people coming in. What is the difference between the two situations?

Mr. Waddington: Curiously enough, asking hon. Members to let us have their representations within 24 hours does not seem in the event to have caused them all that much difficulty. It seems as though my right hon. and learned Friend was entirely right and that he judged the situation accurately. He realised that if he asked hon. Members to do it within 24 hours, they could.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Minister will recall the young Tamil who was removed in error before

[Mr. Max Madden]

his representations had been considered by the Minister. Subsequently, I have been informed that, on the basis of the representations, the Minister was not satisfied that that young man was facing sufficient danger not to be returned. I understand that further representations of a very serious nature have now been made. Will the Minister undertake to consider those representations urgently and comprehensively?

Mr. Waddington: If any representations are made to me and the hon. Gentleman asks me to consider them urgently, I shall do so. However, it must be said that I do not know the matters to which the hon. Gentleman refers. In view of his intervention, perhaps I had better fill in a little of the history of the case of Mr. Raveenthiran. Mr. Raveenthiran was returned to Colombo on 4 June, following refusal of his asylum application but before representations from UKIAS on his behalf were received. It was a serious error, but I think that the House will appreciate that the Tamil emergency placed a considerable strain on staff in the immigration service and in other parts of the immigration and nationality department, and it is in circumstances such as this that breakdowns in communications can occur.

We have taken steps with the aim of ensuring that nothing of the sort happens again. Our high commission has been in touch with Mr. Raveenthiran on several occasions since his return, and it is satisfied that he is safe and has not been harassed in any way. Indeed, he has told our staff that he has not been subject to persecution or harassment. The latest information is that he has now moved to Jaffna. I have also considered very carefully the evidence presented by UKIAS on behalf of Mr. Raveenthiran. I have come to the conclusion that the original decision to refuse him asylum and leave to enter was justified and that he does not qualify for a visa to return here on grounds of severe hardship. If there is any new information, I shall consider it most carefully, but all hon. Members will agree that, if that history is anything like right, it tends to support the decision taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. The man was refused asylum, returned to Colombo and later told our high commission that he was safe and well.

Mr. Marlow: Can my hon. and learned Friend give us some idea of the number of Tamils seeking entry to the United Kingdom, when many were seeking entry, who were related to people already in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Waddington: I am not sure what period my hon. Friend is referring to. In that last month, there were 1,330. In the period to April 1985, about 990 had been allowed to remain on temporary admission. I cannot give a breakdown of the figures. Most were young men — many had families here and many did not. I would not try, without taking advice, to estimate how many had relatives here.

I have no doubt that the imposition of a visa requirement for Sri Lankan citizens was an unavoidable response to the situation we faced. In the light of the explanation that I have given of the background to the decisions, I believe that the House will agree that it was fully justified, and I invite the House to reject the motion.

11.22 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): The Home Secretary's decision imposing visa requirements on citizens from a Commonwealth country who wish to come to Britain is unprecedented. I believe that it is to be deeply regretted and that it represents a major departure from the stand that has been taken by earlier Governments in our relations with Commonwealth countries.

I oppose the change in the rules in principle and in practice. It is on the practice and the ill-judged decision of the Government in imposing those rules that I wish to comment. In spite of the communal rioting, to which many hon. Members have referred, of the summer of 1983, and two years of intense civil strife and terrorist activity in Sri Lanka, it seems that the number of its citizens seeking leave to enter and remain in the United Kingdom was reasonably static during that time.

Indeed, it was not until 20 May, when we were told by the Home Secretary that some 900 Sri Lankan Tamils were in Britain without qualification to remain here, that the number of those seeking admission began to show any sign of real increase. Although the Home Secretary's original statement was tucked away in a written answer about future policy, I believe that that statement gave rise to rumour and conjecture in Colombo: that the door was about to be closed on new arrivals and that notice was being given by the United Kingdom Government that restrictions would be imposed on those who might seek to gain admission in the future.

That rumour seemed to have some foundation when, nine days later, the Home Secretary decided that the rules had to be changed. It took him only nine days to come to that decision. It seemed to me that it was a most extraordinary choice of time in which to come to such a conclusion. In fact, the Minister himself commented upon it. It was at the beginning of a period when serious contacts were being made to bring about a ceasefire, to end civil strife in that country and to attempt a further negotiated, political settlement.

We were told by the Home Secretary in that statement that he took his decision in consultation with the Foreign Secretary and, that being the case, neither Minister could have been in doubt about the moves being made on the Indian subcontinent. Although I should no doubt be called to order if I strayed too far into the arena of foreign affairs tonight, I believe that it is right to put down a benchmark for future occasions when we discuss these matters.

The Home Secretary told the House that his reason for imposing restrictions was that he feared an escalation in the number of those seeking admission to the United Kingdom. I have to tell the Minister, and through him the Home Secretary, that I hold the firm view that any such increased migration as there was during the month of May was aparked off by no one but the Home Secretary himself. By his hamfisted statement of 20 May and his subsequent flustered and panic measures, arrived at by means that I can only describe as a poor quality-making process, he aggravated a difficult position.

Mr. Waddington: What is the hon. Lady suggesting was contained in my right hon. and learned Friend's statement that could have persuaded anybody in Sri Lanka that the doors were about to be slammed shut? What was said was that all those who had been here on temporary admission for very many months would be given an additional six months' leave to remain here.

Miss Boothroyd: The Home Secretary's statement stands. It is surprising that it was necessary for him to make such a statement by written parliamentary answer and not to allow debate or questions following such an important statement. That is why I believe that it led to rumour and conjecture in Sri Lanka.

Much as I dislike the numbers game in dealing with human beings in such a context, I understand that the escalation of which the Home Secretary spoke manifested itself in the form of some 1,300 Sri Lankan Tamils being admitted to this country. I do not know the numbers of Singhalese who came to this country during that time, and it would be interesting to know. But some 1,300 people can hardly be considered a flood. With or without the help of voluntary agencies, I doubt that such a number is a challenge to the social structure of this nation.

I am pleased that the Minister made some comment tonight about the numbers that have applied to come into this country since the end of May. I believe that the latest information takes us to 18 July, when 762 applications had been received in Colombo from Tamils and 492 visas had been granted, with 65 cases still under consideration. Applications from Singhalese numbered 1,329 with more than 1,000 visas granted. It would be interesting to know whether those applications were for refugee status or under normal immigration regulations.

As we understand that there is now an appointments system for making applications, perhaps the Minister could give some indication of how many additional applications the high commission in Colombo is expecting over the next six weeks. With a system of appointments there should be no difficulty in giving the numbers of people wishing to make applications.

Those who seek to come here no doubt do so for varying reasons. There are those who express fear of staying in, or returning to, their own country because of the possible backlash and fear of persecution from whatever source. That fear may be well-founded, but there are others whose fear of persecution is perhaps not so well-founded, and who express the wish to return home as soon as a settlement has been reached.

Let us not be mealy mouthed about it. There are those who are in no danger but who use the situation to enter and settle here to achieve a better life. I do not believe or accept that every Tamil seeking admission to this country is a political refugee at risk of life. By no means are claims of refugee status genuine in all cases. But I do believe that the total number seeking admission is not great, and that with the assistance of voluntary agencies and community groups which have shown a willingness to help, there is no reason to deny those seeking refuge temporary stay until a political settlement has been reached and the legitimacy of their claim to be at risk is investigated. This country has a tradition of providing a refuge for those who believe that they are in need of it, and it is the spirit of that tradition that I do not wish to destroy.

The changes we are opposing are very wide in the extreme. The restrictions are not only imposed on permanent residents in this country but also affect Sri Lankans living and working elsewhere. I doubt whether the Minister is aware of the distress and chaos that they cause.

I wonder whether the Minister is aware of recent circumstances where the head of a Sri Lankan family living in this country died, and the eldest son, who was resident and working in Canada, was required to attend the funeral. I understand that in such an emergency, and in such a vast country as Canada, the son was unable to obtain an entry visa and had no alternative but to arrive here without one. After a long delay and lengthy questioning he was eventually forced to seek assistance to substantiate his reasons for coming here. That young man was allowed to enter the country but was allowed to remain for only four days.

Such treatment is totally unreasonable and unacceptable. There must be greater flexibility and understanding in dealing with such matters. It is also unacceptable for the Government to require Sri Lankan residents here to obtain re-entry visas before travelling abroad.

I cannot recall a period in the peacetime history of this country when the movement of people was so restricted. It cannot be right for a country that claims to uphold justice and freedom to say in respect of some of its residents that a passport will not suffice and that they must obtain a re-entry visa before taking a day trip to Boulogne, and pay £10 into the bargain for the privilege of being allowed back into the country in which they live. It is an insult to those who live, work and have resident status here to restrict their freedom of movement to that extent. There is no justification for such an imposition. It is shameful and should be removed without delay.

I do not accept the need to impose such regulations. The Home Secretary has taken a hammer to crack a nut, and he should lift the regulations with all speed. Indeed, he is making a grave mistake tonight in demanding that this House accepts them.

11.34 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) referred to the visit that I and the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) paid to Sri Lanka in February on behalf of the parliamentary human rights group. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind compliments on our report, from which he quoted. I confine myself to quoting a sentence at the end of it, when he said:

> "Our brief visit left us with an impression of a beautiful island and a delightful people for whom we developed a deep affection."

I am sure that that impression will be echoed by anyone else who has had the pleasure of visiting Sri Lanka.

We found a sad and sorry picture. We entitled our report 'A Nation Divided," for that is what it is. With the co-operation of the Government, we had the opportunity to visit prisons and detention centres. Conditions did not permit us to travel to the extreme north, though we were able to travel through parts of Sri Lanka and we were given the opportunity to meet people from the north, from Jaffna and Trincomalee, and people from the south.

We met members of all the communities and, although neither of us would profess to be experts on the country after a fortnight's visit, we got a good impression of what was going on. I hasten to add that my remarks are made on a personal basis, and I would not claim for a moment to speak on behalf of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North, who will probably wish to put a different interpretation on some of the things that we saw and heard.

The hon. Member and I saw some extremely distressing things and drew some depressing conclusions. There was no doubt that there had been widespread incidents carried out by Tamil terrorists in the north. There was no doubt that there had been gross over-reaction on a number of

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occasions by the army against Tamils. There had also been incidents in which Singhalese had been turned out of their villages and forced to flee.

We visited both Tamil and Singhalese refugee camps. To be a refugee in one's own country may seem a contradiction in terms, but, alas, that was the picture that we saw. We describe in our report our conviction that some people in custody suffered torture — which, of course, is totally unacceptable — and we describe the way in which, in the north, whole communities were cleared from their villages, losing their homes and livelihood.

We are tonight discussing whether people from Sri Lanka—in particular members of the Tamil community — should be allowed here without meeting the requirements to which the Minister referred. Reference has been made to hardship and to people living in fear, and I have little doubt that many Tamils in the north of Sri Lanka are living in constant fear. They are fearful of being attacked by terrorist groups and being forced to take part in terrorist activities.

There are living in villages Tamils who are not involved in terrorism but who fear over-reaction by the ill-disciplined army after terrorist incidents have taken place. There are Tamils living elsewhere in Sri Lanka who remember the reprisals and riots of the past and who fear that at any time they may be the victims, being in the minority elsewhere than in the north, of reprisals and have their homes attacked and destroyed.

Nor is the fear confined to the Tamil community. I fancy that after the attack in Anuradhapura, to which the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber referred, many Singhalese in that area live in fear.

This all adds up to the fact that much of the population of Sri Lanka is to some extent living in fear and might claim that they could suffer hardship if they had to remain there. While, I fear that is the case, we are talking of a Tamil population alone of 3 million people. Are some hon. Members really saying that there should be no restrictions on any of them being allowed to come here and that our doors should be wide open to that number of people coming here because they claim to live in fear?

I put it to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber that the logic could equally well be applied to other parts of the world where there are communal disturbances, so there must be many people living in fear who will claim that they wish to leave their countries and not return because they will suffer hardship — for example, central America, southern Africa, the middle east, and parts of the Indian subcontinent. We must think through the logic of where the motion would lead us. I hope that the House will consider this coolly and realise what the implications are, and will realise that, reluctant though my hon. and learned Friend the Minister was to impose the visa restrictions, it was an inevitable reaction to the situation in Sri Lanka at the time.

Happily, it seems that there may have been a turn for the better in recent weeks. I know that all friends of Sri Lanka will hope that the truce will hold and that some political solution of the problem will be worked out so that there can be peace in this beautiful but unhappy country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that the winding-up speeches will begin at 11.50, so I appeal for brief contributions.

11.40 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The document on which we are to be asked to vote is the most disgraceful document. It should never have been brought before the House, and it is an unprecedented move to bring in visa requirements for people coming from Commonwealth countries. I object to the reasons why it was introduced, the methods by which it was introduced and its implications. If the Government can rush through, almost secretly, visa requirements for people from Sri Lanka, they can do it for the people of any other country at any other time that suits them, for their own expediency.

We have to look briefly through the events that led to the imposition of the visa requirements. After the riots in 1983 in Sri Lanka, many people came to this country to seek refuge and asylum here. In April 1984, the Minister agreed that he would grant temporary exceptional leave to Sri Lankan Tamils to remain here. That was not entirely satisfactory because it meant that theyhad no permanent solution to their problems. However, it meant that at least they were removed rom the fear of what might happen to them in Sri Lanka.

In May this year, the situation in Sri Lanka got worse, according to accounts from virtually every newspaper correspondent in Sri Lanka and the BBC world service. However, the British Government decided that things were improving in Sri Lanka, and decided to impose a visa restriction as the culmination of a series of rather sordid manoeuvres. On 20 May, the Home Secretary answered a written question from a Tory Member, in which he said: "there is no reason to believe that Tamils returning to Sri Lanka face persecution, and few Sri Lankan Tamils are likely to qualify for refugee status in this country."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1985; Vol. 79, c. *273*.]

In other words, he was denying the right of refugee status on the basis of information that he had received from I do not know where in Sri Lanka that the situation was improving. There was no evidence to support that.

A few days later, on a Friday evening of a bank holiday, the information reached my office and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South-West (Mr. Nellist) that we would in future have to give, within 24 hours, written reasons as to why we wished to place a stop on the removal of certain people back to Sri Lanka. There was no sign that the Home Secretary or the Minister had any plans to cancel their bank holiday weekend to remain in the Home Office to receive those letters or deal with those representations, or that they had intended to do anything other than put more staff in the Home Office to deal with the problem and place a great burden on Members of Parliament who represent constituencies such as mine, to which a large number of asylum seekers are likely to come. *[Interruption.]* Tory Members have obviously dined well this evening, and appear to find this amusing. I suggest that they go back to the Dining Room.

On the Wednesday of the week following the bank holiday, the Government imposed the visa restriction, but it is nearly two months later, in July, that we are getting around to debating this disgraceful and tawdry move. The position in Sri Lanka and the attitude of the British Government are the result of a long period of political isolation for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The constitutional

changes that have been pushed through, the systematic discrimination against Tamils that is practised in many parts of Sri Lanka and the large number of internal as well as external exiles show that the British Government ought to pay far more serious attention to this problem.

I am reminded of two points. First, Sri Lanka is a former British colony. There is a British defence pact with Sri Lanka. There was an exchange of letters in 1956 between the Government of Ceylon, as it then was, and the United States on a mutual defence treaty. Secondly, a considerable amount of British aid has been given to the Government of Sri Lanka. In April 1985, the Prime Minister visited Sri Lanka. Earlier in the year, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs informed the House, by means of a written answer to me, that he was concerned about human rights in Sri Lanka. When the Prime Minister went to Sri Lanka in April she had a discussion of some description with President Jayawardene and a month later entry restrictions to this country were imposed, culminating in the visa restrictions. We are entitled to know what the Prime Minister said to President Jayawardene and what he said to her. No answer has yet been given.

We are also entitled to know what representations the British Government have received from other European Governments and from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees about Sri Lanka. It is worth noting that Poul Hartling, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, after a lengthy meeting with the representatives of all members of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, went to considerable lengths to point out that European countries are very good at parading their liberal consciences around the world and in international forums but that when it comes to receiving refugees and asylum seekers their record leaves a great deal to be desired.

No Government leave more to be desired than the British Government in the European context. The smallest number of refugees and asylum seekers has been received, yet the Government allowed, or perhaps encouraged, a press "hype" in May of this year, when the Government's friendly paper, the *Daily Express*, headlined an article about a statement by the Home Secretary with these words:

"We will stop the Tamil 'flood ' vows Britain."

The *Dail Mail* said:

"Tamils facing a closed door"

over another article, prompted, no doubt, by a statement by the Home Secretary. The *Daily Mirror* said:

"No open door. Brittan warning race war runaways"

over the Home Secretary's warning on this matter. Finally, *The Sun* produced an editorial in which it quoted that well-known friend of the dispossessed around the world, the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

Mr. Nellist: Does my hon. Friend agree that his press quotations are in line with the opening speech of the Minister of State, Home Office, who referred to an overcrowded island and gave credence to the Prime Minister's remarks about this country being swamped with refugees? The Minister of State referred to economic refugees coming to this country to look for jobs, yet only 1,300 Tamils have applied for asylum in Britain, compared with 47,500 in Europe and 100,000 in India. Does my hon. Friend think that the Minister of State seriously believes that unemployment in Sri Lanka during the first three weeks in May increased six, 10, 15 or 20 times? That was the extent of the increase in the number of asylum seekers during that period of three weeks.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is right, and he has made a very good point. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's campaign for decent treatment for Tamil asylum seekers in this country, which is more than can be said for that mob opposite and the remarks that they made during his speech.

It is worth while recalling what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said when he opened this debate. He compared the attitude of the British Government towards people fleeing from the terror of attack in Sri Lanka with the way in which Polish refugees were treated some years ago.

During the bank holiday weekend, when much of the story became news, I had the opportunity of interviewing about 60 people who had arrived from Sri Lanka. They were all young and frightened and they had all come here in nothing more than the clothes in which they stood up. They were fleeing from terror and violence. *[Interruption.]* Tory Members might not understand that, but it is a fact. Those refugees should be treated humanely and not like shuttlecocks, in the way that the Government treated them.

At the same time as the British Government were deciding that the situation in Sri Lanka was becoming safer, Simon Winchester reported in the *Sunday Times* from Trincomalee, in the north-east of Sri Lanka, on the effect on one village of the arrival of the Sri Lankan army. He said:

"We found it, first, unexpectedly, at a small village called Tiriyai, 50 miles north of Trincomalee. It is a place named in the guidebook for its exquisite 7th-century Buddhist pagoda".

He went on to say that when he arrived he found that

"almost every single house had been wrecked and burned, and fewer than 100 people remained."

One elderly rice-grower explained what happened when the Sri Lankan army arrived by helicopter, firing guns, followed by the foot soldiers.

The plight that people have faced in Sri Lanka is terrible. It falls on the British Government not to allow a racist hype to take place in the media but to act as they should towards asylum seekers from wherever they come, at whatever time they come, and to give them the kind of treatment they deserve. The Government should not try to throw the housing burden on to local authorities as they are doing at present, or use immigration policy to throw refugees and asylum seekers out of the country.

I hope that the House will support the motion to revoke the changes in immigration rules, but I recognise that, in view of the support that the Minister has, the motion may be defeated. If so, I hope that the rules will not last long, and that we shall never again see this kind of nasty, tawdry legislation before the House.

11.52 pm

Mr. Waddington: I must make one matter plain at the outset. There is no question whatever of our not being prepared to honour our obligations under the UN convention on the treatment of refugees. That is not what we are talking about tonight. We are talking about whether there should be a visa requirement and whether, if a visa requirement is imposed, it will help us to deal with the present situation.

Before the introduction of the visa requirement, literally hundreds of people were arriving each day. After

[Mr. Waddington]

they arrived, their cases had to be examined to establish whether they qualified for refugee status under the convention, and a decision had to be made as to whether, even though they did not qualify for refugee status, they would suffer hardship if they were returned.

Surely, in those circumstances, it is far better that the claim of somebody to come here should be tested before he comes rather than after he has arrived. The only argument that has ever been advanced against this proposition is that these poor people would be frightened to turn up at high commission, that they would be unable to travel from Jaffna to Colombo in order to go to the high commission, that if they queued at the high commission they would be persecuted by the police, and so on. That has all turned out to be nonsense, as can be shown by the number of Tamil applications processed at our high commission and the number of Tamil applications which have been granted, by what happened when Mr. Raveenthiran went back to Sri Lanka, and by what happened on the day referred to by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). Rumour has been rife, but most of the rumours have not been true.

The new system that has been set up is working satisfactorily. No one can say that Tamils are not having their applications dealt with properly in our high commission in Colombo.

I agree with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) that it is sad to introduce a visa requirement for the first time, but it is working well. When things return to normality, the possibility of removing the visa requirement can be considered. In the meantime, no one has begun to establish that anybody with a justified claim to refugee status or to be here because of exceptional hardship is not having his case looked at properly.

11.55 pm

Sir Russell Johnston: By leave of the House. The Minister has not made a persuasive argument. He said that the visa requirement had been applied with reluctance; it was certainly applied with celerity.

The Minister said—*[Interruption.]* It is appalling that some Conservative Members have complete disregard for a serious human rights matter. The Minister said that his reaction when faced with a surge of refugees was not that he had to do something about it quickly, but was, "How can this be stopped?"

When mention was made of statistics from other countries the Minister, who admitted their accuracy, said, "That was forced on them". What would he have done if it had not been forced on them? What is the relevance of our being a signatory to the United Nations declaration?

The Government should give a categorical assurance that no one will be sent back against his will.

Miss Boothroyd: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 323.

Division No. 289] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*

Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*

Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. John Major.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that for nearly seven weeks now on each working day of Parliament there has been a Notice of Motion in my name on the remaining Orders of the Day opposing the order which has just been passed by a vote in this place. As it is Labour Members who have to deal with most of the effects of the order that has been passed, I wish to give you notice, Mr. Speaker, that the matter, despite the vote, does not rest there.

Mr. Speaker: As long as that is not a personal threat, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Orders of the Day

Child Abduction and Custody Bill *[Lords]*

As amended, in the Standing Committee, considered.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Lord Chancellor (Salary)

Mr. Speaker: Before we debate the order, I remind the House that the scope of the debate is on the reasons for and the merit of increasing the maximum salary payable to the Lord Chancellor to the extent specified. I appreciate that there may be a desire to debate wider issues and I remind the House that there will be the opportunity to do so tomorrow on the Adjournment motion and, by good fortune, on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

12.15 am

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That the draft Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 18th of July, be approved.

The House will recall that a similar order was debated on 20 July last year. On that occasion the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and I were the only Members to comment on the Lord Chancellor's salary. This evening I note the mood is somewhat different. I am, of course, aware that interest is not confined to this single order, and I shall seek to refer to the wider issues raised by the Top Salaries Review Body recommendations, having regard, Mr. Speaker, to your ruling. However, I should first like to comment upon the important but relatively new issue contained in the order.

The order arises from the link between the salary of the Lord Chief Justice and that of the Lord Chancellor. In May 1983 the TSRB recommended for the first time that the Lord Chancellor should be paid rather more than the Lord Chief Justice. This was to recognise his pre-eminent position in the judiciary. The principle of this recommendation was accepted by the Government. It was proposed that the Lord Chancellor should be paid £2,000 per year more than the Lord Chief Justice. This proposal was contained in the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1983 which was approved by the House on 26 July of that year without a Division.

The arrangements approved then mean that, whenever Government acceptance of TSRB recommendations causes a change in the salary of the Lord Chief Justice, a new Order in Council is required to alter the Lord Chancellor's salary accordingly. This order provides for the Lord Chancellor to be paid an annual salary of £71,500 from 31 July 1985 until 28 February 1986; and an annual salary of £77,000 for any subsequent period. These two stages reflect the Government's proposals to phase implementation of the recommended increase for the Lord Chief Justice, which of course is an increase set in the context of the wider TSRB recommendation for some 1,900 most senior members of the public sector.

I turn to the wider issues of the TSRB recommendation which have occasioned the order.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): Will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the salary paid to the Lord Chancellor means that he has some means of appointing the Lord Chief Justice? How is the Lord Chief Justice appointed.

Mr. Biffen: By the Prime Minister.

The TSRB's recommendations extend beyond the judiciary to include the salaries of a limited number of senior civil servants and senior members of the armed forces. Furthermore, for this year the TSRB report departed from the more normal practice and instituted a

comprehensive review which considered not only salary levels, but also structures. It commissioned Hay-MSL management consultants to report on the pay of senior open structure civil servants and senior officers in the armed forces. In addition, the Office of Manpower Economics carried out a survey of remuneration in the private sector at levels of responsibility broadly corresponding to senior levels in the Civil Service and the armed forces. The Office of Manpower Economics also undertook a survey of earnings at the Bar.

Thus, in producing its recommendations, the review body took into account such evidence as it could on recruitment, retention, motivation and morale, as well as the rewards available at comparable levels of responsibility in other walks of life. Bearing these factors in mind, the TSRB recommended substantial salary increases and widening of differentials among the members of these groups. Implementing its recommendations would increase the pay bill in a full year by 12·2 per cent. for senior civil servants, by 17·6 per cent. for senior members of the armed forces and by 16·3 per cent. for the judiciary; or, taking the groups together, an overall increase of the order of 15 per cent.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Does not the Leader of the House consider it hypocritical of his Government to offer 30, 40 and 50 per cent. rises in the pay of a few senior civil servants, judges, generals and other members of the armed forces and, within 24 hours, to argue that youngsters on £29·71 in their first few months of training in hairdressing are getting too much and are pricing themselves out of jobs?

Mr. Biffen: No, I do not regard the stance that the Government have adopted as hypocritical.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Judges do not need hairdressers; they wear wigs.

Mr. Biffen: It is one of measured realism, given the very difficult task that the Government have had to discharge.

The TSRB did not suggest that there were imminent substantial resignations among those covered by the report. It believed, however, that problems were developing for the medium term. Paragraph 47 of the report indicates that those in the public service with the potential to reach the senior posts were increasingly seeking jobs elsewhere with better financial prospects. This was a major factor in persuading the TSRB to make recommendations to provide rewards in keeping with the responsibilities undertaken.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): If it is part of the Government's case that it is difficult to recruit the necessary judges and generals, is he seriously telling the House that it would be very difficult for the Government to recruit another Lord Chancellor? Surely that is the ultimate in ludicrous comment.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman is setting his own standards for ludicrous comment. It is clear that the Lord Chancellor's position is related entirely to that of the Lord Chief Justice. The main burden of the report is that it is the view of the Top Salaries Review Body that, unless action is taken by the revision in pay structures that it suggests, there is a danger that ultimately the standards will decline.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend help me about the head of the judiciary? I was under the impression that the Lord Chancellor was appointed, or dis-appointed, on the advice of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as a party politician. I thought that a Lord Chancellor came and went with the Government in office. Stripping away the wig and the fine gown, is he not a politician like the rest of us? Why is the Lord Chancellor of England suddenly ceasing to be a politician and becoming a judge? He is either one or the other.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend takes a rather more severe view of Lord Chancellors than I do. I say in all seriousness that, if anyone supposes that the Lord Chancellor is just another politician, he simply fails to understand the nature of our forms of government.

The Government agree in principle. There is no popular way of awarding pay increases to top earners in the public sector. Even so, the Government do not believe that they can disregard the evidence, conclusions and recommendations of the TSRB report. Such a course would be detrimental to the ultimate performance of the public service.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): In saying that the Government are more or less obliged to accept the Top Salaries Review Body's report, will the right hon. Gentleman cast his mind back to an occasion when the Government decided not to implement a TSRB report? He said in 1983:

> "We have still to make our own political judgment about an issue sensitive in its economic and social consequences . . . I reiterate that we have to make our personal and political judgment on this issue. It is redolent with economic implications far greater than the actual sums involved."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1983; Vol. 46, c. 271.]

Is not that the case on this issue?

Mr. Biffen: That can certainly be argued. I remember that occasion very well. The House decided to arrive at a formula for the pay of Members of Parliament, having regard to ultimate linkage with the Civil Service, which reached a conclusion not far different from that recommended by Lord Plowden.

Our proposal is to phase the implementation of the increases within the year. Almost all of those concerned will receive half of the recommended increase, with a minimum of 5 per cent. from 1 July 1985. The balance will be received with effect from 1 March 1986.

These increases have been contrasted with our treatment of doctors and nurses. I remind the House how we have acted in response to other review body reports. The recommendations of the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body have been fully implemented since 1 June. The first stage of implementing the reports of the Review Body for Nursing Staff took effect from 1 April. The balance of the recommended increases will be paid on 1 February 1986. We accepted those review body recommendations for pay increases and revision of salary structures, as we have now accepted the recommendations of the TSRB.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the Government have been insensitive in deciding to implement the TSRB proposals so soon after accepting those lower pay increases recommended by other review bodies for doctors and nurses and while no settlement has been reached for teachers' pay.

[Mr. Biffen]

There are two points that I should make here. The first is that in July, in respect of teachers' pay, we undertook to make more resources available if an acceptable agreement could be reached on teachers' duties and career structures. There is now no prospect of reaching such an agreement which could be implemented and financed this year. Secondly, if an acceptable agreement can be reached by October 1985, additional resources will still be made available for 1986-87.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Leader of the House has referred in some detail to the requirements that have been requested of the teachers to justify an enhanced award. The Secretary of State for Education and Science, at Question Time today, used a slightly different term. He talked of flexibility. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House what flexibility we can expect from field marshals, High Court judges and top civil servants?

Mr. Biffen: I believe that they will discharge their duties as senior public servants without meriting a lot of the snide comments that are now being made. There is an earnest desire on these Benches to see a speedy——

Mr. Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My request for details of flexibility on the part of field marshals was in no way——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman on that.

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps we both have that difficulty, Mr. Speaker.

More generally, it is inevitable that the TSRB recommendations will be taken into account in a range of public sector negotiations, at whatever time the announcement is made. I have to say that I do not believe that our decisions would have been any less contentious if we had delayed announcing them until the return of Parliament in the autumn or until some point in the summer recess. There is never a right time to increase the salaries of those who earn most in the public service. The central challenge is the decision itself; it cannot be willed away by subtle timing.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when someone is reluctant to become Lord Chancellor, an admiral or field marshal because of the current pay scales? Is there not plenty of evidence, however, to show that people are leaving the teaching profession simply because they cannot afford to be teachers? Schools and the community are losing dedicated people who are fed up with being paid inadequately.

Mr. Biffen: The problem of recruitment and retention of those in the senior public sector posts is described in paragraph 47 of the report, which I commend to the hon. Gentleman.

There has also been considerable opposition from those who want a public sector which does not admit senior positions carrying substantial salaries. Opposition Members delight in playing the populist card of equality. But confronted with the challenge of authority and the responsibility of government, we know that the Labour party behaves differently. In December 1974 the Labour Government accepted to be paid in two stages the TSRB recommendations for an average increase for senior civil servants, senior members of the armed forces and the judiciary of more than 28 per cent.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Should we not cut the hypocritical cackle? Are we not agreeing to a gravy train for the rich and nothing for the rest?

Mr. Biffen: I thought that the hon. Gentleman gave an almost knee-jerk reaction, as he rose to his feet as a member of a print union, when he heard of a pay increase of 28 per cent.

Again, on 4 July 1978, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) announced the Government's acceptance of an average 35 per cent. pay increase for these groups. That increase was staged as the TSRB recommended—the Government merely accepted its proposal. The recommended salaries were adopted in full for pension purposes from 1 April 1978.

The written answer in which these Government decisions were announced cuts through the bombast and moralising that we have heard these past five days. It shows the reality which any future Labour Government would have to recognise no less than their predecessors.

Although my speech has ranged over the issues raised by the TSRB report, in concluding I should remind the House that Government have already taken their view on the report. This evening, one specific issue requires our approval—the Lord Chancellor's salary. In 1983 there was no Division on this. Last year, only 14 Members voted against it. I realise an Opposition captive to populist passion will turn turtle this evening. The House should not heed such opportunism. I commend to my hon. Friends the order and the policy that sustains it.

12.32 am

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Why the House is so full at this time of night and why the issue raised in this order is so explosive is really plain to everyone—except, perhaps, Cabinet Ministers. What the country wants to know is why the Government, officially pursuing a 3 per cent. per annum public sector pay policy, reluctantly forced to concede 5·6 per cent. to the nurses and still stubbornly resisting 6 per cent. plus for the teachers, are happy to concede much higher increases—16·6 per cent. for the Lord Chancellor—to those at the highest level in the public service.

Why, people are asking, should stringency and restraint apply to those on average and below-average earnings and generosity and open-handedness be shown to those who are already among the highest paid in the land? Several reasons have been advanced both by the Leader of the House in his speech and earlier by the Prime Minister in her exchange with my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) in the House this afternoon.

Let me run over the arguments that have been advanced and say straight away that none of them stand up to serious scrutiny. First, as the Leader of the House said, the Lord Chancellor's salary — currently £66,000 per annum — must rise to £77,000 per annum from 1 March 1986 because the Lord Chief Justice will be receiving £75,000 per annum at that date. The Lord Chancellor has to be £2,000 per annum better off than the Lord Chief Justice. Such a differential may have become a convention, but it is certainly not mandatory upon the Government to accept

it. Even if it was, it merely calls into question why the Lord Chief Justice should be elevated from his present £64,000 per annum to £75,000 on 1 March 1986.

The second reason advanced, to use the language familiar to all those who have listened to recent speeches of the Secretary of State for Education and Science, is that such increases are claimed to be necessary to retain, recruit and motivate if not the teachers, then the Lord Chancellor and those at the highest level of the public service. To those who know the Lord Chancellor, not to mention the aspirants to his post, such an assertion can only be described as ludicrous.

Thirdly, it is argued that the Government are bound by the recommendations of the independent Top Salaries Review Body, which was set up specifically to make recommendations in this difficult area. That argument has a little force, but independent review is precisely what the teachers have been asking for and what they have been denied. As hon. Members know very well from their own experience, in June 1983, the same independent review body recommended a salary of £19,000 for Members of Parliament. The Government rejected that recommendation, and only after considerable controversy, agreed to stage the pay of Members of Parliament over four and a half years.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that at the time of that pay review, many Members of Parliament thought that a 31 per cent. increase was quite obscene against a background of asking the nation to tighten its belt? For the sake of increasing the salaries of the Lord Chancellor and other top people, are not we running the risk of putting ourselves in exactly the same position that we fought against previously?

Mr. Shore: The only thing I am sure of is that the hon. Gentleman will be joining us in the Division Lobby later tonight.

Next there is the assertion—trotted out last Friday by the Lord Privy Seal and the Chief Secretary and today by the Prime Minister — that in 1978 the last Labour Government accepted a pay increase for the senior levels of the public service of some 35 per cent. I have two comments. First, the 1978 award was staged not over nine months but over two years and three months. If the Government wish to align themselves with the practice of the last Labour Government, and stage the proposed increases over the next two and a quarter years, we and the nation might take a somewhat less hostile view of what is being proposed.

The second point, which this comparison with 1978 omits, is the fact that, whereas top people in the public service during the five years of the last Labour Government had pay increases that fell substantially short of both increases in the cost of living and average earnings, since May 1979, when the present Government took over, they will by 1 March 1986 have received no less than a 246 per cent. increase in the case of the Lord Chancellor, a 132 per cent. increase in the case of permanent secretaries, and a 128 per cent. in the case of the Lord Chief Justice, compared with the cost of living increase of approximately 80 per cent. and increases in average earnings of approximately 95 per cent. What a contrast!

The last reason for this increase that could be advanced —interestingly, it has not been, although in my view it is the only one that carries any weight—is the state of morale and motivation of the Civil Service, so severely damaged by six years of Conservative rule. The report of the Top Salaries Review Body stated:

"the picture we have formed is a highly disturbing one. Morale in the Civil Service, if not commitment and motivation, appears to be at an exceptionally low ebb and this impression has been confirmed by individuals with long and wide experience of the Civil Service".

The reason why morale is so low, according to the report, is that,

"in contrast with those in industry and commerce, seen as the wealth producing part of the economy, many Civil Servants although personally convinced of the value of the jobs they perform in the public service, have come increasingly to feel that they are regarded as in some sense parasitic. It is felt, rightly or wrongly, that the Civil Service has declined in public and ministerial esteem and it is seen by many as offering a markedly less worthwhile career than hitherto."

That is correct. The way to solve that problem is not through a massive increase in top public service pay but through a fundamental change in the attitudes of Ministers towards the public services, and if that change is to take place, it must begin with the Prime Minister.

Those who may still be in doubt about the wisdom of the order and the generality of pay increases in the higher judiciary, to which the Lord Chancellor's salary is linked, may like to be reminded of some words of the Lord Chancellor when he addressed the Common Law Bar Association in London as recently as 3 July of this year. The *Daily Telegraph* reported:

"To those who claimed that the level of earnings at the Bar was so high that the best candidates did not make themselves available for appointment as judges, he replied that it was, in general, false . . . 'It is rare indeed for a High Court judgeship to be declined, and not many refuse the circuit bench'."

The Lord Chancellor went on, according to the report, to say that he regarded judicial work as the

"real crown of a legal career for the absence of which money alone cannot compensate."

Judicial work was

"a privilege, a pleasure and a duty"

and was

"one of the highest forms of public service."

It conferred not only status and prestige, but the opportunity to serve the country, one's fellow man and the "glorious heritage we have received from our predecessors."

I agree with the noble and learned Lord. His words apply not only to his own post as Lord Chancellor and to the higher judiciary but to the top echelons in the Civil Service and the armed forces. In a period of general public sector pay stringency, it is wrong and provocative to give those at the top so generous a settlement.

Taking the decisions of the last few weeks together, it must appear to the nation that the Government have three separate and contradictory pay policies according to people's levels of pay. For those on the lowest pay, the incentive to work seems to be to pay them less. That is why only last week the Government removed the protection of the wages councils from the under-21s. For those on middle incomes, such as teachers and people in the community services, pay must be held at levels that barely keep pace with, and preferably fall below, the cost of living. But for those at the top, the only incentive that appears to matter is more pay.

Those are mutually inconsistent and contradictory policies. They are rejected by the great bulk of the nation, and the House should tonight reject this instrument because it symbolises an unacceptable policy which will have to be changed.

12.43 am

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): Criticism of the order takes three main forms. They are that the timing of the announcement was inappropriate, that the presentation of the announcement was poor, and that the award was unjustifiable in itself or when compared with other groups. I shall examine each of those criticisms.

First, there is the point about timing. Some of my hon. Friends have argued that the report should have been delayed. Yet the report had already been with Ministers for a month. When would they have had it announced? Would they have preferred it to have been announced during the recess? If so, do they have any regard for the role that hon. Members play in this place? Or perhaps they would have preferred it to have been delayed until the next parliamentary Session and the beginning of the next annual pay round. What would have been gained by that? There is only one appropriate time at which to make this announcement, and that is never, and never is not an option open to us.

Secondly, there is the point about presentation. Perhaps we should have reiterated that there are now 130,000 fewer civil servants than there were in 1978. That means an annual saving on the salary bill of £750 million, compared with the cost of this award of £9 million. Perhaps also we should have stressed that there are now 20 per cent. fewer civil servants covered by the report than there were in 1979, and that the award was more than justified on productivity grounds. Perhaps we should have repeated this more eloquently and loudly than I have been able to.

I doubt whether, even if we had done all this, it would have had any significant effect. The announcement that the Government had to make, that people who are already highly paid deserve to be paid more, is unpopular, and the most difficult announcement that any Government have to make. The Labour Government found the same problem in 1978, and we find the same problem when we have to tell the nation of our pay rises. There is never a sensible time to make an announcement such as this.

The last argument is that the awards were unjustifiable in themselves when compared with other groups. The comparison with other groups is dealt with in the Plowden report. If strict comparison with the private sector had been recommended by it, the increases would have been far larger than they have been. If the comparison is made with different groups such as teachers, we are comparing apples with oranges and looking at completely different issues.

We have now to make a judgment on the report. Are the awards justified in themselves? Some civil servants run enterprises that, in size and complexity, dwarf businesses such as Sainsbury's and British Aerospace. Is it wrong that civil servants should be paid two thirds of private sector salaries for doing comparable jobs? Terry Wogan is said to be paid £350,000 a year by the public sector—the BBC. Does the Lord Chancellor deserve only one fifth of that amount? He deserves all that and more.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that his argument is undermined by the fact that the Lord Chancellor has made it clear that he does not want the increase? Is it not adding insult to injury?

Mr. Eggar: My noble Friend the Lord Chancellor has said that he expects that any successor of his should be free to, and would, take up the award. What is more, he has said clearly that he supports the award for the judiciary. In everything that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, in all the debate and discussion in the media, I have not heard a serious attempt to challenge the analysis of the Plowden report. Plowden's case is unanswered and unanswerable.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Two years ago, the House agreed that Members of Parliament should set an example to the nation and should accept less than the Top Salaries Review Body said that we should take. Are not these top people also in a position to set an example to the nation and receive less than the award? What is the difference between Members of Parliament and these top people?

Mr. Eggar The difference is that hon. Members set, and vote on, their own salaries. In 1971 this House set up a review body. Governments of both parties have consistently accepted its recommendations on civil servants, the judiciary and the military. We should be making a grave mistake if we deviated from that path. It would create difficulties not only for this Government but for future Governments.

The case that Plowden makes is unanswered and is unanswerable. In their heart of hearts, all hon. Members know that. We have lost our sense of perspective. We have been influenced by envy and hypocrisy. Let us cut out —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not have to fight like this to be heard.

Mr. Eggar: Let us cut out the humbug and give to public servants the reward that they deserve. Let us return to doing that which we do best: securing our economic prosperity. That is our task in this House.

12.51 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am sure that the Conservative party has orders of gallantry into which the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) might naturally fit. I hope that before any such order is awarded a vote will be taken in the 1922 Committee so that we can establish whether his gallant efforts meet with general support.

The Leader of the House was right to say that this occasion differs slightly from the last occasion upon which we considered the salary of the Lord Chancellor. Only 14 hon. Members voted against the granting of his salary, seven of whom came from the Labour party. It was a thin night. Nevertheless, it was memorable because the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) was pressed into service as a teller on the Government side to count the votes in favour of the salary that his father quite rightly said he did not need and would not accept. I hope that tonight he will be spared that unfair obligation.

However, it reminds us that there is an element of absurdity about a discussion of top salaries when it is applied to the salary of the Lord Chancellor. Nobody can claim that, worthy as he is, he is irreplaceable or that for many years there has not been a queue of people waiting to take the post. I can remember the time when at last we got rid of the old legal limitation that the Lord Chancellor could not be a Roman Catholic. There were candidates, even then, for the post and the queue has grown longer ever since.

Nor can it be suggested, as seemed to be implied in the Lord Chancellor's comments, that although he does not need it a future Lord Chancellor may need the money. I can conceive of no Government made up of Conservative Members, or even of Opposition Members, who would appoint a Lord Chancellor who needed the money. When that day comes, the revolution will really have arrived.

On a number of occasions we have heard the argument that the timing is wrong. The Leader of the House was right to dismiss it. The argument about timing reminds me that there were those who argued that it was Mr. Arthur Scargill's bad timing that influenced the result of the Brecon and Radnor by-election; had he made his comments a few days later the effect would not have been the same. This is an argument not about timing but about the substance of the issue. The Government's public sector pay policy is wrong. It would not be argued that this public sector pay policy is wrong if the characteristics of this order bore the marks of the Government's public sector pay policy. For example, comparability—a key feature of the proposals—is wholly absent from the discussion of the position of many groups in the public sector, including the nurses, teachers, and university lecturers, many of whom have moved into highly paid jobs in other areas.

Motivation, morale and recruitment are indeed relevant factors in the assessment of pay, but again they are not applied to the nurses or to the teaching profession. Here we have an independent review body with its proposals fully implemented and fully funded. It is a major decision for the Government to take, but it is taken so selectively that it applies only to the pay of top people, including the Lord Chancellor, and not to the nurses.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the number of people involved and on the total cost of the award? Will he agree that that is relevant if he is seeking to make comparisons with other groups which are far greater in number? If a similar award were made to them, it would cost vastly more.

Mr. Beith: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the words of the Leader of the House when he said:

> "It is redolent with economic implications far greater than the actual sums involved."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1983; Vol. 646, c. 271.]

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the issue is confined to the small number of people and the amount of money involved, he misunderstands the mood of the people. They know an injustice when they see one.

I was dealing with the aspects of pay policy which have been applied to this decision and which have been keenly but unsuccessfully sought by people in other areas of the public sector. There has been no staging or delaying of the recommended award. Many groups of people would like that principle to be applied to them. It is conceded in this case but not to them. There is to be no decline in the real living standards of those affected. That has not been the lot of many groups within the public sector.

The groups at the lower end of the public sector who have seen their living standards decline are the very ones who also feel the weight of the tax burden. The people who will gain the benefit of these increases are in that small group which is substantially better off, in terms of the impact of tax on take-home pay, than any other group in society. It has been at the highest level that the impact of the Government's taxation policy has been felt beneficially.

The decision will be seen by many people as showing that there is one law for those at the top and another for those at the bottom. That is why we have argued for a single public sector pay review body. If principles are to be applied to public sector pay, they have to be applied across the board. If the Government cannot afford to apply those principles, they must clearly say so, but they cannot just dodge around the public sector and apply the principles in one area and not in others. Such a public pay body should pick out those fairly rare cases where it can manifestly be shown that recruitment or retention of key people is being made impossible. No one can say that of the Lord Chancellor. It is not true of him or of a number of the people in the wider group to which the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body apply.

The Government have done nothing to arm themselves against the charge that they have two pay policies, one for those at the top and one for those at the bottom, and that charge will stick. It is the decision, not the timing, that I and my right hon. and hon. Friends challenge, but the timing has its own particular story to tell.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why he now finds these recommendations so unacceptable? When he was a member of the Lib-Lab pact, he was content to see approved rises which were three times as high as the rises now recommended. If he cannot deal with that question, he lays himself and his hon. Friends open to a charge of complete hypocrisy.

Mr. Beith: Those rises were applied to people who had suffered a decline in their real incomes, and they applied in the context of a general pay policy. The hon. Gentleman is forgetting, for example, that it came after a period when there had been a percentage plus £6 a week pay policy. There were several genuine attempts by the Government led by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) to improve the position of those at the bottom of the public service pay scales. There was also a different taxation climate at that time. We supported the Labour Government because they were making a genuine attempt to tackle public service pay across the board and to do something about private sector pay at the same time. The present Government's failure to address that side of the issue is a sign of how they have failed.

The Government clearly did not expect the response that their decision received. I do not think that anyone will argue with that fact; certainly, not many Conservative Members will argue with it. The Government were taken by surprise because they did not recognise the depth of public sympathy for the other groups involved — the nurses, the teachers and young people in wages council industries. The Government do not understand that they are already perceived as an Administration who want to assist those who are already getting a handsome reward for their work.

The Leader of the House said that we still have to make our own political judgment about an issue that is sensitive in its economic and social consequences. Let us, as a House, make our own political judgment and defeat the order.

1.1 am

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): It is late, it is July and I wish to be brief, so I hope that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) will forgive me if I do not take up his arguments. To save time, I say at the start that the Government were right to accept the reports of the TSRB and were right to phase them, and it is right that we should approve them.

As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House reminded us, the Government's record in accepting pay review body reports is a good one, and so it should be. It would have required a more special argument than the Opposition have put forward for us not to accept this report. The principal aim of the Opposition seems to have been to obscure their responsibility for the events of 1978, and I can understand that that desire is shared by the heroes of the Lib-Lab pact who survive on the Opposition Benches and other believers in a statutory incomes policy.

Although this is a difficult matter—I expect that we shall have a heated debate—I do not accept that there is any truth or justice in some of the criticisms levelled against the Government. The parallel that some critics inside and outside the House have tried to draw between this decision and the teachers' dispute is not accurate.

The blame for the absence of a settlement in the teachers' dispute rests squarely on the leadership of the NUT which cynically insisted on going for a flat-rate increase all round, irrespective of merit or performance. But for that, we should be deep in discussion about how we could reallocate resources for teachers' pay to reward merit and restructure the profession in a way that would be of great advantage to the nation's children, their parents and everyone else. It is not the Government's fault that we are not in that position.

I do not believe that any arguments drawn from the teachers' dispute would have justified the Government in taking a different decision on the TSRB report. As for the timing of the decision, one of my hon. Friends has already said that there is never a good time for such decisions. However, if the Government will allow me to offer a constructive criticism, I believe that there may be scope for improvement in the presentation of such decisions. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members will allow me to develop the argument, I shall explain why many of my hon. Friends agree with that proposition.

We may be accused of having the advantage of hindsight, but perhaps there was room for more foresight. If the Government had chosen to make an oral statement, instead of a written reply, there would have been much less opportunity for the selective reporting and deliberate misrepresentation of the Opposition which has caused so much annoyance to so many people outside.

If a Government are generous enough to give their opponents half a day's start, it is not surprising that they should find themselves at a disadvantage in putting across their side of the argument. I think that it was the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) who said that a lie could get halfway round the world before the truth had got its boots on.

Leaving party politics aside, I do not believe that such a situation is in the interests of the nation. However comforting the Opposition find the precedents, we should look for a better way of presenting such decisions so that they are more generally understood. We shall thereby promote the debate on the real issues. One issue concerns how we can improve the performance of the Civil Service if, in addition to adequately rewarding its top members, we look at the structure down the line so that, in the Civil Service as in the armed forces, there is a greater shake-out and inducement to achieve efficient performance.

Whatever the faults in the presentation of the order, they could not possibly justify a rejection of the decision for which the Government ask us. I hope that my colleagues share my view and that they will join me in the Division Lobby in support of it.

1.5 am

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I shall make a few brief points, because many hon. Members want to participate in this debate.

My right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal referred to "populist" pandering. Why is it "populist" pandering to listen to people outside the House? They put us here in the first place, and they can put us out. We should be sensitive to people who bother to ring us. We should be sensitive also to the feelings of those who have been loyal to one's party for 30 or 40 years who speak not from a sense of outrage but from genuine sadness because a party which they thought was on the right lines suddenly does something which, according to a natural sense of justice, seems to be wrong.

Whether it is right or wrong that the Lord Chancellor needs £77,000 a year or £177,000 a year is not really the point. The point is that the Government's main strategy —on inflation—is right. I have received letter after letter from teachers, as have many other hon. Members. I have written back robustly, not pandering to populism, saying, "I believe that you deserve more, but the country cannot afford more because inflation is the important battle." What do we say to those people now when the Secretary to the Cabinet is given a £25,000 a year increase? This must be wrong. There must be logic in what we do. If we cannot carry the people with us, where will it end?

People say, "Remember 1978." I say to those who remember 1978, "Remember 1979." I would say to any Government in the most friendly way, "Unless you can put forward decisions that will stand up to a natural sense of justice, things can turn." I believe that most people accept that the policies that we put to the country as right are right, even though they are painful. We may say to 100 people, "You are to be the exception, because it will cost only £4 million after tax." It does not matter what the sum is—it could be £40,000 or £400,000 after tax, and it is. If we are talking about only one salary, can any of us justify saying to the people who should have more and to whom we cannot afford to pay more, "Is it right to go ahead"?

How many people have ever been sacked from the Civil Service? How many bad mistakes have been made? How many civil servants have gone because of De Lorean? I know where the civil servants will go. They will either go to the other place or get a KCMG—"kindly call me God"—and an inflation-proofed pension. If we are to have a just society and to compare civil servants with business men, let a few of them be sacked when they go wrong as business men are. But the House knows that not one of them ever has been or will be.

It is wrong to do this for the Lord Chancellor, and it was wrong to do it for senior civil servants. The increase should have been phased in over four years, if it needed

to be done at all. No one would leave. Paul Volker of the Federal Reserve Bank in America, for example, receives $75,000 a year. He would not leave that job for $1 million elsewhere. There is something about service, power and influence that cannot be bought. If we are to say that everybody can be bought and has a price, however high, what price public life then?

1.10 am

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark). On this occasion, as on many others, the Government have made the right decision. It is a difficult decision—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the House wants to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

Mr. Marlow: It is a courageous decision because the issue of top salary reviews is always shrouded in a fog of arithmetic illiteracy—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), who spoke against the motion, was heard in silence. I ask the House to pay equal courtesy to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who speaks in favour of it.

Mr. Marlow: If, cumulatively, over a period of years, the cost of living doubles, for some obscure reason it is thought moral and right for the £4,000 a year man to get £8,000 a year, but insensitive and damaging for his more successful fellow citizen on 25 grand to get 50 grand.

I shall put three points to those who oppose the rise. First, to give a fairly random example, a major-general who in 1970 received three times the sum of a newly promoted captain will receive only two and three quarters the sum after the increase. Secondly, do we believe in the erosion of the differentials of the most important and successful people in the country? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] The Conservative party does not. In the past 10 years that I have researched, and I dare say for longer, the reviews and the phasing that goes with them have always been accepted by the party in power. What is so different about this review? What do the Opposition find wrong with this review, which was right with the reviews that they supported in the past?

Thirdly, Labour Members, to whom counting the peas on their neighbours' plate is not only their motivation but their way of life, should take note of the fact that behind the Iron Curtain, in that Nirvana, the People's Socialist Republic of Bulgaria——

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I shall not give way. Highly paid comrades in Bulgaria receive more than 10 times the number of leva of their low-paid Socialist brothers. Is that what Opposition Members want? The teachers are currently——

Mr. Franks *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Speaker: I have not yet heard the hon. Gentleman mention the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Marlow: When my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House introduced the debate he suggested that he wanted to extend it beyond the Lord Chancellor to all those who will be affected by the Government's decision. We have been told that one of the groups of citizens that are concerned about the issue are the teachers.

Mr. Speaker: It is fair enough to draw an analogy with the teachers' dispute, but the hon. Gentleman must deal with the order. As I said before the debate began, the House must deal with the Lord Chancellor's salary.

Mr. Marlow: As far as the salary review of the Lord Chancellor and the others are concerned, this is a different decision, but it is the correct one. The decision has been made and the more it is attacked by a few of my hon. Friends the more it will appear to be a bad decision—*[Interruption.]* We believe in differentials and we believe in rewards for those who deserve them. We believe as other Governments have believed, that when pay review bodies have researched, considered and produced their decisions, their reports should be implemented. Other groups are not in the same position. Others have been offered fair deals and the deal that we are considering is fair and should be accepted.

1.18 am

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly on the pay increase for the Lord Chancellor. I intend to vote against the proposal on principle and not because of the timing.

I firmly support the tight control of public expenditure and the idea of reducing direct taxation on wealth created in the United Kingdom, without which we would have no money to spend and no jobs for anyone. We are discussing specifically the career structure of the legal profession, but in addition the pay review body's report extends to the Civil Service and the armed forces.

When young people embark on a career, they may consider money and earnings, but there will be other considerations during their career, including job satisfaction, professional pride, companionship, achievement and the acquisition of skills. It is no coincidence that the two careers that are being considered alongside that of members of the judiciary and the Lord Chancellor contains the word "service" or "services". These are the Civil Service and the armed services. The history and tradition of our Civil Service are well known to the House and I do not need to speak at length about it. My experience of the armed services has convinced me that pride in one's job, high standards, high morale, integrity and honour are not necessarily related to commercial or money considerations.

In short, the arguments for large increases, especially at the pinnacle of the career structure in the Civil Service, do not stand up. Comparability has been discredited ever since the day of Clegg. Morale, retention and motivation depend as much on atmosphere, leadership and man management as on money. In any case, when the nation is crying out for more qualified engineers in industry, more physics teachers in our schools and a higher standard in middle management, how can we argue a special case for a small group in our society?

The Government case fails because it is unfair, indefensible and out of line with declared Government policy which I have supported and will continue to support. Worst of all, it sets a poor example at a time when we in the House and in the constituencies are preaching

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

restraint in pay bargaining. I see this as a tussle not between Members of the House but between Westminster and Whitehall. I hope that the common sense of practical politicians will override the sophisticated but misguided advice that we are getting from Whitehall. At the same time, I hope we have the sense to abolish this review body once and for all.

1.21 am

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I have always been against independent pay review bodies, royal commissions and all other forms of sanctimonious wisdom. Having read with great care the report out of which arises the motion we are considering, I have no reason to revise my opinion of all such forms of sanctimonious wisdom. From beginning to end the arguments are cogent, expensively arrived at, and wrong. It dismays me only that a royal commission did not arrive at the decisions, because it could have spent more and taken longer.

The report suggests that the office of Mr. Speaker, far less that of the Lord Chancellor, who, I understand, is Mr. Speaker in another place, is bereft of aspirants. The salary is the sole taunt to prevent the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) from succeeding to it, or even, God help us, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), whose income would drop if he were to aspire to that office. I cannot speak for the judiciary in England, but I know of very few senior counsel who are not ambitious to reach the bench.

The arguments contained in the document are false, as are all theoretical arguments by bodies of people surrounded by civil servants who eventually make reports with Command numbers on them. But that does not alter the argument that those who are in the highest jobs in the land should receive appropriate salaries for those jobs. That is the fudge which makes it so difficult for Opposition Members to agree, unless they apply to themselves, that salaries should be excellent.

I have not heard any Opposition Member object to the fact that in London, in the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, a 15-year-old tennis player who did not even win a game was getting more than £1 million. I have not heard anyone object to the fact that a young girl running without shoes is getting more than £1 million. Yet there is this enormous resentment that the top people in the country who happen to be paid by the Crown——

Mr. Canavan: By the people.

Mr. Fairbairn: —should be paid salaries commensurate with the dignity of the offices to which they are appointed.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Ask the unemployed.

Mr. Fairbairn: Ask the unemployed about Zola Budd, about the Beatles or about any of these types of people with high salaries, and there is no resentment.

I do not think that we should fudge the issue of paying people at the top the appropriate salaries. It is amazing, is it not, that we deny to the people in charge of our liberty salaries per year less than the amount per month that we do not begrudge a tennis player of 15?

Let us put aside our jealousies, and if we are to say to the teachers that they cannot have an independent pay review—which I believe that they should not have—let us abolish independent pay reviews for good, because they create the very problems that we are debating.

1.28 am

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): The order in itself does not involve the payment of a single additional penny from the Exchequer. However, it involves a very important principle for the Government. It does not involve a single penny because the Lord Chancellor, in characteristic and generous fashion, has said that he will not accept the increase. But if the order is not about money, it is about a matter which has deep meaning for the Conservative party and the Government.

Every weekend I am assailed, as other hon. Members are, by teachers who complain about their pay. In my view, they have wrongly disrupted their schools and their pupils' education. I am assailed by parents who understandably are concerned about their children's future and who have appealed to me to try to persuade the Government to change their minds. I have replied to them "Stand with me. Stand with the Government. However well merited some of your claims may be, stand with the Government because there is a limit that the public sector can afford." If we want to control inflation, we must control pay because we want to create more jobs in my part of the country and others.

If I say that to those parents and to those teachers, how can I walk through the Aye Lobby in support of the order? If the restraint on pay in the public sector is to apply at all —and it must— it must operate from the top to the bottom of the judiciary, the Civil Service and the armed forces. I believe that, sadly, the Government have made a serious error. However unfair and unjustified it is—it is both—the public will see that they are a soft touch for the few and a hard push for the many.

I am, by preference, not a natural rebel. I have voted against the Government only twice since I came here and I do not relish doing so again tonight, but I am not prepared to perform political gymnastics in support of the order and all of its implications, which I believe will haunt the Government for the rest of their period of office. That is why I have spoken as I have, why I shall vote against the order and why I urge the House to do the same.

1.30 am

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): The order is, in the short run, bad politics but, in the long run, it will prove to be good government.

It will be commonly agreed that, whatever the merits of the salaries of those who occupy high ranks in the Civil Service or the armed forces and of the Lord Chief Justice or the Lord Chancellor, hon. Members who have to wrestle with problems such as this are underpaid. That goes for members of the Opposition Front Bench who, when in government, have had to deal with problems of this difficulty and sensitivity. They have reached difficult and unpopular decisions and stuck with them. The same applies just as certainly to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her Cabinet colleagues who have had to wrestle with this exceedingly difficult matter. They are underpaid for their pains. That goes for most hon. Members.

As for the criticisms that have been made, three questions arise. Are the criticisms directed against the review body? Are they directed against the civil servants and others who will receive increased salaries as a result of the order? Are they directed solely against my right hon. Friend, who has had to take the decision? I shall deal with each in turn.

Is it suggested that the review body is lacking in integrity? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Anyone who sees the names of those who sat on the review body knows their record and must understand that their integrity is beyond question. Is it suggested that the review body lacks independence? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] That cannot be said, as the people concerned have reached their own judgments on the facts that they have discovered.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am sorry, but I have no time.

Can it be said that the review body is somehow incompetent? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Anyone who reads the report in detail and who examines the analysis will see no evidence of any incompetence. The review body must be judged to have done——

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I apologise to my hon. Friend, but there is a problem of time.

The House should not criticise the review body. We must therefore ask whether civil servants, judges and others who do difficult tasks should be under attack. I remind the House about whom we are talking in our constituencies. It is not just a few very senior civil servants —it is those who carry out the difficult tasks of the industrial tribunals, the social security appeals commissions and many other such bodies to which, week by week, we take problems and which we expect to carry out their difficult tasks well. I do not believe that the gravamen of the criticism lies either against the civil servants and judges—it is not they who should be attacked—or the tribunal itself. That quite simply leaves the attack that has been launched upon the Government. I can only say that I believe that our system of independent review bodies, taking all in all, is a good one. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), who attacked them, simply revealed his inexperience in dealing with the difficult problems of public sector pay.

The conclusion is very clear. The attack that has been made on this measure is——

Mr. Fairbairn: I am so inexperienced that I did not even hear the insult.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am so inexperienced that I did not get my hon. and learned Friend's point.

There is no point in our attacking independent review bodies. For all their faults, they have served this country well. Those in the teaching and nursing professions, the doctors and the police have benefited from the bodies. The Social Democratic alliance, which scavenges in the dustbins to find any populist issue that will get its name into the newspapers, has latched on to this issue. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who I regret to see taking this stand, in government had more courage and guts than any Opposition Member has displayed tonight.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that it may well be bad politics in the short run, but in the long run it will prove to be good government. My right hon. Friend should be supported by the House for her courage in taking an unpopular issue and dealing with it in the interests of the country.

1.37 am

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Such is my regard for the Lord Chancellor that I feel that the time of the House tonight would be better employed by insisting that he should take the salary that is currently on offer rather than taking the salary that may be on offer.

Be that as it may, I am inclined to vote for the Government because I believe that public servants of all sorts should be properly remunerated. Before I do vote for the Government, for the last time I ask my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to ensure that from now on the Government behave with a little more sensitivity, a little more humility and a little less arrogance—in short, I ask the Government to behave as though they had a majority of 25, not 145.

1.38 am

Mr. Biffen: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker. I think that the debate has demonstrated that all those great reformers who want to pack us off to bed by midnight would miss a great deal. There has been a good and vital exchange on this subject, but it had its peculiar characteristics. The most peculiar is that, apart from the contribution of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), every other Labour Member seems to have been overcome with that silence which is a training to become Chief Whip. That is to be regretted, because there has been a clear exchange of views on the Government Benches, met only by silence on the Opposition Benches—and silence in the most important of contexts. When elaborating the failings, faults and damnable social dereliction of this Government, the right hon. Gentleman concluded that the proposals might have been acceptable if, as in the days of Labour Government, they were staged over a couple of years. That is not the language of the barricades, but that is what it came to from the lips of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney.

On what basis will my hon. Friends consider whom they will join in the Lobby? The only basis we have is the contribution of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney. He is not making any fundamental challenge to what is being undertaken. He belongs to the fine-tuning school of politics. Not for him the fundamental challenge — that is left to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), and I respect him for it.

We must first decide whether these great issues of top people's pay, which are full of great political difficulty, are best vested for their recommendation in an outside body such as the Top Salaries Review Body. If that is our judgment, and we have lived with that form for some years now — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because the alternative of politically decided pay determination is infinitely more unsatisfactory and, above all, infinitely

[Mr. Biffen]

more embarrassing for this House. If anyone doubts that, he need only watch the agony of Members of Parliament when they must think about their own pay.

We must first decide whether we want the format of the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body report. I believe that it presents a sustained and convincing argument for a change in pay structures. That argument is particularly made out in paragraph 47. Those of my hon. Friends who think that this can be willed off as a July act of madness should bear in mind that that problem will be waiting for us when we come back from the summer recess. It will be with us next year and the year after.

If we accept the point of substance, we come to the point of timing. The policy decisions were announced a few days ago, and it would have been the grossest cynicism to wait until the House had risen for the summer recess and then make this known. It would have been even more inept had we waited until we return in the autumn.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *rose——*

Mr. Biffen: It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman did not get off his backside earlier. All will now be revealed in the closing moments! Perhaps the policy will be elaborated, and we shall see whether or not it convinces my hon. Friends.

Whatever timing is resolved, it is always a matter of embarrassment and acute unease. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) had it absolutely right when he said that in the long run it will be good government. We must decide whether we are in the business of administration to take the easy way out by finding some way of excusing ourselves of this decision now. There is no easy way out of this or any of the other major issues in politics. We are not here to hide behind any passing popular fashion. We are here to provide leadership as well. I do not resile from that observation. We are not in the business of paving-stone politics on this or anything else. Confronted with these difficulties, it is our obligation to give a lead and not to cringe and follow.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 249, Noes 232.

Division No. 290] **[1.45 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas

Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. John Major.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchan, Norman
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dormand, Jack
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Anthony
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Malins, Humfrey
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parris, Matthew
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Whitfield, John
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 18th July, be approved.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the remarkable vote that has just been recorded quite clearly expresses the widespread view on all sides of the House about this matter and the associated matters, can we ask, through you whether the Government will reconsider it and make a further policy statement tomorrow?

Independent Schools (Transport Facilities)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

1.59 am

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am grateful to have the opportunity to raise this very important issue, and I am sorry that so many hon. Members have decided to leave. I apologise to the Minister, because 2 am is not the happiest time to make a speech anywhere. I thank my hon. Friends from the Greater Manchester area who are here tonight supporting me, because they agree with me that we are discussing a very important question of principle.

This is not the first attack on independent schools that we have had from the Labour-controlled Greater Manchester council. A few years ago, that council planned to axe local authority bus services to private schools. As one Labour councillor said on that occasion, "If they can afford the fees, they can afford the fares". That is a pathetic statement from an ignoramus who is apparently unaware that not every child that goes to an independent school comes from a wealthy home. That Labour councillor could not be more wrong. The children are in the schools because they have won scholarships. They are there on merit and not by power of the purse.

At that time sanity prevailed and the committee did an about-turn. The director general of Greater Manchester passenger transport executive said:

"The committee had decided that the services in question will continue until further notice. The decision to continue is in accordance with our views".

There speaks the voice of sanity. That was the official who perhaps knows more about transport than any member of Greater Manchester council.

However, the about-turn by the Labour councillors was quite extraordinary, because at one time they claimed that by cutting out all the special buses taking children to independent schools would save Greater Manchester about £200,000 a year. After the about-turn the amount had dropped to between £40,000 and £43,000 per year. Whatever the actual sum, when the decision was announced the parents of children in independent schools heaved a sigh of relief, but that was not for long. In June this year that same council suddenly announced that scholars' permits to pupils aged between 16 and 19 will from August 1985 be issued only to pupils at state schools.

Councillor Hickman, the chairman of the Greater Manchester passenger transport committee, has said that the cost saving was not significant; it was a very small amount of money. I wonder what the reason can be for that very strange decision. I can only describe it as an act of political malice. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) is here and has agreed with me on the issue, because most decent people in the area are horrified by what Greater Manchester council is doing.

Councillor Hickman is totally opposed to independent education. That is his opinion and he is entitled to it. In a free society, people who pay taxes and rates to support the state system of education, and who then opt to pay for their children's education out of their net income, must also be entitled to their opinion. It is all part and parcel of the Labour party's aim to abolish independent schools. The removal of scholars' permits is just one more example of the Labour party's willingness to make children suffer for the sake of political dogma.

I talked earlier about the ignoramus on Greater Manchester council who believes that children in the independent sector all come from rich homes. With the help of the Independent Schools Information Service, I have some cases which present a different story, and I shall give three examples of girls who all live in the Greater Manchester area. One has a father who is a graduate and worked in the textile industry but is now unemployed and on supplementary benefit. Her bus fares will go up from 40p a day to £1·40 a day. Another has a widowed mother with a total income of £3,000 per annum. Her fares will go up from 40p a day to £1·52 a day. The third girl has a mother who is a widow and works as a cleaning lady. That girl's fares will go up from 60p a day to £1·20 a day.

Those three examples show clearly that the decision to remove scholars' permits will seriously affect families who will have difficulty in finding the extra money. As one parent said in a recent television interview:

"As ratepayers we are entitled surely to the same council services that every other ratepayer is entitled to. The fact that we happen to choose to spend our money educating our children is entirely our own affair and is totally unconnected to this issue about bus passes. You surely can't discriminate against a certain percentage of the population, on an item like this, that's totally irrelevant."

That lady was right. It is amazing that no Labour Members are present. They claim to be the champions against discrimination of any sort. They are up there shouting on any issue of discrimination, but when there is blatant discrimination against children who go to independent schools, not one Labour Member can be bothered to stay to listen to the debate.

It is unfair that the parents of nearly 3,000 children —the vast majority of those parents are ratepayers and taxpayers—should be penalised by the GMC decision. If they want to send their children to independent schools, that is their right in a free society. If the GMC is allowed to get away with its proposal, it will be the thin end of the wedge. I believe that there will be further attacks on independent schools. Councillor Hickman said in an interview:

"it was a decision that we made on the grounds that we felt we were not, as a passenger transport committee, in a position to judge on the value or not of certain schools receiving those concessions. It started way back in '83, when we were asked to extend our concessions, and it arose again in 1984, when we were asked to extend our concessions, and what we found is that we were working on a list that was based on 1970, and that list was getting increasingly out of date. In fact of the 53 schools originally on it, there were now only 40, and are increasing, and we found we were discriminating against people who were not on the list."

The grammar was not all that one would expect and I found part of those comments difficult to understand. No doubt Councillor Hickman and God understand and at times I think that only God can understand. Councillor Hickman based his arguments on a list that he said was issued by the Department of Education and Science in 1970. I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science will investigate the claim and find some way of protecting parents with children at independent schools from acts of blatant political discrimination by elected representatives of a political party which is pledged to abolish independent education.

2.8 am

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): With the kind permission of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), I add my strong support to his plea for a thorough investigation into what the Government can do to stop this discrimination.

The principle goes well beyond the Greater Manchester area. I guess that the GMC's action is illegal under existing law and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has had a chance to investigate that possibility.

For a public transport authority to decide whether to give a fare concession on the basis of the destination of the passenger is a dangerous principle. If we carried the analogy to old people's passes, someone going to have his feet seen to at a private hospital might also fall foul of the local authority.

I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to look at the matter on a nationwide basis. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale who has brought the issue before the House.

2.9 am

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): With the kind permission of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) I should like to say that in my constituency of Bury, where I am a governor of the grammar school, there has been widespread concern at the decision taken by Greater Manchester transport. That decision was based on two false premises. The first is political, suggesting that only the children of rich parents go to these schools. As my hon. Friend demonstrated, that is false. The grammar school in Bury has been supported by children from all sections of the community for many generations. The grammar school is seen as a school for people from all sections of the community. I know from my experience that parents will be badly hit by the decision. The second premise is based on economics. The decision will result in poor economics, because a number of parents who will not be able to send their children on the bus pass scheme will run their own mini-buses, taking children, not just between the ages of 16 and 19, but others. Far from gaining anything, GMT will lose.

I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to look not only at the present position but to the future. The PTEs will change with the abolition of the Greater Manchester council. I think that people understand the political iniquity exercised by the GMC. They would not be happy if the Government were not able to correct this position in the future.

2.10 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on bringing this subject up. It has been of great concern to my constituents who immediately brought it to my attention and have seen me about it in my surgery. The decision is unfair, attacking parents for doing what they should do—helping their children to get the best education.

On economics, the GMC would do better to give free bus passes to people who educate their own children and save the state the cost of educating them. On every ground, this decision is wrong. It should be reconsidered. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will come up with some action to stop this measure. I believe that it was tried about eight years ago in London, without success. I should be pleased to hear of the history of this measure in other areas. I hope that it will be stopped in Manchester this autumn. My constituents say that fares will rise so that it will cost them an extra £200 a year. For those who are already scrimping and saving to provide their children with an education this is a gross injustice and burden that they should not have to bear.

2.11 am

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) for allowing me to make a brief intervention. This issue affects not only his constituency but my constituency and all those who live in areas served by Greater Manchester Transport. As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) said, it may affect many more.

Many parents can afford to send their children to independent schools only because they have worked and saved to meet the fees. All of them pay their rates, taxes and levies to Greater Manchester Transport and the GMC. They are entitled to the services that the council provides.

So far, the issue has evoked a muted response. If GMT had discriminated against white children, or black children, the protests would have been heard as far away as the town hall in Bury, which is my local authority. I say to GMT what the late Al Jolson said, "They ain't seen nothing yet." If the protests are not heard, they will become louder and more consistent until this act of blatant political discrimination is reversed.

2.12 am

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) for giving me an opportunity to endorse heartily what he has said. Many families in my constituency have written to me expressing their concern at this action by GMT which is nasty, small-minded and mean.

2.13 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) has obtained this Adjournment debate, because it gives me the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts that he and other colleagues in other parts of the Greater Manchester area and beyond its borders have made in representing the interests of those parents and children affected. I refer to my hon. Friends the Members for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester), for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith), who by his presence and his interventions on other occasions has shown his support for the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale.

I have noted the points that have been raised by my hon. Friends about the actions of the Greater Manchester transport executive in ceasing from 1 September 1985 to supply scholars' permits to pupils aged between 16 and 19 attending independent schools. I understand that up to now these have enabled all pupils aged 16 to 19 to travel between home and school at the concessionary child's rate of 10p.

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

I take seriously the outpourings of indignation that have been expressed to me, not only in this House tonight but in letters from my hon. Friends and from parents of pupils affected by this decision. In making my response, the adjournment debate enables me to have the opportunity of explaining how matters stand.

Before doing so, it is necessary for me to explain the Secretary of State's role in matters of this kind. Essentially it is to examine them, once they have been drawn to his notice, either by means of a complaint or in some other way, and to see whether they call for any action on his part under the powers conferred upon him by sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944. Those sections concern the exercise of powers and duties conferred by or under the Education Acts. Section 68 relates to situations where a local education authority may have exercised its powers or duties unreasonably. Section 99 relates to matters where a local education authority may be in default of a statutory duty under the Education Acts.

We are faced, not with the exercise of a power or duty by an education authority, but with the decision of a transport authority. As such, therefore, it is not open to my right hon. Friend to intervene in its actions. I may say, however, that I am extremely surprised to find that the Greater Manchester transport executive appears to have resolved to take this action without the courtesy of consulting the local education authorities concerned. While I recognise that it is under no legal duty to do so, I am quite clear that the GMTE should have recognised that there would be clear and strong financial implications both for local education authorities and parents locally, and should consequently have consulted. This short time scale not only makes it difficult for me to reply in any depth to my hon. Friend, but puts an extra and unexpected burden on both parents and LEAs, which neither could have budgeted to meet. I am advised that children may use the Teen Travel Clipper card system, which would reduce the cost of their fares to a maximum of £3·35 per child per week. But that still leaves parents with up to £2·35 per week to find. In any event the use of the Clipper card is limited to times outside the rush hour—a vital time for the access of any child to its school from its home.

Trafford LEA, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency, has particular reason to feel badly treated. The decision is likely to cost it a considerable and unforeseen sum in purchasing bus passes, mainly for Roman Catholic pupils who attend independent grammar schools at the authority's expense.

To say that this decision by the transport executive is not in itself a matter for complaint under the Education Act is, however, not to wash our hands of the whole situation. We must next turn to the statutory duties and powers under the Education Acts, which are involved in the issue of school transport. The main provision governing home-to-school transport is section 55 of the Education Act 1944. Section 55(1) places LEAs under a duty to make such arrangements as they consider necessary for the purpose of facilitating the attendance of pupils at schools. Any arrangements made under that subsection must be free of charge to the parents. However, while there is a duty on LEAs to provide transport, within limits, for pupils in the maintained sector, it is a question of discretionary provision for pupils at independent schools, and here I suspect that practice varies enormously between one LEA and another. The statutory provision is contained in section 55(2), which gives LEAs discretionary powers to pay the whole or part of the fares of a pupil in attendance at any school or country college for whom they have made no arrangements to provide free transport under section 55(1).

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale will understand—perhaps not as clearly at this time of night as he might—that LEAs have considerable freedom within the law to deal with school transport. Whether or not any individual LEA would assist the parents of children at independent schools who are affected by the GMTE's decision is entirely for the operation of the discretionary powers of that LEA. I know that a number of LEAs are affected by this decision and I cannot presume to speak for any of them. It is open to any parent affected to approach his or her appropriate LEA. There is no redress under the Education Acts or the Secretary of State's powers but it is open for any parent to test out the action of the GMTE with legal advice.

The issue of school transport and LEAs' discretion is a wide one, and in responding to the debate I have confined myself to the particular aspect that affects independent schools, not least because my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has raised the wider issues only recently.

In drawing my response towards its conclusion, I draw attention to a problem that has been raised already. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale will not object if I take advantage of the opportunity that he has given me to mention the implications of the decision for pupils on assisted places. Several people from less well-off families whose children are benefiting from the assisted places scheme have told me definitely that they will be financially embarrassed by this decision. I emphasise that the new Assisted Places (Incidental Expenses) Regulations, which comes into effect by 1 September, make provision for the less well-off parent to claim home-to-school travel expenses direct from the school. I recommend and urge those parents to contact their children's schools.

I believe that independent schools are an important part of the school system and, in considering the costs of the services that they provide to pupils in those schools, LEAs need to remember that they are in general released from the higher cost of providing for those children in maintained schools. The independent sector has an important role to play in enriching the education system and the Government are committed to preserve and foster it.

I give a strong undertaking to those who have contributed to this short debate that the matters which concern them will be brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I shall seek to provide answers to the individual questions that they have raised. I shall certainly ask other Government Departments and agencies, which clearly have an input to this matter, to deliberate upon the points that have been raised.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East for his evident knowledge of the ILEA and for his reference to events of some eight years

ago. All the points raised will be taken seriously, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale for giving me the opportunity to make this statement.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty five minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 24 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

OXFORDSHIRE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

Amendments agreed to.

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of third reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the third time.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

1. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will agree to meet the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to discuss King Hussein's middle east peace initiative.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): We support King Hussein's courageous initiative. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I had a useful discussion with the King on 19 July. We are examining with him how best we can encourage the current movement towards peace negotiations. We have also welcomed the Israeli Prime Minister's proposals of 10 June as a useful contribution to narrowing the gap between the parties.

Ms. Short: The Secretary of State must be aware that there is now a real danger that that initiative will run out of steam, and the Palestinian people will conclude that there is no way in which diplomacy will bring them a just solution. That is a grave danger for the situation in the middle east. Could not the British Government have a little more courage and, instead of whispering in the ear of the American Government, stand up publicly and agree to meet the delegation in order to move the whole initiative forward?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Lady is right to emphasise the importance of keeping the movement towards peace moving in that direction. It is wrong to cast any judgment on our lack of courage or insight. We are looking continually at all the possible moves that we can make to help the process forward. The key point is that what is necessarily a step-by-step approach is kept moving in the right direction and that each step that we take will help and not hinder that process.

Mr. Walters: In order to assist King Hussein in his peace efforts, would it not be helpful for Her Majesty's Government to announce their willingness to receive the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in advance of the United States doing so? Should we not appear to be one step ahead of the Americans in this matter, and not one step behind?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the need to judge these matters carefully. We shall certainly be making a judgment in response to such suggestions in the way that we judge, after consultation with the King, to be most likely to take the process forward.

Mr. Janner: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has welcomed the statement by Prime Minister Peres, who I am sure he will agree is a man of peace. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman know that it is the expressed view of Prime Minister Peres that, far from the Hussein initiative hastening the way to peace, it will stand in the way of direct negotiations between the parties, which provide the best hope for a true solution to a very difficult problem?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Despite my overwhelming respect for the hon. and learned Gentleman's accuracy and my awareness of his concern in the matter, I am not sure that he accurately summarises what Prime Minister Peres said. The important thing is to take into account how easy it is for misunderstandings to arise in the matter and to make sure that progress is being maintained in the direction and with the objective of direct and effective negotiations in the cause of peace.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Will my right hon. and learned Friend congratulate King Hussein on his sincere efforts to achieve peace in the middle east? Will he do his utmost to swing the moderate Arab states behind King Hussein and secure appropriate representation on the delegation? In all the circumstances, will he take it on board that it is the wish of many right hon. and hon. Members that he meets the delegation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the point in the last part of my hon. Friend's question and the extent to which it is supported. As he says, it is right to encourage Palestinians who are committed to working for peace, all of those moderate leaders in the Arab world who are committed to the same cause, and all those in Israel as well.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that he does nothing to jeopardise Mr. Richard Murphy's American diplomatic initiative and that any deputation that is received here contains names that are also acceptable to the Americans?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Each question that is asked on this matter shows the many factors that one must keep in mind and the many components that could be constructive that one must take care not to jeopardise. I have well in mind the points that my hon. Friend made.

Mr. Anderson: This is a courageous initiative which is clearly at a delicate stage. Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the Government have no objection in principle to meeting the joint delegation? Will he also confirm that the Government believe that these moves towards a partial settlement on the lines of Camp David

are more likely to be productive than is a generalised peace conference, and that there are real signs of progress, especially as the Soviets seem more willing to recognise the existence of the state of Israel?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One cannot be sure about the validity of the hon. Gentleman's last point. He is right to call attention to the hazards, as he put it, of a generalised peace conference, certainly at this stage. The important thing is to take steps that are necessary and right at each stage to encourage moderate leadership on both sides to come closer together and, eventually, to negotiations.

Mozambique

2. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Mozambique.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Renton): We maintain friendly relations with the Government of Mozambique. This is happily demonstrated by the current visit to this country by the Mozambican Foreign Minister, Dr. Chissano, as our guest.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my hon. Friend confirm newspaper reports that Britain is to train and equip Mozambican army officers and NCOs? Does not the Machel regime remain Marxist, denying human rights and fundamental freedoms, and is it not coming under increasing pressure from anti-Marxist rebels? Are we convinced that we are supporting the right side?

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. President Machel has made clear his wish to develop relations with Western countries. We believe that we should respond positively. It is against that background that, with the full agreement of the Zimbabwe Government, we have offered to expand the British military advisory and training team in Zimbabwe to train officers and NCOs of the Mozambican army.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am glad to hear that we have friendly relations with the Mozambique Government. Does the Minister agree that they are extremely exposed because of their relationship with South Africa? Will the hon. Gentleman assure us that there is support for the Mozambique Government and their relationship with South Africa, bearing in mind the emergency in South Africa? Does he agree that it is important that we show that we have the interests of the Mozambique Government and their independence at heart, despite the problems that must arise from the emergency in South Africa?

Mr. Renton: We have the interests of Mozambique's development at heart. Until now, South Africa has stuck by the Nkomati accord and has recently not given official support to Renamo. That has been acknowledged in Mozambique. We have an interest in the external implications of the current insecurity in Mozambique. That is one reason why we have taken the steps that I have just announced.

Sir Peter Blaker: What are the Mozambique Government's views on the proposal to impose economic sanctions on South Africa?

Mr. Renton: I am not aware that the Mozambique Government have yet expressed any view on that subject.

United States of America

3. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Government of the United States of America; and what subjects were discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I last did so when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I met Vice-President George Bush during his visit to London from 2 to 3 July. The principal topics discussed were international terrorism, East-West trade, East-West relations and international trade issues.

Mr. Canavan: What discussions or recent communications have there been between the British and American Governments about possible concerted action by both Governments to reject the legitimate calls for economic sanctions against South Africa? Is it not absolutely deplorable that once more the British Government are deserting our true friends in the Commonwealth in order to kowtow to Ronald Reagan in support of the continuance of economic relations which in effect will bolster the evil apartheid régime which is directly responsible for the recent bloodshed and other atrocities during the current emergency in South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I join the hon. Gentleman in condemning apartheid wholeheartedly and without qualification, but at that point I must part company from his insight into international affairs. I cannot believe that he seriously imagines that our view about the wisdom of economic sanctions is dictated by a determination to kowtow to President Reagan or to anybody else. We wish progress to be made in order to secure the removal of apartheid, but we believe that the imposition of economic sanctions would not help in that direction but would have the contrary effect.

Mr. Hickmet: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the United States Government propose to impose curbs on steel imports from 1 August 1985? Is he also aware that imports from the European Community into the United States are the result of rigidities and inefficiencies in the steel manufacturing sector in the United States? Is it not unfair that because high American interest rates fund their massive budget deficit, which provides an opening for the import of European steel into their market, they should propose to block such imports? What action will my right hon. and learned Friend take about this and what representations will he make to his opposite number in the United States Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to steel imports as one of the areas where the United States is threatening to take restrictive action if agreement cannot be reached with the European Community. We believe that the United States should refrain from taking unilateral action in such areas. It is important for such disagreements to be handled bilaterally between the European Community and the United States. The exchange rate of the dollar, to which the size of the United States federal deficit makes a significant contribution, is an important factor.

Mr. Deakins: Did the Foreign Secretary discuss with Vice-President Bush how to cope with the growing volume of popular pressure in both the United States and Britain for the imposition of some form of economic sanctions on

South Africa? If so, what conclusions did they reach as representatives of two Governments who, in this sense, are beleaguered minorities in their own countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must speak for himself in judging the scale of pressure for action of that kind in this country. However, on this issue the view of the United States is the same as our own: that although we profoundly detest and deplore apartheid and all its manifestations, we do not believe that the imposition of economic sanctions would be helpful either in helping to remove apartheid or in promoting the interests of the people who are most adversely affected by it.

Sir John Farr: Since most hon. Members agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that economic sanctions against South Africa would be unhelpful and unrewarding, will he assure the House that he took the opportunity when he met Vice-President Bush to express very clearly Her Majesty's Government's views?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The two Governments are in constant touch with each other on this topic. In the context of the United Nations and of bilateral contacts we have no doubt about each other's views.

Mr. George Robertson: On the subject of contacts with the American Government, what precisely is the function of the current visit to America by the Secretary of State for Defence? Why is he going round the United States trying to lick up the gravy of the star wars programme when the Foreign Secretary and all his European counterparts seemed openly to express widespread doubts about the strategic defence initiative?

Will the Secretary of State comment on the reports that the United States Congress has already been notified that a phased array radar system is to be installed at Fylingdales in Yorkshire, along similar lines to the much criticised phased array radar at Krasnoyarsk in the Soviet Union?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is extending his range of curiosity widely this afternoon——

Mr. Robertson: Why not?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am always here to satisfy, as far as I can. Let me take the hon. Gentleman's second point first. Any decisions to modernise existing radar establishments, including the one at Fylingdales, are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and would be undertaken in any event in compliance with existing treaty obligations.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, all the countries of the Western European Union have commissioned the Council to co-ordinate their reactions to the American invitation to participate in SDI research — a research programme which most members of the WEU support. The visit by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to Washington, which is now over — he returned last night — was designed to give practical impetus to the exploration of ways in which British companies can participate in the research programme.

USSR (Postal Services)

4. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the non-delivery of mail to individuals in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in breach of the Universal Postal Convention was raised by the United Kingdom delegation during the discussions on human rights at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Ottawa in May; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The United Kingdom delegation to the Ottawa meeting made clear our very real concern about the Soviet practice of interfering with private mail sent from abroad.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the Minister aware that the host of communications sent recently from the United Kingdom to the USSR which were seized by the Soviet postal authorities included inoffensive items such as wedding invitations and birthday cards? Will the Minister undertake to communicate with his opposite number in the USSR to discover which items are prohibited by the Soviet postal authorities, so that those who send communications to their friends in that country can be informed?

Mr. Luce: I know of the hon. Gentleman's long-standing interest in this problem. As I said, the general subject was raised forcefully at the Ottawa meeting on human rights. As the hon. Gentleman will know, my hon. Friend the Minister of State — the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind)—arrives in Moscow today. He told me before his departure that he intends to raise this general issue during his visit.

Soviet Foreign Minister

5. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the new Soviet Foreign Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expect to meet the new Soviet Foreign Minister in Helsinki on 1 August during the meeting commemorating the 10th anniversary of the signature of the Helsinki final act.

Mr. Brown: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the main prerequisite for agreement on arms control is that there should be confidence between East and West? Will he use that meeting as an opportunity to stress the British Government's commitment to increasing confidence?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with my hon. Friend that the achievement of success in arms control negotiations could depend substantially on the creation of confidence on both sides. I shall certainly do my best to stress that. It is one reason why we welcome the prospect of contact at the highest level in the forthcoming summit meeting between the President of the United States and Mr. Gorbachev.

Dr. Owen: Before that meeting with the new Soviet Foreign Minister, does the Foreign Secretary think it appropriate to restart the Anglo-Soviet health agreement, which was signed in 1975 but suspended in 1979? The suspension has caused much friction between the two countries. Would not such a gesture be appropriate to commemorate the signing of the Helsinki final act?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall reconsider the matter in the light of the cogent arguments advanced by the right hon. Gentleman. I cannot promise him that my consideration will be concluded in time for the meeting next week.

Mr. Lawrence: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the new Soviet Foreign Minister, will he say

that, although the overseas English language broadcasts of the BBC are not usually jammed, its Russian service broadcasts are always jammed, and that that is in breach of the international telecommunications convention — another international undertaking which the Soviets have signed but do not honour?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Freedom of broadcasting is a matter that frequently arises at meetings of this kind, and it will be relevant to the proceedings at Helsinki next week. My hon. and learned Friend will find that there is a question directed specifically to this subject to be answered later today.

Mr. Boyes: When the Foreign Secretary meets the Soviet Foreign Minister, will he tell him that the British Government are against the deployment of chemical weapons in Europe by any NATO state, and that it would be helpful if the Soviet Union would reduce dramatically its stocks of chemical weapons and produce no further stocks? Will he also say that the British Government would guarantee, on the removal of all Soviet stocks, that they would be opposed to the deployment of any chemical weapons in Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the massive stocks of chemical weapons held by the Soviet Union and the importance of their removal if we are to secure progress towards a worldwide ban on chemical weapons. The United Kingdom has neither manufactured nor stocked chemical weapons for many years. We shall continue to press the Soviet Union, at Helsinki and elsewhere, for a worldwide ban on chemical weapons.

Mr. Key: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take every opportunity to press upon the Soviet Union leadership how welcome it would be if, in a co-operative and uncompetitive spirit, it would increase its contribution to solving the problems of famine and development in the Third world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall take that opportunity. I drew attention to that point in a speech yesterday, noting the significant fact that, in the past six months, India has contributed 10 times as much to food aid as the Soviet Union.

Mr. Healey: Will the proposed visit of Mr. Gromyko to Britain still take place? If not, will it be replaced by a visit from Mr. Shevardnadze, his successor as Foreign Secretary? When the right hon. and learned Gentleman meets the Soviet Foreign Minister in Helsinki, will he suggest that the Soviet Union should impose a ban on all tests of components or subcomponents of systems that could be used in space, including the Soviet anti-satellite system?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall consider the second point raised by the right hon. Gentleman. On his point about a visit from Mr. Shevardnadze in place of Mr. Gromyko — whom we must congratulate on his appointment to President — the invitation previously extended to Mr. Gromyko has been re-extended to Mr. Shevardnadze and I hope that it will be accepted.

Argentina

6. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the prospects for Anglo-Argentine relations in the light of Her Majesty's Government's decision to re-open trade with Argentina.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have repeatedly made it plain that we seek more normal relations with Argentina, while continuing to fulfil our commitments to the Falkland Islanders. By lifting restrictions on imports from Argentina we have taken a practical step of benefit to both sides, as we have done on a number of occasions since 1982. But the restoration of more normal relations requires as well a constructive approach from Argentina, which it has so far declined to adopt.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: While upholding British sovereignty over the Falklands, does my right hon. Friend's reply mean that Her Majesty's Government are always ready to welcome Argentine co-operation in the defence and development of the region? Meanwhile, will the Foreign and Commonwealth Office stop pussyfooting and procrastinating about fisheries protection through a mistaken fear of certain powers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no question of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office pussyfooting or procrastinating about the prospect of effective control over fisheries in the Falkland Islands region. My hon. Friend must understand that we want to achieve an effective fisheries regime, which is much more likely to be effective if we can achieve it on a multilateral basis. That is why we are working actively, under my supervision, to make progress in that direction.

Mr. Dalyell: What advice did the right hon. and learned Gentleman get in Brasilia?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We had a useful and constructive exchange of views on a large number of matters. — *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If all questions were as brief as that, we should get on very rapidly.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that in future dealings with Argentina he will in no way be dismayed by its very disappointing reply to his imaginative gesture in lifting trade restrictions? Will he explain that the renewal of diplomatic relations is more in Argentina's interests than it is in ours?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: From as long ago as September 1982, when I first proposed and negotiated the withdrawal of financial restrictions between the two countries—an agreement which has yet to be fully implemented by Argentina—I have been exercising a patient pursuit of good reason and sense from the Government of that country.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the President of Argentina had a very distinguished record in opposing the previous regime? Will he also accept that initiatives and good will on both sides could lead to a lasting agreement on all outstanding issues that would be the envy of diplomats throughout the world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I certainly recognise the position adopted by the President of Argentina and the part that he has played in restoring democratic government to that country. That is why I am disappointed by the reluctance of his Government to respond even to the gesture we made

a couple of weeks ago. We would welcome any signs of willingness to move step by step in the direction of more constructive relations.

Mr. Robert Banks: In relation to what my right hon. and learned Friend has said, can he say whether he has any objection to the landing of civilian aircraft from Argentina at the new airport at Port Stanley?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The management of that airport is a matter upon which one would need to consider each proposal as it was put.

Mr. Hardy: May I return to the question of fisheries? Is the Foreign Secretary aware that there is not a great deal of time before irreparable harm will be inflicted upon the fishery resources of the Falkland waters? What evidence can he give the House that the Foreign Office has taken any helpful action, and when shall we see the urgent initiatives that are necessary?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I appreciate the seriousness with which hon. Members on all sides of the House are looking for a solution to the matter of fisheries raised by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison). We need to reach a conclusion that will be effective, durable and respected. We are much more likely to achieve that on a multilateral basis, and that is why we are working towards that end. If we wish to preserve the fish about which the hon. Member is concerned, we must secure ageement on as wide an international basis as possible.

Mr. Foulkes: I hope that it is in order for me to congratulate the Foreign Secretary on this small step forward, even with the unfortunate caveat on sovereignty. Is the Foreign Secretary aware of the oil exploration already under way by Firstland? He is aware of the chaos over fishing. Will he now consider some agreement with Argentina on the development of oil resources for our mutual benefit? Will he confirm that Argentina is involved in the multilateral discussions on fisheries, and that we can expect an agreement soon, before all the fish have gone from the South Atlantic?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that the action upon which the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) was kind enough to congratulate me indicates our disposition to find any way we can to improve our co-operative relationship with the Government of Argentina. That is what we are seeking to do in relation to fish, and we will look at any proposals in relation to anything else. Many people in Argentina understand that action of a multilateral kind to manage and conserve fish in the South Atlantic would be in everybody's interests.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I welcome the reopening of trade with Argentina. How far does the Secretary of State believe it is significant to the stability of the democratic, civilian regime in Argentina to have a discussion of sovereignty on the agenda? If he does believe that it is important, what is he doing about it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A discussion about sovereignty cannot be on the agenda. For that reason, we have been seeking to open up prospects of discussion on the wide range of topics that I have identified.

European Community (Intergovernmental Conference)

7. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will be submitting any proposals to the forthcoming European Economic Community intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have already put forward a number of practical proposals. They remain valid. I expect specific proposals from other member states to be put forward as a basis for discussion at the conference. In the light of that discussion we shall consider whether to put forward any further ideas ourselves.

Mr. Deakins: Does the Foreign Secretary support the Prime Minister's view, expressed recently in the House, that amendments to the treaty of Rome are not required?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The view that we took when we went to the meeting in Milan was that it was possible to achieve the necessary progress on the basis of our proposals, without treaty amendment. As the Prime Minister said in her statement to the House after the Milan summit,

"We must go to that . . . conference and consider what is put before us."

Mr. Dykes: Now that we appear to be more enthusiastic about the conference, will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House that we shall attend with positive and enthusiastic proposals? If a good number of the founding member states want to make some changes to the treaty—without there being too many—would it be possible for us to accept that with good grace and common sense?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Good God, no.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The important thing, which is well known to my hon. Friend, is that we must achieve a conclusion of the agenda before us as quickly as possible in order to promote effective common action and further progress within the Community. We shall be approaching the whole agenda at the intergovernmental conference with a view to concluding those matters and achieving as much progress as we can.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Foreign Secretary impress on his colleagues that Community aid to Turkey should depend on that country's return to democracy? Will he bring to their attention the new report by Amnesty International showing that torture of political prisoners in Turkey is systematic and widespread and that nothing has changed in that country since the beginning of this year?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am able to challenge the last part of the hon. Lady's question forthwith, because the parts of Turkey subject to martial law have been substantially reduced since the beginning of this year. That is indicative of the progress that we wish to see towards the restoration of full democracy in Turkey, which is important.

Mr. Budgen: I remind my right hon. and learned Friend of the robust and patriotic words of the Prime Minister who said on her return from Milan, "I do not think there is any need for any amendment to the treaty." Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear that the Government rule out any proposals for amendment to the treaty that might come forward at the intergovernmental conference in the autumn?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I remind my hon. Friend of the equally robust and patriotic words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who said:

"We must go to that . . . conference and consider what is put before us."—[*Official Report*, 2 July 1985; Vol. 82, c. 191.]

It would be foolish to go to such a conference with preconceived ideas. Our objective, in the interests of the economic policy and politics of this country, must be to secure effective agreement so that the Community can make the sort of progress that we all want to see achieved.

Mr. George Robertson: Now that the Foreign Secretary has taken to fudging up everything that the Prime Minister has said in her robust comments, will he tell the House what he will do at the intergovernmental conference to protect this country from changes in the voting procedures which, even without a change in the treaty, could easily lead to the elimination of the Luxembourg compromise? Will he resist any procedural change that will make costly tax harmonisation possible, and will he recognise and admit to the House that any intergovernmental conference that has no agenda, so little time for preparation and nobody agreeing on what the eventual outcome will be, is a recipe for misunderstanding, disillusionment and disenchantment?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has a capacity which astonishes even me for casting gloom and doubt on every sensible proposal before the House. He must recognise the importance of going to the conference with a view to achieving effective progress in a direction that is important for this country. That is how we approach all proposals in the Community. The hon. Gentleman will recall that it was agreed at the Milan conference that proposals for tax harmonisation should be remitted to Finance Ministers for further consideration, because they cause equal doubt and difficulty to a number of member states. As for the Luxembourg compromise, the hon. Gentleman will also accept that many states recognise and emphasise what the Community recognises, that it is not possible in the Community to disregard or overrule the vital national interests of any country. That having been said, it is of vital national interest for the Community to achieve co-ordination and unity on the progress that is necessary.

European Community (Foreign Policy)

9. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a common European Community foreign policy.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The United Kingdom put forward at the Milan European Council ideas for a binding agreement on European political co-operation. This would include the formalisation of the commitment to consult, establishment of a small secretariat and closer co-operation on security. These ideas, together with others, will now be on the agenda of the forthcoming intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Knox: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that greater co-operation in foreign affairs among Community countries is a major objective of British Government policy, and that such co-operation is very much in the interests of this country and the other countries of western Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with what my hon. Friend has said. It was for that reason we put forward the proposals that we did at the Milan conference for an agreement on political co-operation.

Mr. Boyes: If Foreign Ministers ever work closer together on a common policy, and whether they do or not, will the Foreign Secretary make it absolutely clear that he is against torture? Will he make it absolutely clear that he is against torture in Turkey—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns European foreign policy.

Mr. Boyes: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I am saying to the Foreign Secretary, as one of the people making that common policy, that the common policy must be to oppose torture wherever it is, particularly systematic and widespread torture in Turkey.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The question ranges, as you pointed out, Mr. Speaker, a long way beyond that on the Order Paper, but I have no difficulty in assuring the hon. Gentleman that of course the policies of Her Majesty's Government are opposed to torture.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the Foreign Secretary do all in his power to make sure that a European foreign policy does not become an anti-American foreign policy? Is he aware of the huge resentment in the United States about the indiscriminate dumping of steel from state-subsidised companies in Europe and about the disruption of world food markets, again by indiscriminate, subsidised dumping of food surpluses?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend refers to the other side of the coin that we discussed a moment ago. The fact is that on both sides of the Atlantic there is a problem to be tackled over the disposal of steel exports in today's world economic conditions. It is equally the case that American agricultural policy involves, in his words, dumping agricultural exports on the world market at subsidised prices. It is precisely because we need to resolve conflicts of that kind sensibly that we need to tackle them, and can benefit so much from tackling them, within the European Community rather than on our own.

South Africa

10. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of British relations with South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are seriously concerned at the deterioration of the internal situation in South Africa and especially the imposition of a state of emergency. This underlines the urgent need for the rapid opening of a dialogue between the present South African Government and the genuine representatives of the non-white community. These grave developments inevitably have an effect on our bilateral relations.

Mr. Cartwright: Since the South African authorities clearly take little or no notice of representations from Her Majesty's Government, will the Foreign Secretary now open negotiations with our European partners with a view to establishing an EEC-wide ban on new investment in South Africa? Does the Foreign Secretary accept that such

a policy would be neither disinvestment nor disengagement, but a worthwhile and effective way of securing the sort of changes that we all want to see in South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the value of approaching these questions in consultation with our partners in the European Community, which is why we issued the statement that we did on behalf of all the Foreign Ministers on Monday. He has not succeeded in persuading me that the proposal that he has in mind would be of value.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, faced with the increasing tide of black violence in South Africa, which includes murder, torture and alleged cannibalism, the South African Government had no choice but to bring in these emergency powers to protect innocent black lives? Will he also accept that the intervention of EC Foreign Ministers and of well-meaning Anglican bishops does nothing to encourage South Africa towards peaceful change?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand that Governments of all sorts must consider what action is necessary to check violence and disorder. However, I do not find it easy to conclude that the measures taken by the South African Government at the weekend represent the best way of achieving the sort of progress that we want in South Africa. Nor is it right to conclude that we should refrain from commenting and pronouncing upon the aspects of the South African regime which we believe are unhelpful to the future of all people of that country.

Mr. Winnick: Leaving aside the disgraceful remarks of apologists for South Africa that we have just heard, are not the present events in South Africa the inevitable result of the policies that have been pursued in that country since 1948? When will its rulers recognise that while the majority of people in that country are denied political and human rights there will never be peace? Is it the Foreign Secretary's intention to recall the British ambassador? Would that not be the most appropriate step to take at this time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have long made clear our view that the policy of apartheid on which the South African Government rest their case is misconceived, unjust, inappropriate and indefensible. Having said that, we think that the least helpful thing that we could do would be to withdraw our ambassador. One reason why we have an ambassador in post is precisely so that we can make clear to the South African Government the views of this Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there is a statement on this matter later. I shall allow a short run of questions, but those who are fortunate enough to catch my eye now may not find it so easy later.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not think that there is to be a statement.

Mr. Speaker: I have it wrong, and I apologise.

Sir Peter Blaker: While the actions of the South African Government are very much to be deplored, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that all the so-called front-line states of central and southern Africa are trading vigorously with South Africa? Does he know of any proposal from any of those countries to impose economic sanctions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that a number of the front-line states have said that their relationship with South Africa would prevent them from complying with any recommendation for economic sanctions.

Mr. Steel: Will the Foreign Secretary make it quite clear to the South African Government that our Government believe that an imaginative and humanitarian gesture, such as the release of Nelson Mandela, would do far more to calm the position in South Africa than the introduction of all the instruments of oppression that have occurred during the last few days?

If that is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's view, what concrete steps is he prepared to take other than spilling out the adjectives of condemnation on South Africa? Will he take a lead from the American Congress and at least consider selective sanctions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I and the Government have made it plain on many occasions that the South African Government need to take bold action to restore the possibility of dialogue, including the step mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman. That does not lead me to conclude that they are likely to be encouraged in that direction by the imposition of sanctions. I well understand why those who deplore the policies of the South African Government as much as I do would like to see something being done. It is only after the most careful judgment that we have reached the plain conclusion that sanctions are likely to have the opposite effect to that desired.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it should be no part of British Government policy, nor would it be in British interests, to add fuel to any fire in South Africa? Will he continue to resist the siren voices of those who suggest that disinvestment would be in the interests of faster progress? That would surely be ineffective, unworkable and least in the interests of those whom it was designed to assist.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have a great deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend's point. It was very well put by Mrs. Helen Suzman in Europe the other day, when she said:

> "Such action in fact blunts the only weapon that Blacks have, or are in the process of acquiring—the economic muscle that accompanies upward mobility on the economic ladder by virtue of greater skills and increased consumer power."

Mr. Robert Hughes: While major differences remain between some of us and the Secretary of State, will he accept that many of us warmly endorse his call for bold steps to be taken by South Africa, such as the ending of detention, the release of people detained without trial and the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela? Having said that, may I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman why his speech yesterday was bereft of even the most timid proposal to try to make South Africa implement steps to carry out the policies that he has apparently vigorously demanded?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Because after careful consideration, despite the unanimity of views about objectives, we share the view expressed, for example, by Mr. Alan Paton, that those who would pay most grievously for disinvestment would be the black workers in South Africa.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to continue to pay attention to the wisdom of people such as Alan Paton and Helen Suzman, both of whom are friends of mine, the chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, and Chief Buthelezi, among many others, who have given a thorough, far-reaching and impressive analysis of the reasons why disinvestment would be a disastrous course of action. If Her Majesty's Government and the Foreign Ministers of the Ten are now to feel both obliged and entitled to interfere in the domestic affairs of another state, may I ask on what grounds we do not feel both entitled and obliged to proscribe to the Indian Government what they should do about civil violence in Ahmedabad, to the Singhalese Government what they should do about the civil and racial violence in Ceylon, and to many others? Are we not creating the most dangerous precedent?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend overlooks a crucial central fact, which is the extent to which the apartheid regime in South Africa is uniquely built on foundations of racial discrimination.

Mr. Healey: Will the Foreign Secretary also agree that the South African Government, since they were given an uncovenanted diplomatic triumph by the British Prime Minister a year ago, have invaded two neighbouring countries and have sabotaged their solemn commitment to facilitate independence in Namibia? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman believes that sanctions are always counter-productive, why did he support sanctions against Poland, why is he now supporting American sanctions against Nicaragua, secret details of which were revealed by a recent document leaked by a civil servant in a Government Department? Does he not agree that financial sanctions against Iran were instrumental in securing the release of the America hostages?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman has posed a long catalogue of questions. We have always taken a profoundly sceptical view of the value of sanctions anywhere——

Mr. Healey: What about Poland and Nicaragua?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —and many of the points implied in his question are not justified by the facts. As a result of the meeting between President Botha, Mr. Botha the Prime Minister, and myself, there have been a number of significant steps, although not large enough, in the direction of reform in South Africa. The tragedy is that they have been blunted and frustrated by the other actions taken at the same time by the South African Government.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that perhaps the most constructive attitude that could be adopted by Her Majesty's Government would be to encourage South Africa to return to the radical reforms that it was undertaking before the latest violence occurred? Will the British Government do that and, in doing it, support the approach of Bishop Tutu in deploring the violence in the black townships? Will my right hon. and learned Friend outline some of the initiatives which he and the Government will encourage President Botha and his Government to introduce in the Republic of South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to say that we should encourage the South African Government to take further the process of reform that had been under way in recent months. None of those steps go far enough, but they are a start. It is right also to endorse the message from Bishop Tutu that violence of any kind from either side can play only a destructive role in southern Africa.

Nicaragua

11. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of British citizens currently in Nicaragua.

Mr. Renton: There are currently estimated to be about 70 British citizens resident in Nicaragua.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister condemn the actions of one British citizen recently in Nicaragua, an office bearer of the Federation of Conservative Students, Mr. Hoyle, who flaunted his participation with the Contras? Will he assure the House that, no matter where in the world it occurs, the Government will condemn participation with terrorists in actions against any democratically elected Government by any citizen of the United Kingdom, especially those with political responsibilities?

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House remarked last week, I think that I am very much more frightened of the Federation of Conservative Students than the Sandinistas are likely to be. The gentleman who was in Nicaragua was not there as a supporter or delegate of Government policy.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, unlike the citizens of many other countries, British citizens are permitted to go to any part of the world where a country will allow them to enter, and that when they are there they are entitled, by the freedoms that we are allowed, to make statements of their beliefs, whatever those statements are?

Mr. Renton: Yes, that is right. To refer to the original question, I do not think that British citizens who are in Nicaragua will take any great comfort from the decision of the Greater London council, supported by various Labour Members, to twin London with the Nicaraguan capital of Managua. I do not believe that they will find that a fruitful step.

Mr. Foulkes: Why does the Prime Minister condemn some forms of terrorism by some people and not condemn the terrorist action of Mr. Hoyle in taking part in this Contra attack? Why will the Minister not confirm that the Government are equally against that sort of action by an office bearer of the Federation of Conservative Students, which was quite outwith the bounds of any reasonable action? Why is the Minister facing both ways on this issue? Will he now condemn the action of this office bearer, Mr. Hoyle?

Mr. Renton: I suppose that I should congratulate the hon. Gentleman, on his return from Nicaragua, on having joined what *The Observer* described as the

"Sandanista bib-and-beret brigade".

It is quite clear that the problems of Central America, including Nicaragua, will not be solved by force, from whichever side it comes. That is why we support the Contradora process and are pleased with the progress that was made at the meeting that ended yesterday.

Immigration

12. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of recent changes in immigration policy for matters within his responsibility.

Mr. Renton: Recent changes in immigration policy have concerned the imposition of a visa regime on Sri Lanka and the introduction of changes in the immigration rules. Both these subjects were debated in the House last night. These changes have caused or will cause an increase in entry clearance work overseas.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Has the Minister had the opportunity to read the report in the *Official Report* of the speech of the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet), who argued with some emotion that we are dealing with individuals and not statistics? Is he aware that queues in the different capitals and entry clearance posts in the subcontinent are likely to lengthen? Surely this is an inhumane way of dealing with the problem of immigration. Applicants are having to wait for 12 months and more for interviews. Will he accept that it is desperately important to consider humanely the possibility of applicants being interviewed far more quickly?

Mr. Renton: We must accept that if there is a change in the immigration rules which allows another new category to apply for entrance to the United Kingdom—for example, the husbands of women who are now settled in this country but not British citizens—there will be an increase in entry clearance work. We shall do our best within the resources available to us to ensure that the delays in the queues are kept to a minimum. We shall consider the possibility of equalising queue lengths between different countries in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Stokes: Is my hon. Friend aware that, contrary to the views of all the Opposition parties, including the Liberal party, the vast majority of people, including many immigrants, respect the Government's immigration policies as being firm and fair?

Mr. Renton: I very much appreciate my hon. Friend's point. When I was on the Indian subcontinent earlier this year and had the chance to see the entry clearance officers at work in Pakistan and Bangladesh, I came strongly to the conclusion that they try to apply the immigration rules as fairly and decently as possible.

Cyprus

13. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the problems of Cyprus with the Secretary General of the United Nations; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of that discussion.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend had discussions with the Secretary General on 23 January and remain in close and frequent contact with him through official channels about the Cyprus problem. The Secretary General has made clear his determination to continue his efforts to bring about a settlement in Cyprus and we have expressed our strong support for his initiative.

Mr. Haynes: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that that is not good enough? Has he read early-day motion 915, which refers to the 11 years during which there has been an invasion of Cyprus? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, under a complacent Conservative Administration, Hitler invaded many European nations? What will the hon. Gentleman do about these problems? I am not satisfied with his answer. Action must be taken. Inaction has gone on for long enough. The problems should be sorted out.

Mr. Renton: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern. We take a serious view of anything that worsens the situation in Cyprus. For that reason we opposed, and called for the reversal of, the so-called declaration of independence in 1983. We drafted and secured the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 541, which deplored the Turkish-Cypriot action and declared that it was legally invalid. We believe that all sides should do their utmost to support the Secretary General's efforts.

Mr. Crouch: I do not want to waste the time of the House——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Everyone else has done so.

Mr. Crouch: Does my hon. Friend realise that he has just answered the question that I wanted to put to him about the fact that the Government confirm that they strongly support United Nations resolutions 541 and 550 and recognise the Government of the Republic of Cyprus as the only Government in Cyprus?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for endowing me with the quality of perceptiveness, which I did not know I possessed. My hon. Friend has put the Government's position accurately and well.

Later——

Mr. Deakins: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to draw your attention and that of the House to the fact that today's Foreign Office questions mark the end of the experimental period that began earlier this year, during which European Community questions temporarily lost their separate slot. This experiment was agreed between the usual channels, although there was inadequate consultation on either side. To take today's questions as an example, only two European Community questions were asked compared with the seven or eight that would previously have been asked. Whatever one may think of the European Community, it is not being viewed in the same light as the United States of America, the middle east, South Africa or any other part of the world, although it has the power to tax the British people and legislate for them, a power which other parts of the world do not have. May I therefore express the hope through you, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the House will take on board these comments, which have been conveyed to him separately? I understand that some of the minority parties also feel strongly about this issue.

Sir John Farr: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There were 81 oral questions on the Order Paper today to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, only nine of which were devoted to European Community matters. Most of us believe that the experiment has been a great success and we hope that it will continue in a permanent form. There seems to be no reason to devote 20 minutes of Question Time to the European Community when so many other pressing matters in the rest of the world await attention.

Sir Russell Johnston: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal party does not agree with the view of the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). It feels that you, Mr. Speaker, ought to exercise some benign influence over the Government to ensure that these matters are properly ventilated.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I add my support to the point made by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins). The experiment has been a failure in the sense that the European Community impinges on so much of the business of this House. Whatever views hon. Members may have about the European Community, I believe they would prefer that slot to be reinstated, because this experiment has been a failure.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): It might be for the convenience of the House if I drew its attention to the written answer that was given on 22 March, which initiated the present experiment. It said:

"The experiment will last until the summer recess to allow an opportunity for its success to be evaluated. Further discussions will then take place through the usual channels to determine whether the new arrrangement should become permanent."
—[*Official Report*, 22 March 1985; Vol. 75 c. 625.]

May I suggest that we should have those discussions rather than that they should be continued at this momemt.

Local Authorities (Financial Assets)

3.32 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his proposal to introduce retrospective legislation to take further control over the financial assets of local authorities.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): Although the Government welcome the news when a council replaces its mortgage lending with private finance, it is obviously wrong when mortgages are transferred to a bank or other institution en bloc without the consent of the individual borrowers. In many cases, the risk is not transferred to the new lender. Such transactions are artificial and have been entered into only to circumvent the capital controls approved by the House.

I therefore announced yesterday, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), that we propose to legislate at the earliest opportunity to give home owners with a local authority mortgage the right to decide whether the local authority may dispose of its interest to a specified purchaser, and a transfer without consent would be invalid. So far, relatively few councils have entered into such en bloc transactions, but a good many more are in the pipeline.

Because deals can be struck swiftly, we shall ask the House, in order to give immediate protection to borrowers, to give retrospective effect to the change as from midnight last night. I wrote yesterday to the chairmen of the local authority associations offering to consult them on the details of the proposal.

Mr. Straw: Is the Secretary of State aware that his announcement, which slipped out in a written answer last night, is outrageous and ill-considered, and has nothing to do with the merits of such deals or with protecting individual mortgagors, and everything to do with the Government's crazy economic policy, under which dictatorial controls have been imposed to prevent local authorities from spending their money on capital programmes to build houses, help industry and create jobs? If these en bloc deals are a bad idea now, why were they a good idea in February when his Department told the *Financial Times* that

"it was happy to encourage this kind of deal."

Is the Secretary of State further aware of the immediate impact that his statement will have, that Calderdale will lose £3 million of planned housing starts, and that Wigan will lose £12 million? How many local authorities and housing associations will be affected? How much is involved? How many jobs will be lost? Will the policy apply to the United Kingdom or to England and Wales only?

Does the Secretary of State not understand that, to the best of my knowledge, every authority has written into these deals protection for the mortgagors? If there were technical problems in that respect, they could have been dealt with through consultation with the local authority associations.

Is not this measure a further example of the Secretary of State's vindictiveness? No such restrictions have been imposed on building societies, which normally expressly provide for the transfer of mortgages without the consent of the mortgagor. Is the Secretary of State proposing retrospective legislation to deal with that?

Is the Secretary of State further aware that to legislate retrospectively on such a matter is a gross abuse of the democratic procedure? It is the fourth time that he has done that. Does he agree that

"Retrospective legislation is a damned slippery slope. Let the House dig its heels in and say that it will have no more of it." —[*Official Report*, 2 March 1965; Vol. 707, c. 1264.]?

Has he forgotten that those were his exact words in the House when he was a Back Bencher on the way up, rather than a Secretary of State on the way out?

Mr. Jenkin: It is astonishing that the hon. Gentleman should consider it perfectly proper that a local authority should sell the mortgages of all its house purchasers over their heads, without even consulting them, and transfer the obligation in forms which do not even transfer the risk. When, during the debates on the Local Government Act, there was a question of transferring the Greater London council mortgages, the hon. Gentleman was one of the first to insist that that should be done only with the consent of the borrowers. His indignation is synthetic.

The hon. Gentleman has asked whether the measure applies only in England and Wales. The question that I answered yesterday applies only to England and Wales. I am not responsible for these matters in Scotland. He asked for other facts and figures. In December 1984, when we gave the House an estimate of the receipts in the year 1985-86 from the sale of local authority assets, we did not take any account of block sales of mortgages, such as we are discussing today. Therefore——

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is their money.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman shouts from a sedentary position that it is their money.

Dr. Cunningham: It is.

Mr. Jenkin: The truth is it is also the mortgagor's mortgage, and he is entitled to be consulted.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the way in which the Liverpool city council went cap in hand to the Banque Parisbas to sell its mortgage book for £30 million was a shabby deal to get round my right hon. Friend's prudent cash limits? Will he confirm that locked up in local authority mortgage books are £5,000 million, which are ratepayers' assets? Does he agree that it would be much better if those assets were unlocked for the benefit of the ratepayers, and if the borrowers transferred their liability to building societies and banks, which have much more sympathy and understanding for the relationship between the home owner and the borrower, and for cases of hardship and arrears? Would my right hon. Friend encourage every borrower to transfer his or her mortgage to building societies and banks accordingly?

Mr. Jenkin: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that it is a perfectly proper and welcome transaction when a local authority, as it were, accelerates the receipt of capital assets by refinancing its mortgages to the private sector, provided it does so with the consent of the borrowers. The Government have repeatedly made it clear that we consider it an entirely appropriate way of generating capital receipts.

Many people, both inside and outside the House, were taken aback by Liverpool city council's transaction with

[Mr. Jenkin]

the Banque Parisbas. There were conflicting views about the legality of the procedure, which is why we shall take an early opportunity to legislate to make the position absolutely clear.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Secretary of State accept that the homes of many private tenants in my constituency are constantly sold over their heads from one landlord to another? If that is legal and acceptable, why should it be wrong for mortgage loans to be transferred without the individual approval of the borrower?

Mr. Jenkin: I think that most hon. Members would have been astonished if it had been said a few months ago that it would be perfectly acceptable for a local authority simply to sell a mortgage to a building society without even consulting the tenants. The hon. Gentleman took part in the debates on the Local Government Bill, when the provision was pressed hard on the Government—not that it needed to be, because we recognise the need to obtain the tenants' consent—that when GLC mortgages are transferred, that should be done with the mortgagors' consent. The disposal of freeholds on property where the tenant has a lease is an entirely different branch of the law, and does not come within this question.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the statements by the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Blackburn, (Mr. Straw), show how much of an armlock the hard Left has on the Labour party? Does he further agree that not only is the hon. Member for Blackburn supporting the madcap Marxists on the Liverpool council, but he is what we all believed him to be, Mr. Hatton's poodle?

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend lays bare the inherent contradictions in the attitude of those on the Opposition Front Bench, who purport to show their respectable face in the House, where they are parliamentarians believing in the rule of law, but who never fail to give aid and comfort to the wreckers who do not believe in the rule of law.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Is the Secretary of State aware that the appalling decision that he has taken, in what can be described only as an underhand and dubious manner, will in effect deprive my local authority in Wigan of £12 million that could be spent on housing and education projects that are badly needed in that town? Can he tell me and those people how he can justify that unwarranted intrusion into legitimate local government business?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman might suggest to his local authority that it could secure the receipts that it hopes to get if it persuaded the borrowers that it would be right to transfer their mortgages to the institutions that the council may have in mind. If that was done, there could be no possible objection. I wish the hon. Gentleman luck.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Why is it wrong for a council to sell a mortgage without the consent of the borrower if it is all right for a building society to sell a mortgage without the consent of the borrower?

Mr. Jenkin: I am advised that it is almost impossible for one building society to sell a mortgage to another without the consent of the borrower—

Mr. Straw: Not true.

Mr. Jenkin: If the hon. Gentleman consults the legal textbooks on the matter—

Mr. Straw: I have.

Mr. Jenkin: —he will find that building societies are always advised to do that. Recently, one or two banks have entered into such block transactions, but the fact is that they have not succeeded in transferring the risk, and they remain in a contractual relationship with the borrowers. We are concerned with the propriety of public authorities—local authorities—and I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should take that view.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): May I thank the Secretary of State for his vindictive announcement this afternoon? Does he realise that it gives Back Benchers such as myself who are of relatively recent origin hope for the next Labour Government? If it is all right for the Tories retrospectively to take away powers from councils such as Liverpool, Lambeth and the others that have been mentioned today, it will be all right for the next Labour Government to reverse the decisions, rebate that money and give it back to the local authorities. In addition, they will be able to have retrospective legislation for others such as the miners who have been attacked by the Government and those who have lost their jobs. If retrospective legislation is all right for the Tories, it will be all right for Labour next time.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to say that he has clearly totally misunderstood what was said in yesterday's answer and what I have said today. Nothing in the answer in any way affects the transactions entered into by Liverpool or any other transaction entered into by a council before midnight last night. We want the legislation to run from the date of the announcement, to protect the borrowers and to ensure that their consent is obtained. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support that.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): When will Ministers stop this game of cat and mouse with local authorities? Does not the right hon. Gentleman's statement demonstrate more of the sour grapes at the Treasury that local authorities are doing what Ministers keep exhorting them to do—deal with public assets?

Mr. Jenkin: I detect behind the hon. Gentleman's question the dissatisfaction with the present capital control system that I share. He will know that I have been in discussion with local authority associations for some months now in an endeavour to find a better system which will achieve the Treasury's objective of more certain control over the total of local authority capital spending while leaving local authorities with greater certainty and flexibility, so that they can plan their capital programmes further ahead.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Before my right hon. Friend pours more money into the bottomless pit of Liverpool city council, will he ensure that all grants have stringent conditions attached to them so that Liverpool cannot spend money as it wishes and so that the

Government have some control of public money? Will he ensure that he does not make the same mistake that Liverpool city council is making and announce in a written answer on Friday that the Government propose to go through the national park of Dartmoor on the southern route south of Okehampton?

Mr. Jenkin: I admire my hon. Friend's geographical ingenuity. I have to tell him that I have to make payments to Liverpool and any other council in accordance with the laws passed by the House.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): How many people made representations to the Secretary of State alleging that their interests were not being looked after in these transactions? How many others will lose the chance of housing this year? The right hon. Gentleman knows that the move has been supported by the Labour party and by councils such as Calderdale, which are balanced. He saw this coming but has decided to act only now. The Audit Commission told him that his Department should maximise assets for house building rather than reduce, let alone retrospectively, at the tail end of the Session, the chance of people having housing. The right hon. Gentleman has presided over a massive deficit in housing and he appears to want it to continue for the rest of the financial year.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman seems to be under the misapprehension that something I have said today discourages local authorities from refinancing their mortgages in the normal way. On the contrary, I have gone out of my way to stress that the Government welcome that being done when it is done in the normal way by securing the consent of the mortgagor. If Calderdale or any other county council wants to enter into such a transaction, it needs only to secure the consent of its tenants—which, if the hon. Gentleman is right, will benefit the local community and be readily forthcoming.

Hon. Member for Linlithgow

3.47 pm

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether this would be a convenient moment to raise a matter concerning the third report of the Foreign Affairs Committee which deals with the events of 1 and 2 May 1982. Paragraph 1.6 of that report states that there is sufficient indirect evidence to support the view that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had supplied Committee documents to the press — *The Guardian* and the *New Statesman*.

I have received a letter from the hon. Member in which he says that he did not leak those documents to the papers concerned and nor did anyone acting for him. The Committee accepts what the hon. Member has written and I will therefore propose that the Committee makes that clear in a separate report to the House. I know that the Committee will wish me to express regrets for any embarrassment caused to the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Homelessness

3.48 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During a visit to the north-east last week, the Minister for Housing and Construction said that, in the next fortnight, he hoped to announce further measures to alleviate the real problem of homelessness. In view of substantial public and parliamentary concern about the problem of homelessness and as two weeks takes us into the recess, will you, Mr. Speaker, in the presence of the Secretary of State for the Environment, join me in expressing the hope that a statement will be made while the House is still sitting?

Mr. Speaker: There is very little time.

Sports Grounds (Safety and Control)

3.53 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have expressed your concern in the past—most recently yesterday—about reports to this House being made available in advance to the media. I understand that the report of Mr. Justice Popplewell's committee of inquiry into safety and control at sports grounds, about which there is to be a statement, was made available yesterday to the media under an embargo. I checked at the Vote Office at 11 am and was told that the report was not available. I was also told that there was no indication of when it would be made available to hon. Members. I was subsequently informed that it was made available at or about midday.

As the report relates to very important matters, not least to the death and injury of our constituents, many hon. Members can see no good reason why reports to this House should be made available to the media under an embargo but should be denied to Members of the House until hours before a statement is to be made, thus putting us in a very poor position to put questions to the responsible Minister on a report which was made available to the media long before it was made available to hon. Members. Can you please, Mr. Speaker, do something to ensure that Government Departments stop this practice, which causes considerable annoyance to all hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: I am not certain that I can do much more than continue to express my sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman said, and with what was said yesterday and previously. It is a matter for the Government, not for me. However, the Leader of the House is here and will have noted what has been said.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I should say that I regret what has occurred. The plan was that the report would be published at 10.30 this morning, which I hope the House will feel would have given hon. Members enough time to consider it carefully.

With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement. The Government have today published the interim report of the inquiry into safety and control at sports grounds under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Popplewell, established following the tragic fire at Bradford city football ground, and the events at Birmingham city on 11 May. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are both deeply grateful for the speedy, clear and thorough way in which the chairman and his two assessors have tackled this difficult and important task.

The inquiry concludes that the Bradford fire was probably caused by the accidental dropping of a lighted match or cigarette or tobacco on to accumulated rubbish below the stand; that had the guide to safety at sports grounds—the "green guide"—been complied with, the tragedy would not have occurred; and that the riot at Birmingham—which the police could not reasonably have foreseen—was caused by spectators bent from the outset on violence. No one reading the report, or who followed the public hearings in Bradford, can doubt that the inquiry has investigated these matters as thoroughly as possible.

The inquiry makes 32 recommendations, eight of which are provisional. They fall into two groups: those concerned with safety and those concerned with control. I am making available separately a written statement dealing with each of the recommendations.

The safety recommendations include several designed to improve arrangements at sports grounds by, for example, improving evacuation procedures, the training of stewards, the provision of fire-fighting equipment and increasing the scope of safety certificates. In all those cases the Government will be inviting the local authorities, the police and the sports authorities to respond immediately to the spirit of the recommendations. The Government will issue a fresh edition of the guide to safety at sports grounds, the green guide, in the light of the inquiry's final report. But they will also ask certificating authorities and the police, in exercising their powers to take full account of the recommendations for amending the green guide, before the issue of the new edition. There is no need for them to wait.

On crowd control, the inquiry has made a number of important recommendations concerning membership cards and closed circuit television, the creation of new criminal offences relating to smoke bombs and the throwing of missiles and the need for a more suitable police radio.

On membership cards, the inquiry recommends that urgent consideration be given by football clubs in England and Wales to introducing a membership system so as to exclude visiting fans. Also recommended is that closed circuit television be introduced at league football grounds. The Government strongly support the television recommendation, and have already made clear their support for a scheme of membership cards to help exclude troublemakers. A Football League working party is considering the options and I would urge the league and the Football Association to take heed of the recommendations of the inquiry by seeking jointly to reach positive conclusions at the earliest practicable date.

It is also proposed that new offences should be created making criminal the possession of smoke bombs in football grounds and the throwing of missiles. This proposal will be carefully considered for possible inclusion in the public order legislation that the Government hope to introduce next Session. The Directorate of Telecommunications at the Home Office will also consider, as a matter of urgency, how best to meet the concern expressed about the personal police radios used at Bradford.

In its provisional conclusions, the inquiry states that it is minded to recommend changes to the provisions of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975; that the police be given additional powers of search and arrest; and that consideration be given to the creation of a specific offence of chanting obscene or racialist abuse at a sports ground. We shall, of course, consider with care any recommendations that the inquiry makes on these and other points in the final report.

I hope that it will also be convenient for me to bring the House up to date on matters relating to safety and control since my statement on 13 May. First, under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act I have designated all the qualifying grounds of clubs in divisions 3 and 4 in the Football League in England and Wales, as well as in divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League. The necessary orders were laid on 19 July and come into force on 9 August. From the latter date, clubs will be required to apply for safety certificates

before admitting any spectators. I have made it clear to the certifying authorities that the expectation is that they will work swiftly, normally by means of issuing interim certificates. In some cases, the best way of providing immediate protection—while also reducing the costs of implementation — may well be to restrict attendance ceilings in grounds or parts of grounds.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has decided for his part not to proceed at present by extending designation in Scotland beyond its existing limits. However, he has arranged for all non-designated clubs and all governing bodies in sport in Scotland to conduct an urgent review of ground safety in co-operation with their local fire authorities.

Secondly, all uncertificated grounds of the third and fourth divisions of the Football League, of the first and second divisions of the Scottish Football League, and of the first and second divisions of the Rugby League have been inspected as a result of the request that I and my right hon. Friend made to chief fire officers and firemasters. In addition, accommodation for spectators at the larger cricket grounds, Rugby Union grounds, race courses, motor racing tracks, greyhound tracks, tennis clubs and athletics grounds has been inspected.

Chief fire officers and firemasters have sent copies of their findings to the management of the sports grounds showing what remedial measures have to be taken. In some cases, this will involve the complete closure of a stand until rebuilding or remedial work has been completed. In other cases, strict limits are being placed on the number of spectators allowed into the stand. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport will be looking further at the financial implications with the interests concerned in his working group on the financing of safety improvements. Managements have responded in a co-operative way and have either set necessary work in hand or are considering how to comply with the requirements. Local authorities and local fire authorities have sufficient statutory powers to ensure that essential fire safety requirements are complied with. These will in no way be affected by the separate proposals directed towards streamlining the present law on fire precautions published yesterday in a consultative document and which I am inviting the inquiry also to consider in the context of its work.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are grateful to chief fire officers and firemasters for the prompt, efficient and careful manner in which this survey has been carried out. A digest of the reports will be submitted to the inquiry.

Thirdly, the House will, of course, be aware of the rapid passage through both Houses of the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol Etc.) Bill. It will be in force by the beginning of the football season.

Fourthly, steps have also been taken to enhance police effectiveness next season. In England and Wales the Association of Chief Police Officers has introduced a new system for exchanging information about the conduct of fans, which should assist in anticipating and preventing trouble. Three of the Home Office photographic vehicles will be available to be deployed at football matches, together with two experimental high-definition tripod-mounted cameras. This is in addition to the £500,000 worth of closed circuit television equipment purchased through funds provided by the Football Trust.

Fifthly, my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport has helped to promote and draw up a Council of Europe convention on spectator violence which was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers yesterday.

There is no single, simple method of making sports grounds safe and free from violence, but I believe that the steps taken in the past few months, coupled with the implementation of the important recommendations of Mr. Justice Popplewell's inquiry, have already made, and will make, a significant contribution towards preserving football as a major spectator sport.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): This report makes profoundly depressing reading. We must pay tribute to Mr. Justice Popplewell for the care with which, in the limited time available to him, he has looked into these matters. The account of the events leading up to the Bradford fire is particularly heart-rending in the aftermath of Sunday's moving memorial service. The description of what took place in Birmingham is a sickening catalogue of mindless violence and brutality.

We need to know what can be done urgently to prevent such outrages and tragedies from happening again. In that context, the press handout accompanying the report is simply impractical in declaring:

"The Committee has produced an interim report so that safety levels can be improved quickly before the start of the new football season in August".

The new football season begins in just over three weeks and, although the report contains a number of useful and sometimes important recommendations, hardly any of them could be implemented and have a noticeable effect in time for 17 August.

For example, recommendations about improving the efficiency and increasing the responsibilities of stewards assume that stewards can be trained to be some kind of super-efficient élite corps. Anyone who knows the real world of football stewarding knows that this is more easily said than done. The report points out that in Bradford, for example, the ages of the stewards ranged from 73 to 12.

Again, the report's recommendations on installation of perimeter fencing does not resolve the two conflicting roles of such fencing as, on the one hand, a protection of the pitch against hooligans and on the other a prison penning in potential fire victims in circumstances of panic.

Certain recommendations do not seem to have been thought through. For example, the proposed ban on all cars being parked within a quarter of a mile of football grounds means that law-abiding householders will be prevented from parking their cars outside their homes. This will affect my constituents, for example, and no doubt many thousands of other people.

Again, immediate designation of all sports grounds with a capacity of 500 or more as recommended, could affect 50,000 small grounds. Is this remotely practicable? Again, there are serious doubts among the football authorities and the police about the principle and practicality of two Popplewell recommendations — that of admission by membership tickets only and that only registered supporters of home teams should be permitted to attend games. This is an unprecedented proposal with serious implications, which Mr. Justice Popplewell does not seem to have considered.

Even if we set aside these issues, has anything been done about such recommendations? We are now nearly two months beyond the time limit set by the Government

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

for practical schemes for membership cards to be introduced by the football authorities. Nothing has been decided and all that we now get from the Government on this are further pious hopes, expressed by the Home Secretary.

Again, only limited progress has been made for plans to install a universal system of closed circuit television and the funds available from the Football Trust do not begin to match the need here.

Most of Mr. Justice Popplewell's other recommendations have been met by the Home Secretary only with vague expressions of good will. People will be "invited" to do this, "consultations" will take place on that, "consideration" will be given to the other. Some points have been noted, others are to be studied. Hopes are voiced. The Government express their readiness to stand by.

The problem of fascist involvement, with which the report deals in disturbing detail, is not confronted by the Home Secretary. While the report has an excellent and well thought-out description of the nature of violence that we encounter in our society, and makes it clear that the violence in football grounds is only a manifestation in one group of places of the violence that is inherent throughout our society, Mr. Justice Popplewell's terms of reference preclude him from making any recommendations on this matter. We have heard nothing from the Home Secretary today about this profoundly important issue. But, above all, the press handout on the report admits that the inquiry did not deal with financial questions. Of the 24 immediate recommendations of this report, 13 require immediate and substantial outlay or entail serious financial consequences. There are no proposals from the Government to deal with that problem, only an examination to take place on some unspecified date. Even the most prosperous clubs, and they are few enough in number, do not have adequate resources to carry out the recommendations contained in the report and which the Government appear to endorse in principle. The Football Trust simply does not have the money left to fund these proposals.

The only solution is the equivalent of the Horserace Betting Levy Board, a football levy board, which will return to the game some of the massive revenues that the Treasury extracts from it. That is the approach of the Labour party and that is what it advocates, because pious hopes will not provide remedies for the serious problems vividly described in this report. What we need is action and that is not what we are getting from the Government.

Mr. Brittan: Many people outside the ranks of Government supporters will be disappointed at the carping response of the official Opposition spokesman to these proposals. The response was not only carping but inconsistent. On the one hand, the right hon. Gentleman calls for the expenditure of substantial sums of public money and urgent action, and on the other hand he objects to some of the recommendations in the report because they are unprecedented. He must make up his mind about whether what occurred this year illustrates a situation that is unprecedented and that requires action, or one to which conventional solutions can be applied.

Of course the financial questions are important and, as I indicated in my statement, my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport and his working party are engaged in discussions about those. It is a misrepresentation both of Mr. Justice Popplewell's report and of the Government's response to it, to imply that nothing can be done or that nothing is being done in the short term. Opposition Members were as anxious as anyone and more anxious than some that Mr. Justice Popplewell should make an interim report. I indicated that he was most welcome to do so and that it was up to him to decide whether he thought that would be useful. He did so decide and he was right. It is in the nature of things that when an interim report is produced within weeks, its recommendations cannot be instantly implemented. But it does not follow from that that it is not worth doing, because the implementation process can be started that much earlier.

The report contained specific recommendations about fire precautions related to the green guide and its contents. I have said from the Dispatch Box that, although we are producing a new edition, those recommendations should be regarded as the guidance of Government from this moment on. The right hon. Gentleman thinks it is clever to talk in a carping way about some things being recommended and others being subject to guidance. Some of these matters, such as safety, are not determined by Government issuing detailed edicts affecting the whole country: they are determined by local authorities considering applications in accordance with Government guidance. I have had no complaints that that guidance has not been followed, because invariably it has been.

In announcing today that that guidance will be varied in accordance with the recommendations in Mr. Justice Popplewell's report, we are operating in the proper way to ensure that safety requirements are properly complied with in the light of the new recommendations. For the right hon. Gentleman to suggest anything else may score a few cheap political points, but it will lead people who are attending grounds to have unnecessary anxieties, and it does less than justice to the inquiry and to the local authorities who will implement this report.

Similar considerations apply to the other matters raised by the right hon. Gentleman. Everybody realises that the recommendations about the training of stewards and perimeter fencing cannot be implemented instantly. In matters such as training, it is obvious that the earlier the recommendation is made about what should be done the better and the sooner an improvement will come. I ask the House to take the view that this report is necessary. It is by definition a partial view of the position, but it makes important and valuable recommendations, which are being pursued vigorously and urgently.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that there are two other statements after this and a ten-minute Bill. This is an important Back-Bench day and I ask for brief questions, please.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that I welcome the report and his statement? Both are condemnations of the state of many football grounds and many spectators, and fully justify the tough line taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by the Minister responsible for sport. Will the Home Secretary press ahead and ask the football authorities to implement as many of the excellent

recommendations as possible? Will he have further consultations about the controversial issue of membership cards and the designation of all sports grounds?

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There will be consultations. I hope that the House will feel that membership cards have a useful part to play in crowd control. Plainly, that is not a view held only by the Government, because it was authoritatively supported by Mr. Justice Popplewell and his inquiry. It is therefore incumbent upon the football authorities to consider the different options and to press ahead urgently. I welcome the fact that the Football League investigation into these matters will produce a report in September. I hope the Football Association will also feel able to enter into discussions on this important matter.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): We on the Liberal Benches welcome the recommendations of the Popplewell report. Before the Home Secretary introduces new and largely unworkable legislation, which could jeopardise the traditional appeal of our unique national game, will he not think again about encouraging local authorities to operate more closely with football clubs and try to find a solution in that way? The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) suggested a levy board. Would the Home Secretary accept that if only 10 per cent. of the money spent on transferring, buying and selling footballers had been spent on improving grounds we would now have the best stadiums in the world?

Mr. Brittan: I entirely accept the last point made by the hon. Gentleman. It is a fair point. I also agree that co-operation between football authorities and local authorities is important. He referred to the traditional appeal of football, but one cannot help thinking rather wrily and sadly of the events on 11 May. They were indications that not all that infrequently the traditional appeal has turned into something rather more horrific. In the light of that we have to contemplate action which is regrettable but wholly necessary.

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in trials following the violence in the coal strike it proved difficult to get convictions, despite acts of obvious violence? Will he bear those difficulties in mind when shaping the legislation and the steps he proposes to take to deal with violence at sports events?

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is an important point to take into account. Sometimes it is a question of the law, but more often it is a question of law enforcement and the availability of evidence. The introduction of closed circuit television in some 30 grounds, coupled with the availability of the Home Office equipment I have referred to, will be an important step in that direction.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Is the Home Secretary aware that while much of the Popplewell report will be welcomed by the football world, much of it bears all the hallmarks of an interim report, in that the judge and his assessors did not have time to look at the many and diverse problems facing football?

Is the Home Secretary aware that the football world will be particularly critical of the blanket membership card scheme and the banning of away supporters? Are the Home Secretary and Mr. Justice Popplewell convinced that if my team, Derby County, came to London, I should not go along and give them a cheer? God knows they need it. That is not practical and it is not on.

Is the Home Secretary aware that on behalf of the all-party football committee I presented to Mr. Justice Popplewell a membership card scheme for away supporters that is much more practical than the scheme that he is offering?

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, if any or all of the proposals are to be implemented by the football clubs, the Government cannot stand from giving them the necessary financial assistance, whether through a levy board or other means. Otherwise, the Home Secretary will go down in history as having helped to kill off our national game.

Mr. Brittan: I do not think that the House will find it surprising that an interim report bears all the hallmarks of an interim report. That is inevitable and right and proper. Mr. Justice Popplewell carefully takes heed of that inevitable fact by distinguishing between firm recommendations and provisional recommendations. That seems to be a sensible approach. He and the rest of the committee will reflect on the provisional recommendations and consider them further as they proceed with their work. No doubt others will comment on them.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned membership card schemes. Mr. Justice Popplewell does not suggest that the proposal referred to by the hon. Gentleman is the only one or that it is free from difficulties.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): It is the one that Popplewell recommends.

Mr. Brittan: It is indeed, but Mr. Justice Popplewell points out the difficulties and suggests that there are other approaches. The right course is for the football authorities to look at the desirability of schemes in the light of the report and I hope that they will come forward urgently with practical, sensible positive and enforceable proposals.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that most reasonable people will feel that his response to the report is a reasonable balance between practicality and urgency? Is not there an essential contradiction in the view of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that the Government should take immediate action and his statement that the Government are proposing action that cannot be implemented within three weeks?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend is right. The right hon. Gentleman's response was riddled with inconsistencies.

Mr. Madden: What practical steps is the Home Secretary taking to implement the recommendation:

"There should be urgent consultation between the Health & Safety Executive and the fire authorities and the local authorities as to how best to coordinate and communicate their inspections and reports"?

Is the Home Secretary aware that many of the recommendations call for all these bodies to spend money that they do not have and for work to be done by officials whom they do not have, because local authorities have had their incomes reduced by the Government and many have been reorganised, usually ending up with less manpower than previously?

The Home Secretary accuses the Opposition of carping criticism, but does he not understand that he and his

[Mr. Madden]

Government stand accused of complacency, with a maximum of talk about these matters and a minimum of positive action?

Mr. Brittan: I do not accept that for a single moment. The fact that action is being taken is made clear by, for example, the fact that among third and fourth division football grounds, five stands have been the subject of local authority recommendations for closure pending further work and seven grounds have been recommended for reduced spectator capacity. The suggestion that none of this has any practical impact does not stand scrutiny. As for the form of co-operation and consultation recommended in the report, there is nothing in any of the financial measures introduced by the Government that prevents that from occurring.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I pay tribute to Mr. Justice Popplewell not only for the prompt way in which he produced his report but for the sensitive way in which he conducted his inquiry. I know that that view is felt strongly in Bradford. I am sure that the chairman and directors of Bradford city would not seek to deny that points made in the report, which says that much of the action required would have been taken if the necessary resources had been available. Therefore, as the burden of ensuring that a similar tragedy never happens again must now fall jointly on the Government and football representatives, will the Government speed up negotiations with the football representatives to ensure that clubs can take the necessary measures and have the necessary financial resources to do so?

Mr. Brittan: I am sure that my hon. Friend's remarks about Mr. Justice Popplewell and his inquiry will be all the more appreciated because of my hon. Friend's distinguished involvement in the aftermath of the tragic events. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport is sitting on the Government Front Bench and he will certainly take my hon. Friend's comments into account in his deliberations.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I press the Home Secretary on what my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said about money? My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) and I have both been told by the chairman of Chelsea that his club cannot even afford the computer that will be necessary to bring in the desirable modifications. Where is the money to come from? Chelsea is one of the richest clubs.

Mr. Brittan: The idea that there is no money available is belied by the fact that about £7 million has been disbursed by the Football Trust in recent years, and the point made by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) is not without force. However, it is not for me to judge the financial capacity of the football world to deal with these matters. I have said clearly that the financial aspects of the matter are being considered by my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for sport and his working party, and all these matters can be looked at.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): I strongly support the excellent interim report, but will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it is not the Government's intention to give one-off capital grants to football clubs for safety improvements, as that would unfairly discriminate against many other businesses — professional football clubs are businesses — which pay from their own resources for putting the safety of their employees and the public at the top of their priorities?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend's comments will assist the Minister responsible for sport in appreciating that there is more than one view of these matters.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Home Secretary is, of course, aware that the report deals with Elland road football ground, the home of Leeds United, which was in my constituency for 20 years and is now in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who is in Leeds today and on whose behalf I am speaking. I live within a quarter of a mile of the ground and I hope that I will not be stopped from parking my car within a quarter of a mile of the ground.

I welcome the report. Whatever is said by Popplewell, the report will need time for implementation. I only hope that the clubs, the local authorities and the police in every area are sitting down now planning what they will do from 17 August. I do not believe that, even when Popplewell produces his further report, his proposals, desirable as they may be, will deal with the problem

There are three things about Leeds United, the club which I support. In Birmingham, so-called Leeds supporters had pickaxes and wore swastika armbands. They came to the ground drunk. It needs more than Popplewell. I have stood outside Elland road in the past when we had real crowds. What is wrong with society? The report talks about containment; there is something radically wrong with some of the spectators that go to these grounds. We ought to be looking at the causes of it and not just how to stop it.

Mr. Brittan: I appreciate what the right hon. Gentleman says and I welcome the fact that he recognises the value and importance of an interim report which proposes practical measures but was not designed to address the wider issue of the cause of football violence. I am sure that any attempt to do that would not have led to the practical proposals that have come forward.

I can reassure the right hon. Gentleman that the sort of discussions and planning that he commends are taking place throughout the country and specifically in west Yorkshire at the moment.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): While partially accepting some of the recommendations made by Mr. Justice Popplewell, such as those relating to identity cards, television help and so on, I must express to my right hon. and learned Friend my concern that the report seems to put the whole responsibility for what is basically a social disease on football. May I draw to his attention paragraphs 6.55 and 6.58 on punishment? In paragraph 6.55, Mr. Justice Popplewell says:

"I believe there is a good deal of justification for this view"—

that is, that many people think that the sentences are not stiff enough. He goes on to quote Lord Justice Lawton in January 1984, and says:

"We infer that those who have a propensity to use violence are not deterred by fines or by orders imposing only a limited restriction on liberty."

Can we have an assurance from my right hon. and learned Friend that the Government will consider the recommendations and come before the House in the autumn with some much stronger measures that deter hooligans so that we do not face such problems in the future?

Mr. Brittan: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish to misrepresent, however inadvertently, what Mr. Justice Popplewell said on these matters. In fact, he said:

"While the independence of the judiciary of the executive is an important feature of our constitution and courts must feel free to impose in a particular case a sentence which they consider appropriate, it is worth repeating the trenchant words of Lord Justice Lawton".

He then quotes the words of Lord Justice Lawton. In other words, the learned judge is drawing to the attention of the community, and commending, the fact that Lord Justice Lawton pointed out the circumstances in which it was proper and possible to impose severe sentences in cases of the kind which my hon. Friend has in mind. The ability of the courts to respond to that guidance is shown most notably and helpfully perhaps in the Cambridge case, when very severe sentences were imposed.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Although I realise that the report does not deal with Northern Ireland, I welcome the general tendency of it, and observe that we are learning from it. May I press the Home Secretary to comment a little further, following his answer to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), on a membership system to exclude visiting fans? I am positive that there are those who come from Scotland, there are certainly those who come from Northern Ireland, and there are others who come from other parts of the world, who would like to be able to see decent football. Rather than hindering genuine, visiting spectators, should not more attention be given to dealing with the social problem of those who, even as home fans, disrupt society, rather than penalising visiting fans?

Mr. Brittan: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says, but what Mr. Justice Popplewell is saying in that recommendation is that things have reached such a pass in football with regard to football violence that it is necessary to consider taking a measure which otherwise in principle would be intensely undesirable and which would certainly, if implemented, prevent people from doing something which hitherto they have rightly and properly wanted to do. That is a recommendation which cannot be ignored or set aside. The judge explores and explains fully the difficulties, and discusses some of the alternatives. I think it behoves us not to carp at the particular recommendation, but to address the problem and the way of solving it which the judge identifies.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I join in the general congratulations to Mr. Justice Popplewell on the depth and speed of the report, but I take issue with recommendation 20 on membership cards. As gate money is important, particularly to the smaller clubs, and as that gate money comes from regular supporters of the home team, regular supporters of the away team and casual supporters, it is surely damaging to smaller clubs to take away two parts of that gate money. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would be better to have a national membership scheme, and does he join me in regretting that the governing bodies of the sport have consistently prevaricated and procrastinated? One factor that has necessitated the report is that those bodies have not put their house in order. They are now asking the Government to do it for them.

Mr. Brittan: I do not wish to use the opportunity to criticise anybody, but it is an objective fact that the recommendation in the report relating to membership cards has to be seen in the context of a rejection by the football authorities of a national membership scheme of the kind that my hon. Friend commends. What Mr. Justice Popplewell would have said if they had vigorously pursued such a scheme and implemented it, or what he might now say in his final report if they consider the proposal and say, "This is not any good, let us revert to a national scheme", is a matter for speculation today but, I hope, for serious consideration tomorrow.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the Government specifically consider giving financial assistance to struggling third and fourth division clubs? For example, Newport county, as a result of an inspection of its ground by the authorities, has been told that to bring the ground up to safety standards will cost no less than £260,000. If it receives a 75 per cent. grant from the Football Trust, this will leave a sum of between £60,000 and £70,000 to be found, which is money that it just does not have.

Mr. Brittan: I recognise the difficulties identified by the hon. Gentleman, but in many situations it is possible that the clubs concerned have capacity that they do not use in full and that partial closure is, at least in the interim, an option that should be considered.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. and learned Friend take an early opportunity to refute the suggestion that the Government would make any public money available to this so-called sport? As for the correlation made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) between horse racing and the betting levy board, he just does not understand a word of what he is saying. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) that, until the football authorities have the same sort of control that there is in racing, then really there is absolutely nothing that the Labour party has to say on the issue.

Mr. Brittan: I agree with my hon. Friend to the extent that I think the first responsibility is on the football authorities and those who run clubs to make them safe. The Government can introduce legislation relating to the criminal law and to public order, and the learned judge can make a report, with recommendations on safety and other matters, but none of that should divert attention from the fact that the primary responsibility belongs to those who run the game and invite people to attend matches.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): While I recognise that many of the recommendations of the Popplewell inquiry cannot be implemented immediately, can the Home Secretary at least give an assurance that on 17 August clubs will not be opening which do not satisfy the necessary safety requirements?

Mr. Brittan: Clubs which open by then will, if designated, have had to apply for a certificate before that day.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): All Football League and Football Association clubs must surely

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

welcome the recommendations of the report. However, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with me that many of these clubs are unlikely to carry out those recommendations either before 17 August or later in the year? Can we get them to put their own house in order so that they unlock the turnstiles and kick out those people who just do not behave? Will he join other hon. Members and support the suggestion of a national identity card, which is the only way to kick out offenders, by keeping a central register?

Mr. Brittan: I have not spoken unsympathetically about that proposal, but more generally it will not be an option open to clubs involved in these matters simply to ignore the recommendations, because legal obligations will be imposed upon them by designation, to name but one example.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will not the Home Secretary recognise the serious concern that will be felt in many clubs in the country if the proposal on membership cards has to go ahead? Not only will there be severe financial and administrative costs, but this will be a deterrent to the casual supporter who may well become a regular supporter. Will he not recognise that it is an infringement of civil rights to stop the genuine supporter travelling to the away match just because of the hooligan element in society? Is it not a serious indictment of society if the Government have to move along those lines? My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and I met the London branch of Burnley football club supporters this morning. There are 37 such clubs that support provincial clubs in London. How will they be affected, because they are made up of loyal supporters who travel all over the country, as far as Aberdeen and Plymouth, to see the teams they support?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman talks about civil liberties. I do not think that that is involved here. It is open to a club to decide whom it wishes to admit. It can decide to admit members only. On the financial advantages and disadvantages, many clubs may feel that if they can convince communities that they can attend football matches safely, the financial advantage from more people coming to watch the games will far outweigh any disadvantage resulting from implementing measures necessary to bring that about.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): When considering the recommendations of the report may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to bear in mind that there are clubs such as Scunthorpe United in my constituency which are the backbone of the football league? Is he aware that they have an average gate of between 2,500 and 3,000 people throughout the season, so that the recommendations on visiting fans and the work necessary to meet the fire officers' requirements would cause a great loss of income? Is he further aware that they would be unable to bear the capital costs without assistance? Can my right hon. and learned Friend offer any hope to such clubs?

Mr. Brittan: I cannot offer them any assistance today. I have already indicated the context in which that matter is being considered by the working group of my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As a supporter of that very famous Scottish club Morton, may I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman what is going on in Scotland? If I heard him right, he spoke of an urgent review in Scotland. When will it take place and when will its findings be published? Will it include Berwick Rangers? Will he remind his Scottish ministerial colleagues that recommendation 20 of the report refers to membership cards being confined to England and Wales? We do not need them in Scotland.

Mr. Brittan: What I said in the statement was that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is not to extend designation in Scotland beyond its present limits. He has arranged for all non-designated clubs and all governing bodies in sport in Scotland to conduct an urgent review of ground safety, in co-operation with the local fire authorities.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): May I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) in asking my right hon. and learned Friend whether he will consider the possibility of introducing a national identity card system, such as prevails in many Continental countries?

Mr. Brittan: I hope that the whole question of identity cards and admission cards will be considered. Mr. Justice Popplewell has made his recommendation. A number of my hon. Friends have suggested an alternative. Of one thing I am quite sure—that either of the alternatives is better than the present position of having no system.

Foreign Affairs Council

4.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement on the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on 22 and 23 July, at which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the arrangements for the intergovernmental conference called by the Milan European Council. A copy of its conclusions on that subject has been placed in the Library of the House. The conference will take place at the level of Foreign Ministers. The first meeting will be in Luxembourg on 9 September. The Political Committee has been asked to draw up, by 15 October, a draft treaty on political co-operation on the basis of our own and the Franco-German proposals. Proposals for treaty amendment will be looked at in a group which will meet at official level to prepare work for Foreign Ministers to consider.

Agreement was reached on two directives providing for freedom of establishment for pharmacists and mutual recognition of their qualifications.

The Council agreed a Community position on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement for the GATT textiles committee meeting on 23 July.

The Commission reported to the Council on the negotiations between the Community and the United States on steel products not covered by the 1982 carbon steel arrangement and on the current trade dispute between the Community and the United States on citrus and pasta. The Council held a first discussion on the Commission's proposals to increase the Community's tariff on video tape recorders and reduce the tariff on semiconductors, and approved the eighth annual report on co-operation with the EFTA countries.

The Council agreed a negotiating mandate for an EC-Central America co-operation agreement. It also reviewed progress in EC-Gulf Co-operation Council relations.

The Council agreed arrangements for approving proposals brought forward under the Mediterranean financial protocols. It also agreed the terms to be applied to Spain's use of pre-accession aid to reduce excess fishing capacity.

The Council formally adopted the reference framework for 1986 in accordance with the Council's conclusions of December 1984 on controlling Community expenditure. That fixes the maximum level of permitted expenditure to finance Community policies in 1986. Following a meeting with the European Parliament, the Council also adopted the agreed regulation implementing integrated Mediterranean programmes.

Meeting in political co-operation, the Foreign Ministers discussed the recent resurgence of terrorism and hijacking. They agreed to put urgent work in hand for joint action by the Ten to combat that problem. They also issued statements on Afghanistan and to make clear their concern at recent developments in South Africa. Texts of those statements have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): First, I thank the Foreign Secretary for his statement. I must say that it is rather oddly balanced. In a statement that covers three pages, there are three lines on the proposals for the establishment of pharmacists and only three words on the historic tragedy of South Africa.

On the detail of the statement, I congratulate the right hon. and learned Gentleman on the dogged pragmatism with which he once again swept up the debris caused by the eruption of Krakatoa Kate in Milan. I hope that the prospects for the forthcoming intergovernmental conference—on which the Prime Minister has made, as he pointed out, totally contradictory statements within a space of a few hours—will be more successful than the lamentable proceedings in Milan.

On the mandate for negotiating a central American co-operation agreement, do the Government propose to join the French and other European Governments in providing troops to monitor a possible agreement on Nicaragua that is now being sought by the Contadora group?

On co-operation on terrorism, have the Government finally agreed to return to Italy persons convicted of terrorism in Italy who are now living freely in Pimlico?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer two or three questions on South Africa? Why did he oppose the proposal by his colleagues to make the Community code of conduct for companies in South Africa mandatory, especially as the British company BTR grossly violated that agreement in recent months? Why did he oppose an immediate end to the declaration of the emergency that has turned South Africa into a storm trooper state? How can he reconcile the absolute and unconditional opposition to economic sanctions against South Africa that he expressed in the House this afternoon and in his speech last night with his formal undertaking on Monday to consider sanctions if South Africa did not make progress in a reasonable period of time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I always accept congratulations from the right hon. Gentleman with a very high degree of reservation. I am glad that he welcomed the work now being put in hand for the intergovernmental conference that will commence at the beginning of September.

On central America, the Contadora group meeting has only recently come to an end and there was no consideration of the particular proposal that he mentioned at the meeting between Foreign Ministers.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the extradition of possible terrorist suspects to other countries——

Mr. Healey: They have been convicted of terrorist crimes.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This matter would have to be considered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary in the light of applications in accordance with whatever extradition treaties might exist.

On South Africa, the suggestion that there was a proposal to make the European Community code on industrial companies mandatory was not discussed between us on Monday. That code is under review in the Community to see in what way and to what extent it may or may not need to be reviewed.

My colleagues all agreed with the conclusion set out in the communiqué, that the state of emergency should be brought to an end, but all agreed that it would not be suitable or sensible to include any particular epithet about the immediacy with which that should be done.

Our position on sanctions is as I have stated it several times in the House this afternoon.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify the Government's broad approach to new treaty-making in relation to the intergovernmental conference to take place in September? Is it the Government's broad aim to go for a new treaty on political co-operation of the kind, for instance, that the Dutch Government are now proposing, or merely to propose the reorganisation of procedures to improve political co-operation? Is it the Government's broad belief that the treaty of Rome requires amendment, in particular the common agricultural policy clauses in the treaty, or is it still the view of the Government that that area does not need amendment at this time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The answer to the first point raised by my right hon. Friend is that it has been our view—the view that we put forward at Milan—that political co-operation has been an area of considerable success for the Community. For that reason we put forward at Milan proposals for a binding agreement on political co-operation between the member states of the Community. Those proposals, alongside the Franco-German proposal, are now being considered with a view to securing agreement on that point, which is distinct from the treaty of Rome.

The answer to my right hon. Friend's question about the treaty of Rome is that we put forward proposals at Milan for achieving the reforms necessary in the working of the Community which would not have needed any treaty amendment. We remain to be convinced that treaty amendment is necessary. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we shall be going to the conference ready to consider what is put before us so as to reach conclusions best likely to help the effective working of the Community.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I, too, congratulate the Foreign Secretary on the positive approach that he has adopted towards the intergovernmental conference in Luxembourg, which compares favourably with the obstructive attitude that the Government first adopted towards the conference being held at all. Like the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), may I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman for an assurance that he will give priority to ensuring that the decision-making process of the Community is improved, even if that requires treaty amendment, and that he will not stand on any sort of nationalistic dignity as, sadly, he is urged to do by occupants of the Opposition Front Bench?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: While I welcome the general encouragement offered by the hon. Gentleman, I cannot accept his contrast between our attitude at Milan and our attitude at the meeting earlier this week. Our objective throughout is to achieve effective changes in the decision-making procedures of the Community because we believe that it is an essential British interest for the Community to be able to function more effectively and for the United Kingdom to be in the mainstream of developments to that end. When we come to consider whether treaty changes are necessary, we shall approach that with those objectives in mind. We have taken the view that the case for such changes has not been made out. We believe that the proposals that we put forward would have enabled us to make progress quickly and effectively at Milan. That remains our objective and that is the way in which we shall consider the matter.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As there was a widespread welcome from hon. Members on this side of the House for the Prime Minister's vote against the conference, will my right hon. and learned Friend say whether it really is the position now that the Government have an open mind on treaty amendments and on the question of a draft European union proposal, and whether they might be willing to surrender unanimity on the vital article 100, which deals with directives affecting every industry and every job in Britain?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to say that article 100 covers a wide range of matters, and I believe that every member state in the Community would have substantial reservations about applying changes in that respect on anything like a universal basis. Similarly, every member state in the Community recognises the reality of the provisions which enable account to be taken of vital national interests.

A decision has been taken to hold the intergovernmental conference. It therefore makes sense, if we are to promote the interests of this country, for us to take a positive and constructive part in that conference. It remains our view that the changes we wanted could have been achieved without treaty amendment, but we must consider now exactly what is put forward, recognising the need to achieve agreed conclusions at the end of it——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Why is my right hon. and learned Friend being obstinate about this?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I beg my hon. Friend to contain his anxious interest in the subject for a moment longer. We must not shrink from the objective set out in the treaty of Rome to achieve ever closer union between the peoples of Europe——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Ah.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —a goal that was laid down as long ago as 1946 by Winston Churchill.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): If political co-operation works so well in the EC, why is a binding agreement necessary? However, if there is to be a binding agreement, why should it take the form of a draft treaty, with the whole panoply of subsequent legislation in member countries, rather than of an intergovernmental arrangement which could then become a Community treaty by virtue of section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We put forward a proposal for an agreement between the member states on the subject of political co-operation because we thought it sensible to set out more clearly and effectively the arrangements for consultation with a view to more effective political co-operation. The practice thus far has worked well and we considered it important to make the commitment more effective along the lines that we suggested. That would take the form of an agreement between the member states of the Community — an international agreement, a treaty, as it were—but a separate agreement distinct from that contained in the treaty of Rome.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that through his skill and imperturbability he has won the compliments of the House, in particular of the overwhelming majority of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and that he therefore has complete freedom of manoeuvre — *[Interruption.]* — to negotiate such agreements as in his judgment will be to the long-term advantage of this country in the European Community?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his tribute, endorsed by the enthusiastic applause of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), and I understand his view of the way in which we should approach the matter. We shall seek to reach conclusions which will promote the interests of this country which are entirely compatible with advancing the interest of the European Community as a whole.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the Foreign Secretary at all perturbed by the situation which has arisen following the German veto of proposals to deal with the European grain surpluses? Have there been any further discussions in the Council about the situation, and what is the British Government's position on the issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The future of grain prices was considered not by the Foreign Affairs Council but by the Agricultural Council——

Mr. Home Robertson: What about the veto?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —and the way in which the German Government conducted their case in relation to cereals prices served as a clear demonstration of the reality in the Community that account must be taken of each country's vital national interests. We need to find a way of doing that which will enable us to advance and not retard the general process of effective co-operation in the Community.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): The House must be glad that the 1986 framework for Community expenditure has now been settled, even though we know that it can subsequently be increased by majority vote of the Council of Ministers. What will the total be for 1986? Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it represents no greater increase than is allowed in domestic public expenditure? Does he agree that the strictures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on public expenditure are as valid in Europe as they are at home?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no doubt that the case for ensuring that finance determines expenditure and not vice versa, which I uttered in my first Budget speech and which President Delors uttered in one of his early contributions to the proceedings of the Community, is equaly important in both places. I am glad to say that the Commission's 1986 budget proposals for agriculture show an increase of only 2·5 per cent., excluding enlargements, within the guidelines required by budget discipline.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I assume that there was no discussion on international famine, but the statement on South Africa was less than robust. Is it not a fact that it contained no reference to that country's recent outrageous invasion of Botswana?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that I am right in saying that every Community country had already made announcements about the Botswana incident. Certainly the United Kingdom had done so. We condemned the invasion of a Commonwealth country as being without justification, and we did so plainly. I think that every other Community member state took the same view. The international famine was not discussed as it was discussed by aid Ministers a week or so ago.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some of us are rather puzzled by the growing gap that seems to be opening up between the Foreign Office and No. 10 Downing street? Does he recall that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister denounced the intergovernmental conference as unnecessary? However, we seem now to be approaching it with an open mind on every subject with almost unseemly enthusiasm. Secondly, does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that on 2 July my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asked her colleagues in the House not to use the phrase "European union" as it was so confusing, yet we are hearing an endorsement of it this afternoon? Surely we should get our own act together before we go to the European conference.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend must retain a sense of perspective about these matters. Both the Prime Minister and I went to Milan with the clear view that we could make the necessary changes without proceeding to the further step of an intergovernmental conference. We thought that the changes necessary to promote progress in the Community, which is of great importance, could there have been made. The majority of our partners took the opposite view and an intergovernmental conference is now to take place. The progress that needs to be achieved is still just as necessary and that is why we want to attend the conference to achieve that progress. For that reason, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 2 July that we must go to the conference and consider what is put before us.

I did not use the phrase "European union" in an earlier reply. I reminded the House that the treaty of Rome itself commits us to ever closer union between the peoples of Europe. If Europe is to achieve effective exploitation of its technological resources and success in reducing unemployment within the Community, we need to achieve closer co-operation on a range of matters throughout the Community. Those who do not recognise that deceive themselves about Britain's future.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): When the Foreign Affairs Council discussed central America, did it take the opportunity to condemn the American trade embargo on Nicaragua and to review the existing aid and trade agreements between Europe and central America, especially Nicaragua, to ensure that the effect of the United States trade embargo can be minimised by increasing trade with Europe, especially medical products and important technical components that are needed for many of Nicaragua's industries?

Finally, did the Ministers take time to condemn President Reagan's statement that Nicaragua is a haven for terrorists? That assertion has been proved to be completely wrong by every journalist and every informed observer who has been in Managua recently.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Foreign Affairs Council did not consider every aspect which appeals to the hon. Gentleman's prejudices.

Mr. Corbyn: Just answer the question.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We concluded a negotiating mandate for agreement with the nine countries of central America, covering economic, commercial and development co-operation. The Council has taken account frequently of the views of countries engaged in the Contadora process, to the effect that a number of countries in central America, including Nicaragua, need to cease the process of contributing to the destabilisation of their neighbours.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Did my right hon. and learned Friend discuss with our Community partners in the broader context Britain's possible entry of the European monetary system? Does he share with me the grave disappointment of many Members of this place that such little progress has been made to build on the Venice declaration? Does he accept that the historical tragedy, so-called, in South Africa pales into insignificance when we consider what could happen in the middle east?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is important for the countries of the Community to continue to contribute as closely together as they can to the advancement of the peace process in the middle east. One of the important features of the Venice declaration is that it has helped to condition a largely common approach to what is necessarily a step-by-step process.

We already belong to the European monetary system. Our attitude towards participation in the exchange rate mechanism remains that we shall do so when the time is right.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What was the net effect of the Council's proposals on the supply of pharmacists in the United Kingdom? Perhaps the Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary will tell him that Lothian Members have been greatly upset by the closure of the distinguished department of pharmacy at the Heriot-Watt university. We have been lectured by Sir Peter Swynnerton-Dyer to the effect that it had to be done because, among other things, there was a surplus of pharmacists.

Secondly, the Secretary of State for Scotland is well aware of the interests of Hewlett Packard and Nippon Electric in semiconductors. What has been said to the French and Germans about the way in which they cut corners on the COCOM arrangements while we remain pristine pure, greatly to the disadvantage of British industry? Were the COCOM arrangements discussed? If not, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman read the report of the debate on exports to China which took place last week, in which some Conservative Members, my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) and I had a good deal to say about the matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: For the second time this afternoon, the hon. Gentleman has made a lengthy intervention. I shall try to benefit from studying the various topics to which he has drawn my attention.

The effect of the directive is to extend employment opportunities both ways by including the right of establishment of pharmacists throughout the Community, which I think is a sensible response to the hon. Gentleman's first question.

It is proposed that the tariff level on semiconductors should be reduced. These items constitute a product and an industrial component and a reduced tariff is likely to contribute to increased industrial competitiveness in the United Kingdom.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall call the hon. Members who have been rising in their places, provided that they are brief.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether my right hon. and learned Friend can respond to a scenario——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not a scenario; that worries me.

Mr. Marlow: I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to consider a brief scenario, Mr. Speaker. If there were to be a treaty amendment which would allow directives to be put through without unanimity, and if my right hon. and learned Friend were against a certain directive which he had to bring before the House to enact in British law, what would he do in those circumstances?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My answer to that scenario is that I am not obliged to answer hypothetical questions.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): My right hon. and learned Friend has said that the EEC institutions might cure unemployment in the United Kingdom. If it is possible for Governments to do that, why cannot the Government reduce unemployment?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We in Europe spend as much on civil research in high technology industries per head as that which is spent in Japan and the United States. We are able to exploit that investment a great deal less effectively than those countries. That is because there is insufficient openness and unity in the European market for the products of high technology industries.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: More public expenditure? Are we all Socialists now?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am talking in neither case about public expenditure, which is another obsession of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). Our net civil expenditure per head on civil research—public and private—is as high as it is in Japan and the United States, but we get less for it. We shall not be able to exploit our investment effectively until we achieve greater unity in the European Community.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the agenda for the intergovernmental conference has been finalised and that there will be no late additions to it? What voting procedures will be used at the conference? How will the conference's recommendations be determined? What criteria will my right hon. and learned Friend use to judge the extent to which the House will support the Government's attitude at that conference? Will he give an undertaking that he will make a statement in the House before giving any irrevocable commitment at that conference?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A number of proposals for the conference have already been put forward. We are awaiting concrete proposals from partners as a basis for discussion, and we shall then consider how we should respond. The conference, which is constituted under article 236, has to reach conclusions by common accord. In order to put those conclusions into effect, endorsement

by the Parliament of every member state of the European Community must be given. The House will have ample opportunities to consider these matters. We shall be bound by the same entirely proper constraints as other members. I shall bear in mind, when considering how we will react to a particular proposal, the enthusiastic support that my hon. Friend always gives me for any sensible proposal.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many of his colleagues would agree with this morning's *Daily Telegraph* leader which says that the EEC Foreign Ministers have given the "wrong response" to the situation in South Africa? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the article was accurate in quoting him as having had "misgivings" about the statement? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that he did not go along with all the recommendations of the Foreign Ministers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that my hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that the statement, which resulted from consideration by the representatives of the 10 member states seeking to achieve agreement, represents something to which each of the Ministers present at the meeting had contributed. The statement was agreed by all the Ministers present. The statement is important, in that it represents a common view on the position in South Africa. It is important for the statement to be part of the foundation of Britain's approach to the problem.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Did the hon. Member rise when I said that I would call the four hon. Members who were standing?

Mr. Adley: I was provoked into rising. I was sitting here quietly.

Mr. Speaker: Go on, then.

Mr. Adley: Following the question by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), will my right hon. and learned Friend take the time during the recess to read the Adjournment debate in 1975 about COCOM and sales of Harrier aircraft to China? I support what the hon. Member for Linlithgow said about this. It is about time that Britain and Europe put their interests first rather than continually following the lines set by the United States Government who do precisely what they think is in the interests of their manufacturers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the proceedings will soon draw to a close, as I am anxious that my holiday reading should not be completely overloaded.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that his Government's policy remains the policy that was unanimously adopted by the House on 28 June 1985 and that it will remain our policy throughout the intergovernmental conference in October? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman have an open mind on the Dooge committee's recommendations on co-decision making between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament? What will be the outcome of that openness? What proposals will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take to Luxembourg to reduce effectively the preponderance of Community expenditure on agriculture and do something about distributing the Community's assets to bring about the economic regeneration of Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his constructive insight into the fact that the Community's assets can be used for the constructive regeneration of Europe. I welcome his acknowledgment of the importance of curtailing the percentage spent on agriculture. As I said in an earlier answer, that is one of the measures achieved by the framework and guidelines that have been laid down so far.

On many occasions we have put forward the argument —it has been supported by many of our partners—that co-decision making could easily be a prescription for no decision making. Any increase in the powers of the European Parliament would require a change in the treaty and would have to be endorsed by each national Parliament. For that reason, we have been arguing that Parliament could play a more positive role within its existing powers. We think that that is the approach best able to command the support of all member states.

Suicide Precautions (Glenochil)

5.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): With permission, I should like to make a statement on the report of the working group on suicide precautions at Glenochil young offenders institution and detention centre which has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Vote Office and in the Libraries of both Houses. I have also laid copies of the determinations of the Sheriff Principal in the cases of Angus Boyd and Derek Harris.

In November 1984, following a recommendation by the Sheriff Principal, after a fatal accident inquiry, I set up an independent working group under the chairmanship of Dr. Derek Chiswick, consultant psychiatrist at the Royal Edinburgh hospital, with the following remit:

"To review the precautionary procedures adopted at Glenochil Young Offenders Institution and Glenochil Detention Centre to identify and supervise inmates who might be regarded as suicide risks; and to make recommendations."

I asked Dr. Chiswick and his colleagues to expedite the report, and I am most grateful to them for completing their work by the end of June.

This is an important report on a subject which has generated a good deal of understandable public concern. It makes a considerable number of recommendations, the majority of which I am ready to accept, although some will require more detailed examination. There are, however, a number of recommendations that I cannot accept. As I cannot in the time available today give a detailed response to all the recommendations, I have laid with the report a paper which sets out my initial response to it.

I should remind the House that procedures to identify and care for vulnerable and inadequate offenders, who may have genuinely suicidal tendencies, must be a vitally important feature of any penal institution. Nevertheless, these are a tiny minority of the inmates. We must not lose sight of the fact that the primary purpose of custody is the deprivation of liberty as a punishment. The inmates at Glenochil are there because they have offended against society and require custodial sentences and rehabilitation. They include many hard and brutal offenders. About half of those in the young offenders institution are serving sentences of between three years and life for particularly serious offences. The authorities at Glenochil have to manage their custody as well as that of a comparatively small number of vulnerable youths.

I wish to refer to some of the detailed points made in the report. The report's broad conclusions are, I am pleased to note, in accord with the recent finding by the Sheriff Principal, who conducted the fatal accident inquiry into the death in April of Derek Harris, that there is no evidence that the regimes operated at Glenochil or the actions of staff were responsible for any of the seven deaths that have taken place since 1981—only three of the seven deaths were determined as deliberate suicides. In submitting the report Dr. Chiswick states that the working group had been impressed by the dedication of the governor and his staff and that the recommendations made in the report imply no criticism of the staff at Glenochil.

The working group acknowledges that, no matter what steps may be taken to prevent suicides, there is no guarantee that these measures will be successful. It considers that the aim should be to achieve a proper balance between procedures that reduce risk to a minimum and yet are compatible with an acceptable way of life in a penal establishment.

The report says that, in relation to the young offenders institution, where all but two of the deaths have occurred, the majority of inmates serve their sentences in a purposeful manner and that the problems are attributable largely to a few inmates who behave aggressively towards their fellows. Such aggression is impossible to prevent, without stopping all association amongst young offenders who mostly serve their sentences without difficulty and co-operate with staff.

The working group criticises the procedures whereby inmates thought to be suicide risks are kept in what is known as strict suicide observation for lengthy periods. I remind the House that those procedures have been in use in penal establishments in Scotland for many years. The procedures involve observation being maintained on an inmate in a cell at 15 minute intervals, day and night. All clothing, bedding and furniture which could be used to cause self-injury may be replaced with clothing and bedding of canvas and with cardboard furniture. No one likes using those measures, but in Glenochil they have been effective to the extent that no inmate has committed suicide while under strict observation. Indeed, the two most recent deaths at Glenochil occurred after the inmates concerned were removed from strict suicide observation, and, in the case of Angus Boyd, the Sheriff Principal commented that death might have been avoided if he had not been removed from strict suicide observation. That illustrates how delicate and complex is the question of caring for these unfortunate individuals. None the less, I accept that the use of those precautions for other than extremely short periods is undesirable in relation to young offenders.

The working group offers advice on identifying possible suicide risks, and makes a number of recommendations on how inmates who are mentally disturbed or vulnerable in some other way may be managed. I wholeheartedly accept the important recommendation of using a team approach involving all the professionals and prison staff to counsel inmates and to minimise the risks of suicide. That is the general direction in which we intend to go in the follow up to the report. Indeed, some of the reports's recommendations have already been met in whole or in part by measures taken since the death of Derek Harris in April. Work has now been completed on a secure hospital facility at Glenochil, consisting of a ward and a single cell, so that strict medical observation can be provided in appropriate cases. In addition, immature and vulnerable inmates requiring a more closely supervised supportive regime are now housed in "D" hall of the young offenders institution, or transferred to Carrick house at Polmont young offenders institution.

Some recommendations have staffing and resource implications, and will require careful consideration. There will also have to be consultation with the staff associations and other interested bodies. Others create problems of adapting existing structures. Recommendations of this longer-term type will need to be examined carefully so that the custody and care of inmates is not put at risk in the short term.

In a number of respects the working group has gone beyond its remit and discussed issues affecting the overall management of establishments and the prison service as a

whole which, as a small, specifically qualified group, it was not constituted to comment on. A minority of the working group felt that, such was the aura of suicide permeating Glenochil, the only solution lay in its temporary closure. I concur with the view of the majority, who rejected that idea.

I trust that the working group's findings, taken together with the determinations of Sheriff Principal Taylor, will be accepted by hon. Members and by the general public as refuting any suggestion that the unfortunate deaths which have taken place at Glenochil are attributable to the regimes, particularly that of the detention centre, or the behaviour of staff. There is not a shred of evidence to support those allegations.

My hope now is that the governor and staff of Glenochil will be left to get on with their difficult and demanding task, and that the institution will be afforded an opportunity to settle down after recent events, and to make the useful changes which I have accepted from the recommendations in this report.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I add my thanks to Dr. Chiswick and his colleagues for their work. The important report takes a careful and detailed look at the background to a tragic series of deaths, which cost seven young lives at the Glenochil complex. The Opposition's doubts centre on the nature of the regime and the way in which the system operates, and should not be taken to impugn the commitment or integrity of the staff there.

The Secretary of State's approach, as instanced in the statement, has been rather negative and, at times, sadly, a little unfeeling. There is an important distinction between saying that an offender may go to prison as a punishment and saying that he goes to be punished. The Secretary of State has ignored the widespread feeling that the regime for young offenders in Scotland is inflexible and rigid, and does little to rehabilitate and support young men who, in every sense, are at risk. It smacks of complacency to say that

"There is not a shred of evidence"

to suggest that the system contributed to any of the deaths, as the Secretary of State said.

Is it accurate to talk of a "tiny minority" as being a genuine suicide risk when, during the past 18 months, 123 inmates at the detention centre and 132 at the young offenders institution have been on strict suicide observation? In 1984, 7 and 10 per cent. respectively of the total number of inmates in the two centres of the complex were under that sort of observation. By no stretch of the imagination could that be called a "tiny minority".

I welcome the specific recommendations on suicide prevention that have been accepted, especially those for more psychiatric support and medical help. Will the Secretary of State look carefully at the recommendations made on contact between inmates and their families, which, with ingenuity and imagination, could be put into practice, but which are heavily qualified in the report that the Secretary of State has laid? Most important, will the Secretary of State give some thought to the implied criticisms of the system that can be found in the report? I am thinking of the reference to a lack of a distinct philosophy at the young offenders institution and the suggestion that the regime there has drifted too close to that in the detention centre, the recommendation that there is a need for a policy development unit, and, above all, the revelation, to which the Secretary of State referred but which does not appear in the report, that a body of opinion in the working party thought that the position was so serious that the only possible short-term solution was a temporary closure of the Glenochil complex.

Will the Secretary of State note that the Opposition resent the implication that Dr. Chiswick and his colleagues acted improperly by going beyond their remit? They had a clear duty to state their wider anxieties. Every hon. Member who studies the matter impartially will feel that they did so in a dignified and restrained fashion.

Will the Secretary of State give urgent consideration to recommendation 63 for a review of the criminal justice system for under 21-year-olds in Scotland? It is time that we had a long hard look at the system, which, for example, offers only one option in terms of a custodial sentence between 28 days and 4 months. There must surely be a case for a system in which a court sentences a young offender to a specific custodial period, but in which his placement is a matter for a balanced assessment based on his individual circumstances.

Finally, will the Secretary of State confirm that the wider inquiry, to which I have referred and which is the subject of recommendation 63, has not been ruled out? Will he go further and make it clear that he will be prepared to set up such an inquiry because there is so much support in Dr. Chiswick's report for the view that our approach in Scotland to young offenders often lacks sympathy and imagination, and, in some cases, can be counterproductive in practice?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his tribute to the staff at Glenochil, which I warmly endorse. They have a difficult task and have done it well. I absolutely reject the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that my response is in any way negative or unfeeling. It is extremely positive. More than half of the recommendations are already being implemented, which is a quick response.

I take issue with the hon. Gentleman in his denial of the fact that there is no shred of evidence that the regimes are responsible for any of these tragic deaths. That has been investigated by the Sheriff Principal on several occasions in fatal accident inquiries. It has been carefully looked for by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons in his annual reports, and now it has been examined particularly carefully by Dr. Chiswick and his group. In each case they have come to one conclusion without doubt, which is that, however sad the events, and however serious their causes, the regime has not been responsible for them. We must accept the facts put to us by that series of inquiries.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome of greater psychiatric help, and I take his point about trying to improve contact with families to the greatest extent possible. We shall certainly do what we can to improve that.

With respect to the hon. Gentleman, there is a reference in paragraph 6.4 to a minority who took the view that major reconstruction was the only solution to the problems in the regime. However, that was rejected by the majority. We should look hard at that suggestion because to break the regime into small units would be counterproductive to the objective of trying to get young offenders rehabilitated and to undertake more activities generally with their fellows in the institution.

[Mr. Younger]

Referring to two other recommendations, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the establishment of a policy development unit. I confirm that we shall look at that carefully. It was considered in the internal management review in 1978 and rejected, but that does not mean that it should not be reconsidered now. I shall certainly do that.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to changes in the criminal justice system. We keep it under constant review. Much change is taking place at the moment following the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 in which major changes were made. Partly as a result of that, the population of young offenders in our young offenders institutions has dropped by about 20 per cent. A halt in that progress while another review takes place would not be helpful. It is much better to proceed on the basis of the suggestions of the Stewart committee and so on, which we intend to do.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the publication of the report will be warmly welcomed, particularly the implementation of the majority recommendations to ensure that there is effective teamwork among those professionally qualified to see that suicides do not happen? What is my right hon. Friend's policy towards the minority recommendations, which were not accepted? Do many of them remain under consideration?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to put his finger on the main theme recommendation in the report, which is that those difficult cases should be dealt with very much by a team of people of different disciplines who can give individual special treatment to those cases. I am sure that that is the right way to go. Some of the recommendations that were not fully accepted are still being assessed for further consideration and possibly consultation with other interests involved. I have not been able to accept a small number of recommendations, and I have made that clear.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Secretary of State accept that the Chiswick inquiry acknowledged that the brief that he gave the committee was too narrow for the situation that it was asked to investigate, and that it has rightly put forward a much broader set of proposals? However, does not the right hon. Gentleman admit that his response has been rather selective in picking on things that seemed to support his approach, which appears to have been complacent throughout? Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that, for example, he has resisted anything that implies spending significant amounts of money on the buildings or the staff?

When I visited Glenochil, I was impressed by the work of the staff and the governor, and by their dedication. However, the fact is that they have to deal with young people who are referred to them. They acknowledge that frequently young people who are referred to them are unsuitable for the young offenders institution. At the back of the report there is a list of 32 cases of youngsters who suffered from broken ankles or some physical or mental disability, making it impossible for them to cope with the regime. Therefore, does the Secretary of State not recognise that a wider inquiry into the whole policy needs to be taken into account, as well as the screening process for young people being referred to such institutions?

Mr. Younger: I take the hon. Gentleman's point about the remit given to the committee being too narrow. However, it was a direct response to the suggestion of the Sheriff Principal, who had conducted the fatal accident inquiries and suggested that such an inquiry would be suitable.

When I replied to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) I did not say that I implied no criticism of the Chiswick committee for, in some respects, recommending beyond what it was directly asked to do. It is not a question of criticising the committee, nor is it a question of the committee expecting me not to mention that if I consider that the committee has done so.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to injuries. I understand that those people were transferred from the detention centre. With any group of young people who are active and have problems, there are bound to be some accidents at times. However, the atmosphere of the regime has been applauded by Dr. Chiswick and his committee as humane and reasonable. That is important for everyone concerned, not least the staff.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I congratulate the committee on the speedy and thorough way in which it undertook its review of the procedures at Glenochil and the unfortunate circumstances that led to the suicides. Will the Secretary of State tell the House the size of the minority that recommended temporary closure of Glenochil? How does he intend to approach the assertion by some members of the committee that, because of the aura of suicide hanging over that establishment, it will be difficult for it to return to normality, and it may be left open to the copycat suicide which, unfortunately, is a significant part of that mode of behaviour? As the suicides have occurred and as the report does not completely answer questions about the methods by which they could be reduced, what constructive proposals do the Government have in mind to deal with that aura?

Mr. Younger: On the hon. Gentleman's first question, I cannot tell him the size of the minority, but I refer him to paragraph 6.4.2, in which there is mention of a minority, but we are not told its size.

With regard to atmosphere, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is one of the most baffling, difficult and distressing features of the case. I take it as a serious point to which all the staff concerned must address themselves with great care. It is not easy because the special cases who might be suicide risks require specialised care and treatment. It is important that the team approach to dealing sensitively with those people not only, as I hope, prevents any further suicides or accidents but tries to tackle the aura of suicide, which must be eliminated if the institution is to be successful.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The Secretary of State has made a long statement, and this is a complicated and detailed report that we shall want to study closely. It is already clear that the impression that the Secretary of State gave in his statement, that, according to Chiswick, there are no problems at Glenochil, does not accurately represent the views of the committee. For example, the right hon. Gentleman quoted perfectly rightly the tribute that Dr. Chiswick paid the staff at Glenochil, but he did not quote Dr. Chiswick's statement in the same paragraph that

"we think that the procedures we suggest can only be operated in the context of more fundamental developments at Glenochil. We consider that these are necessary to ameliorate some key institutional problems which we believe to exist."

There was nothing in the Secretary of State's statement to acknowledge those key problems.

The recommendations on the broader issues were meant to tackle or at least study the problems. For example, there is criticism of lack of managerial and medical guidance to the staff at Glenochil from the headquarters of the Scottish prison service.

Unless the Secretary of State takes those criticisms seriously, he will find that there will be continuing anxiety about Glenochil and how we deal with young offenders generally in Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman's statement, with its extremely complacent tone, unfortunately will in no way allay those anxieties.

Mr. Younger: The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is a long and complex report. Inevitably, I have not been able to respond on every point. My approach is entirely one of wishing to meet, if possible, as many of the recommendations as possible. We are dealing with a highly serious matter which the committee was set up to examine. I hope that it will at least reassure the right hon. Gentleman to know that I do not take it lightly. I should not like anything that I have said to suggest that I am in any way satisfied that everything should be left as it is. The recommendations in the report were constructive. While saying that there was no cause to blame the staff or the regime for the tragic events, it made many constructive responses. I have done my best and will continue to do so to see that the recommendations are implemented.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the lack of guidance to management. He can make a judgment on that, too. I refer him to appendix D, which sets out the guidance that the prison management department has given. If the right hon. Gentleman studies that in due course, he can see whether he thinks that the guidance is deficient. If so, of course, we shall be prepared to consider that.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State said that many people at the institution were on the suicide watch. Is he satisfied that there is adequate psychiatric care for people before they are sent to the institution? In view of the serious events that have taken place, would it not be wiser not to send to Glenochil those who have been identified as having suicidal tendencies?

Mr. Younger: One of the recommendations is that psychiatric facilities should be stepped up. I have accepted that recommendation and we shall do the best we can. Assessments of people before they go to the institution are already made carefully and will be made as thoroughly as possible in the future. Severely disturbed people who go to the institution are treated quite differently from each other. I hope that the team approach will foster individual, sensitive and careful treatment in the interests of patients as well as of everyone else.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that seven deaths out of 7,000 inmates during four and a half years are not acceptable and cannot be regarded as a coincidence? Are we to conclude that the reason is still a mystery? If so, would it not be more prudent to accept the views of the minority and, at least temporarily, close down Glenochil?

Mr. Younger: I do not agree. We all realise that this is a most serious problem, and we have looked in all of the reports and inquiries for a shred of a suggestion that a major change in the regime could have prevented the deaths. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I would have acted immediately on any such shred of a suggestion, but there is none, so we must take the determinations of the sheriff in the fatal accident inquiries at face value. They give as complete an explanation of the deaths as is ever likely to be possible — each is different, but none appears to have resulted from the regime. We have to accept the facts as presented to us and to act upon them. To do otherwise would be wrong.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is the Secretary of State aware that the most worrying aspect of his response to this important and careful report is his continued misrepresentation of its central message, which is not, as he said, that the regime is in no way responsible, but that there is something seriously wrong? Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will address himself to paragraph 10.4 of the report which says:

"The young offenders institution was built as a high security establishment . . . Less emphasis appears to have been given to planning for the needs of a range of offenders . . . We consider that Glenochil may have been disadvantaged by an apparent lack of foresight in planning and development."

In those circumstances, it is patently misleading to the House and the country to suggest that the Chiswick inquiry has not found matters which seriously require further investigation.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the alliance parties fully endorse the recommendation of the Chiswick committee, and of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), that there should be a review of the criminal justice system for under 21-year-olds in Scotland? Will he undertake to ensure that that is put in hand?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman's first question dealt with two issues. I, Dr. Chiswick, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and the sheriffs in their fatal accident inquiries have not said that the regime or the detention centre is perfect and incapable of change, but that we have found no evidence to suggest that the regime caused or contributed to the deaths. That is an important determination. If it were otherwise, we should all be quite justified to take it extremely seriously.

The second point, to which I believe the hon. Gentleman was referring, is that many recommendations require follow-up action. Some are quite sweeping and far reaching. I shall address them in a constructive spirit and accept as many as possible. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman could have expected a better result than that.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman agrees that the identification of vulnerable people is essential. I am also sure that he agrees that parental visits and parents can play an important part in detecting those who are at risk. May we look forward to the rapid implementation of recommendations 54 to 60? Psychiatric training — recommendation 17 — is an essential ingredient in the detection of those at risk. The same is true for the Kardex system—recommendation 21—which is used in all acute psychiatric units, especially for those prone to suicide. May we have an early implementation of those recommendations?

Mr. Younger: I have accepted recommendation 21. I hope that it will be properly followed up. As for visits, it is desirable to have as open a regime for relatives as possible. However, there are some resource problems such as overcrowding at visiting time. We shall have to see whether we can improve that. We cannot envisage a 100 per cent. open visiting system at all times. I have to decline to implement that part of the recommendation.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Is it significant that the Scottish Prison Officers Association does not appear to have given evidence? Is it not possible that it would have reminded the right hon. Gentleman of the importance of taking away an offender's freedom and of the possibility of personal fulfilment, self correction and realisation of potential? The fact that a minority of the committee felt that it was necessary to produce their own report and that some went beyond the committee's remit must influence the right hon. Gentleman into considering at least the possibility of a much wider inquiry.

Mr. Younger: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's latter point, although I am willing, when implementing as many of the recommendations as possible, to make further studies or determinations as they appear necessary. The Scottish Prison Officers Association did not submit any evidence officially because it felt that, as it was not represented on the inquiry, it should not do so. There are several recommendations on which I would want to have consultations with it before implementation. I clearly and openly acknowledged in a statement last year that the role of Scottish prison officers involves personal development, personal relationships and rehabilitation, not just custody.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Arising out of my constituency experience, will the individual treatment about which the Secretary of State rightly talked extend to the problem of visiting, which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) raised, especially when there are problems of step parents or no parents? Could it be extended in some cases to brothers or even friends? On paragraph 6.5.1 regarding fragile personalities, is the recommendation for existing screening proposals to be improved acceptable, and what will the Secretary of State do about it? In regard to paragraph 9.8, should there be further medical examinations after the first week?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his first question. We would like to extend visits as far as we can, but there must be a progression of visiting during a patient's stay in the regime. We hope that it can be done in a structured way so that there is not too much disturbance. I must be brutally realistic, however. There must be considerable control of visiting because it is a sad fact that almost all of the contraband that is brought into such institutions comes during visiting. That presents a bit of an inhibition to too wide a visiting regime. I accept that screening has to be looked at more carefully, particularly screening before people come to these institutions to make sure that they are suitable for them. We are looking very hard at the relevant recommendations.

Mr. Dewar: I return to recommendation 63 and the possibility of a wider inquiry. The Secretary of State gives the impression in his statement that he practically rules it out of court. He made it clear that he wishes merely to proceed on the present basis. If he will turn to his summary of recommendations and initial responses which have been laid today he will see that in response to recommendation 63 he refers to the Stewart committee on alternatives to prosecution and to certain proposals for intermittent custody that have been made by the Home Secretary. Finally, he says:

"When these are complete the Government will give consideration to the need for a review."

That is considerably more optimistic than what he appeared to say today. In case he should have given the wrong impression, will he confirm that he will consider the possibility of a review? Will he also say when that consideration will take place? We shall want to return to this issue.

Mr. Younger: I apologise if I gave too gloomy a view of that recommendation. I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. However, the point I was trying to make was not that I would rule out further consideration of these matters but that we should not stop in its tracks the very good progress that is being made on sentencing. The inquiry arose from this series of seven tragic events, to which we must respond positively in every way that we can. However, we should not ignore the very real progress that has been made in the treatment of young offenders. The changes to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 were widely welcomed. There has been a population reduction of about 20 per cent. in young offenders institutions. This is partly the result of the changes in sentencing policy and the abolition of the borstal course.

I accept, however, the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. I am not saying that a further inquiry may not be necessary but that we should allow the present progress to proceed. When we know the Government's recommendations on the Stewart committee's report on alternatives to prosecution, we shall examine whether a further inquiry is needed.

BILL PRESENTED

Provision for Young People in Rural Areas

(No. 2)

Mr. David Penhaligon presented a Bill to establish a Rural Youth Affairs Advisory Committee and to define its responsibilities; to amend the Road Traffic Act 1972 to allow 16-year-olds to drive a motor car on a road provided that it is solely in the course of receiving instruction from an approved driving instructor; to amend section 22 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 in relation to change of use of dwelling houses in rural areas; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 October and to be printed. [Bill 205.]

Discrimination

5.53 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to ban discrimination against people because they are single or elderly, or in other specified categories, and for connected purposes.

The purpose of the Bill is to fill some enormous and surprising gaps in our law which permit discrimination against vast categories and huge numbers of people, discrimination which is intolerable in any decent society. There is discrimination against single people, including single-parent families and the single homeless. There is discrimination against older people, which forces women to retire at 60, whether or not they wish to do so and whether or not the result will be that they are forced into poverty or loneliness, while men are required to soldier on until they are 65, if they wish to receive a pension, irrespective of whether they are fit and without regard to of the number of unemployed people who are desperate for their jobs. There is discrimination particularly in the home and in employment. Finally, there is discrimination that does not permit men to have paternity leave when their wives are having children. This discriminates against the wives just as much as it discriminates against the husbands.

It is a massive array of unacceptable discrimination that is completely unaffected by the law. Although I accept that the law cannot change the ways that people think, it can and must provide a decent and proper framework for any society, including especially our own, which in so many ways is discriminatory and in which people are suffering so greatly.

I have the support of a massive series of organisations, to each of which I pay tribute. They include the Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless, CHAR, of which I am proud to be a founder and trustee, Gingerbread, which cares for single-parent families, the National Council for One-Parent Families, the Single Homeless Project, the National Council for Carers, CRUSE which looks after the bereaved, Help the Aged, the National Council for the Divorced and Separated, the National Council for the Single Women and Her Dependants, and Shelter. The community should be grateful to all of these organisations which look after people who, in the main, are discriminated against because of the nature of our society.

Curiously enough, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 bans discrimination against people because they are male or female or because they are married but it contains no similar provision to outlaw discrimination against those who are single: whether or not they have ever been married, or whether or not they are widows or widowers. They may be discriminated against while those who are married may not. It is a distinction with neither sense nor compassion.

According to figures that have been supplied to me in written answers, there are today over 11 million single people in this country who are over the age of 16. There are 6,170,000 men and 5,090,000 women. This huge number of people is completely unprotected against discrimination.

There is an immense number of one-parent families. In 1982, there were 930,000 single-parent families who were unprotected by the law. In many cases they were suffering very considerable hardship because of discrimination against them in housing and in work. If one speaks to their organisations, as I do, and listens to them, one finds that the difficulties that single parents face in finding private sector housing are often equalled by those which they suffer in the public sector, whose ability to provide accommodation for anybody is shrinking and within which it is always harder for single people to obtain accommodation than it is for those who are married.

An official of CHAR told me this morning that it has no way of knowing how many people are both single and without homes, or how many are living rough or in hostels, or both, but it says that several hundred thousand people are in this position. The provision of housing is bad for all but it is worse for the single. In Leicester, the provision of public sector housing is worsening almost daily. Housing starts have withered away because housing provision has been hacked back by the Government. There is less housing for those who need it, although that need is growing among many sections of the population, particularly among those who are on their own and lonely and who tend to be not merely in need of care but of shelter. I pay tribute to Shelter for the work that it does.

Even where there is housing, the rights of single people are not protected by our law. This is weird. When a man and a woman who are not married share accommodation, the law is ludicrous. In the House of Lords decision of Burns *v.* Burns in 1984, their Lordships considered a man and a woman who had lived together unmarried for 19 years. When their relationship broke up the woman got nothing. The court told her that if she had wanted anything she should have got married. The court did not say that to the man, to the common law husband. It was said to the woman, the so-called common law wife. That area of discrimination was mentioned this week at an American Bar Association meeting, where Dame Margaret Booth made it clear that people who live together could ensure that their property, financial and social security rights were protected only by getting married.

For those who reach the ages of 60 or 65, the differences are even more acute. Men aged 60 are required to continue working, whereas women aged 60 are generally forced into retirement. Such discrimination should be banned. In this area, the United States provision is an excellent guide. In 1967, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act was introduced as a federal statute to promote the employment of older persons based on their ability rather than age, and to prohibit arbitrary age discrimination in employment. The Act prohibited employment discrimination against people aged between 40 and 65. Since 1967, the Act has been amended twice. In 1974 its provisions were extended to include federal, state and local government employment, and in 1978 it was amended to extend protection beyond the age of 65, without an age limit for employees of the federal Government, and until the age of 70 for most other workers.

Hon. Members are privileged to serve in the House until any age, depending upon whether they are selected, re-selected or elected. In another place, service can continue into the second century of life. May I pay an affectionate tribute to my father, who served in this House until he was 79 and then for a further 10 years in the other place. Had he been forced into retirement, there is no doubt that he would not have survived. His work would have ceased when he was 65, yet he gave much of his most valuable service after reaching that age.

[Mr. Greville Janner]

There is no justification, in a society such as ours, which has vast unemployment, for forcing men who wish to retire to stay at work until they are 65. Nor is it fair to require women who are anxious to stay at work to retire when they are 60. We should reach the position in our society where people are treated equally and, as the American statute says, according to their ability rather than according to their age or sex. People should be encouraged to serve society irrespective of anything but their ability.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Gerry Bermingham, Miss Betty Boothroyd, Mr. Gordon Brown, Mr. Jim Craigen, Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. Ian Mikardo, Mr. Merlyn Rees, Ms. Jo Richardson, and Mr. David Marshall.

DISCRIMINATION BILL

Mr. Greville Janner accordingly presented a Bill to ban discrimination against people because they are single or elderly, or in other specified categories, and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 October and to be printed. [Bill 204.]

Adjournment (Summer)

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): On the next business, I have to tell the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition at the top of page 4818 of the Order Paper and the consequent amendment that goes with it.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Friday 26th July do adjourn until Monday 21st October, and the House shall not adjourn on Friday 26th July until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses. *—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

6.4 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, in line 1 to leave out 'Friday 26th July' and insert 'Tuesday 30th July'.

The Government have now had 15 or 16 hours in which to consider the vote in the House earlier this morning. It was clear from the vote that most hon. Members do not support the Government's decision to implement the top salaries review. The Government's majority was 17—one tenth of its nominal size—and no one can doubt that dozens of Government supporters went into the Government Lobby last night because of loyalty rather than conviction. The 48 Conservative Members who voted with the Opposition, the 40-odd hon. Members who did not vote and those who voted for the Government with understandable reluctance were the result of the House fulfilling its proper constitutional function.

Many hon. Members said that they had visited their constituencies during the week between the announcement of the top salaries decision and the vote on the order last night. They had listened to their constituents and had responded to the undoubted mood of the country. However, as I understand it, the Government intend to proceed with the implementation of the report as though there had been no revolt, no outcry and no general condemnation of all that they have proposed in the operation of that report.

The Government intend to proceed with the report despite the bitter opposition that they have encountered. The central, crucial reason for that opposition is worth at least a brief repetition. The Government's proposal is opposed simply because it is unfair. It is unfair to ask the low-paid and the average-paid worker to show restraint and at the same time to insist on paying massive increases to the highest-paid public servants, who enjoy advantages that are denied to other sectors of the community. They have complete job security, index-linked pensions, which are almost unknown outside the public service, and a special social status which employment in the private sector does not carry.

The extraordinary fact about the proposals being made in the first place was recorded in the leader in *The London Standard* today:

"To everybody outside the Cabinet the social inequity of these pay awards was immediately apparent."

What is unforgiveable is that, having been told of the conclusion that the awards lacked social equity, having had a week to consider their folly, and having had a vote to demonstrate the opposition to what they initially proposed, the Government intend to go ahead with it as though there had been universal support for their decision at last Thursday's Cabinet meeting.

The opposition from Labour and Conservative Members last night was based, as I have described, on fairness. However, the Government either overlooked——

Mr. Tim Eggar (Enfield, North): Fairness?

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, and I will explain it to the hon. Gentleman if he does not know what it means.

The Government overlooked or chose to ignore some practical considerations. First, the top salaries award was almost certain to have a damaging effect on pay negotiations in the public sector. If the Cabinet did not realise that when it made the decision, it must have realised it from reading about the reaction to the decision of pay negotiators in the public sector. There is no doubt that the decision to make those massive awards—in two cases, 46 per cent. increases—has made a settlement of the teachers' dispute substantially more difficult to achieve. If there is disruption in the classrooms when term begins again in September, those who supported the top salaries pay award must take much of the responsibility for it.

Secondly, immense resentment is building up among the local authority manual workers and local authority ancillary workers, many of whose total wages are not even 50 per cent. of the pay awards now proposed. Those are all serious considerations, to which the Government should have given careful thought. I have described them in as moderate language as possible.

They are also serious considerations about which the Prime Minister should have given the House and the country her opinion, for she is the Minister responsible for the Civil Service. This decision was her decision. When it was announced last Thursday, her press officer was telling every newspaper that the Prime Minister supported the report in every line and detail, and had urged her troops to meet criticism head on. However, it was the Prime Minister's duty not simply to say that, but herself to meet that criticism head on, by taking one of the three opportunities provided in the House to defend what is essentially her position.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall deal first with the Prime Minister and then with the hon. Gentleman. All that we have heard from the Prime Minister was her answers to questions yesterday, which did not constitute anything like a reasonable response on a serious issue. She has hardly attempted to justify what in anything like rational terms or serious language she has done. She made two points, both of them trivial and neither of them concerned with the merits of the argument that she is supposedly advancing.

The Prime Minister's first point was that it had all been done before. That is wrong. The precedent on which she leaned so heavily yesterday afternoon, that of 1978, was a pay award staged over three pay rounds, which was paralleled by other comparability exercises for the lowest paid public sector workers, and gave an award to the lower-paid sections of the public service. It was not preceded by the intentional depression of earnings in the private sector by the abolition of wages council protections for young workers.

The Government should understand, although I fear that they do not, that perhaps the deepest offence has been caused not simply to those on the Opposition Benches but, in the country, to people who are basically non-political and are adherents to no political party. It has been caused by the idea that on a Wednesday afternoon some of the poorest paid and least well protected workers in the community — young workers in wages councils industries—should have their protection removed, and the next day enormous pay increases should be endorsed for the public sector.

The Prime Minister was wrong to lean on that precedent, but more important than the error in her argument was the fact that she should choose to use that argument at all. After six years in government, she should have the courage to stand on her own record rather than make bogus comparisons with what happened six, seven or eight years ago. To do so is simply demeaning and, as she demonstrated yesterday afternoon, simply to say, "I may be bad but they were worse," no longer gets even a cheer from her Back Benchers.

Mr. Tracey: The right hon. Gentleman obviously considers that he is making a strong case in trying to differentiate between what happened in 1978 when he was a member of the Government who implemented that award, and now. Why, despite the apparent strength of his case, did 38 of his colleagues not come along to support him last night?

Mr. Hattersley: As speakers say in a music hall joke, I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that point, because it enables me to say what should be said. First, the figure of 38 is conjured out of the air.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): What is the figure?

Mr. Hattersley: Secondly, to have reduced the Government's majority still further, which is all that we could have done, as it was never within our power to defeat the Government, would have meant calling back to the House people whom I am not prepared to call back to the House now or ever because that would mean going back to the bad old habits of the 1960s and 1970s when the sick were required to be here. I was not prepared to do that on the vote of censure in 1979, and I am not prepared to do it now.

I am astonished to discover that the best argument that the Government have today is that we should have trounced them more roundly than we did last night. If that is the nature of our crime, it shows how pathetically incapable the Government are of doing what they should be doing in these circumstances. If they had a case on which to build, they should be defending their own proposals rather than making a trivial point about what happened at 2 o'clock this morning.

The Prime Minister's second defence of the Government's position was, as always—this has become her habit over the past six years — to question the motives of her critics. She said that those who opposed what the Government were doing were guilty of cant and humbug. If her accusation is justified, 49 of her supporters voted for humbug last night and more than 40 of her Back Benchers compromised with cant by abstaining.

Those who voted against the report, and certainly those who spoke from the Government Benches, were opposed to the report on a principle, and were not opposed to its timing or tactics. The principle was that of social justice. Sooner or later, the Prime Minister will have to learn that

[Mr. Hattersley]

even some of her supporters are beginning to think that social justice is an important consideration when Government policy is being decided.

The House was entitled to a calm explanation from the Prime Minister, the Minister who took the decision that it was right to increase the pay of the Chief of the Defence Staff by 46 per cent., but that it was not right to approve an extra 1 per cent. to bring the damaging teachers' dispute to an end.

None of these questions has been answered. Instead, we had a typical speech from the Chief Secretary last Friday and an uncharacteristic speech from the Leader of the House yesterday. The Chief Secretary said, in answer to a private notice question, that less fortunate people than the senior civil servants should rejoice at what was being proposed because it offered them, the least fortunate, at least the prospect of winning such glittering prizes.

In the northern wards of my constituency there is 50 per cent. male unemployment. All over it, services and the housing stock are deteriorating and many men and women are suffering the discrimination of the present immigration regulations. The idea that they should rejoice because the Secretary to the Cabinet is to get an extra £23,750 a year is the most bizarre nonsense imaginable.

The Leader of the House behaved in a similarly and —I say this as a compliment—surprisingly unconvincing way yesterday evening. What he said, turning not to his hon. Friends but on them, was, "Do you want such decisions about public sector pay to be decided by politicians?", as if the automatic answer to that question was, "Of course not."

It may be "of course not" for senior civil servants, generals and judges, but it is "of course" for teachers, because the pay of teachers is determined by politicians. The pay of the lowest paid workers in the public service is always determined by politicians, and I do not understand how a distinction can logically be drawn which says that the rich and the privileged must be insulated from the grubby business of politicians deciding how much they should earn, while the poorly paid and those receiving average pay will be subject to Government decisions endorsed by whipped votes in the House of Commons.

Mr. Eggar *rose——*

Mr. Hattersley: No, I will not give way.

Regrettably, the double standard typified by the Leader of the House in his answer yesterday evening is exactly what permeates the order. It is exactly what typifies the response to the report, and exactly what has caused so much resentment in the country. It is doing enormous damage in the country, because the Government are dividing the nation by helping one group and penalising and ignoring another. It would be wholly wrong for this House to adjourn until we have made one last attempt to convince the Government of their error, and that requires the Prime Minister to have the courage to come to the House and defend the decision for which she and she alone is responsible.

It is no good the Prime Minister hiding behind *The London Standard* bill boards uttering half-veiled threats to resign. It is no good either for the Prime Minister to sit looking menacing on the Front Bench throughout the debate on the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order. The Prime Minister has a duty to defend the decision, which was hers and hers alone. One of the things for which she will be condemned is not just the crass error of making the decision, but lacking the guts to come here and explain why she made it. Let me describe exactly the error made by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The right hon. Gentleman knows about guts. Let him tell us about the Common Market vote.

Mr. Hattersley: In that, I voted against my party. Not only did I vote against my party, but I did not go through the Lobby whining that I might have voted for the other side if circumstances had been rather different. Let me describe the error that the Prime Minister is making.

Mr. Eggar: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

Her error is the belief that social justice does not matter. Of course she is right to say that, in simple terms of arithmetic, a huge pay increase to a selected few costs little, while a small pay rise to thousands of nurses, teachers and manual workers costs a great deal. But in these matters arithmetic is not enough. It is not possible in a decent society for the rich and the favoured to be absolved from restraint while other groups are not.

Mr. Eggar *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the right hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister does not understand that her policies ought to be characterised by social justice. I should like this House to postpone the Adjournment until we have made one last desperate attempt to teach her that truth, a truth which will destroy this Government.

6.23 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) lost the vote last night and has moved his amendment with customary bluff and bluster, and with precious little regard to the realities of the difficult and complicated problem of fixing pay for senior public servants. It is a problem which this year has generated a great deal of misunderstanding and widespread public concern. He gave no indication at all about what he would do. Would he totally and completely reject the report? Would he, as appeared to be suggested by his right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) speaking from the Opposition Front Bench last night, merely stage the increases over a longer period?

He treats the House with total contempt in that he is not prepared to say what he would do. He attempted to gloss over his own acute embarrassment at having been a member of the Administration who in 1978 agreed to much greater increases. Those increases were of 35 per cent., not the 12·2 per cent. for the Civil Service which he has condemned. He said that the 35 per cent. was staged, as though that were some brilliant feat of political wisdom by the Government of that day. All they did was to implement the proposal in the TSRB report that staging be carried out.

The cost of the right hon. Gentleman's first stage in the financial year 1978-79 was more than the total cost of the staged award that we are now talking about. Not only did his Government stage the award; they backdated it and as

a result a large amount of money was paid. It was not debated, but the Government decision was announced in July of that year and the money was backdated to 1 January.

The right hon. Gentleman has quite a neck to complain about the increase the Government are proposing for senior civil servants which in this financial year amounts to 5·1 per cent. That will be the total amount on the pay bill for 1985-86 of the award which will be implemented by the Government. He spreads about the figure of 46 per cent., but he knows very well that he is quoting the extreme limit. Why does he not talk a little about the other elements in the report, which involve much lower increases and leave some people in the judiciary and some civil servants in London perhaps rather worse off?

It is fairer to talk, as I have done, about averages over the whole field. I do not wish to counter his plucking out of the highest figure by plucking out the lowest figure. My criticism of the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues goes wider than the fact that they gloss over what they have done in the past. Early yesterday morning, the deputy leader of the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who I am glad to see in his place, twice quoted wise words used by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House in the debate we had two years ago when were discussing hon. Members' pay.

I should like to contrast what happened two years ago, in July 1983, with what is happening now in July 1985. We had controversial TSRB reports on both occasions. In 1983 the report dealt with hon. Members' salaries and this report of 1985 deals with the pay of senior civil servants, the judiciary and senior military officers. In 1983, Labour, with a few exceptions, argued for full implementation of Plowden, a 31 per cent. increase, when their own and our pay was involved.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hayhoe: Let me complete the point I am making. In 1983 my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House argued the case for restraint and long term staging. The deputy leader of the Liberal party in his speech on that occasion asked:

"What is the point of setting up review bodies to determine what our level of pay should be, allowing them to spend large sums in the process, and then ignoring what they recommend?" —[*Official Report*, 19 July 1983; Vol. 46, c. 288.]

Let the hon. Gentleman remember those words.

What a contrast we see. Most Conservative Members voted for staged and smaller increases in our own pay and for the full increases, though staged, for senior public servants. Most Opposition Members—Labour Members, with a few notable exceptions, Liberal Members and SDP Members — voted for the full increase in their own salaries in 1983 and oppose a staged increase for public servants in 1985.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was right to condemn the synthetic indignation of the Opposition. The House should reject their amendment with vigour and contempt.

6.30 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I congratulate the Government on the wisdom of their policy. Last night many of us were extremely upset to hear that the Lord Chancellor was hard up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister of State had finished his speech.

Mr. Leighton: I am making my own speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As is my custom, it will be brief.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Leighton: Many of my hon. Friends were extremely——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is this an intervention or is the hon. Gentleman making a speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I called the hon. Gentleman to make a speech.

Mr. Leighton: I am pleased to hear than an hon. Member may make a speech in the House. If the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) wishes to intervene, I shall give way.

I reiterate that the Opposition were touched to hear that the Lord Chancellor was hard up. I am sure that most of us were willing to grant him the extra £10,000 or £15,000 that he needs to make ends meet.

We have taken the wrong attitude. We ought to congratulate the Government on giving these good people 50 per cent. salary increases. My criticism of the Government is that——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Lady wish to raise a point of order?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: No. I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wanted the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) to give way to me as he promised.

Mr. Leighton: I am certainly willing to give way.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman is doing the Lord Chancellor less than justice. He knows that the Lord Chancellor will not be taking the increase. The hon. Gentleman is misleading people into believing that the Lord Chancellor is waiting with his hand out for the money.

Mr. Leighton: If the Lord Chancellor is not really hard up, that takes a great burden off my mind. I thought that these top people were hard up and that we had to vote them an extra £5,000, £10,000 or £15,000 to keep the wolf from the door. If the hon. Lady assures me that the Lord Chancellor is not hard up, perhaps there is no problem.

However, the field-marshals, the admirals and all the other top people are hard up. At least, I am assured that they are hard up and that, therefore, as a matter of public policy, we must give them lots more money. They have a good shop steward and they must all be given thousands of pounds more.

Perhaps the Government are right. In congratulating them, I would say only that they are not going far enough. They should extend their wise policy that everyone should have a 50 per cent. pay increase. What about the teachers? Perhaps the teachers and everyone else should have a 50 per cent. increase.

Wisdom is dawning on the Government at last. Let the message go out to the nation that the Government say that everyone should have a 50 per cent. pay rise. I congratulate the Government on that signal.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps it would help the House if I reminded hon. Members that we are debating when we should adjourn for the summer recess.

6.34 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I voted against the Government last night and if the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who has been fulminating against the top people's pay increase, had been able to get a proper turnout from his supporters, the policy that he so dislikes would have been defeated.

However, as we knew would be the case and as has happened throughout this Session, there was not a proper turnout of Opposition Members. Yet even without that proper turnout, the Government received a severe shock from the debate and the vote. What lessons should they learn from that?

Even those who were most enthusiastic in supporting the Government generally conceded that the political handling of the issue had been inept. However, I suspect that Ministers may have derived some comfort from the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) who said that the Government's action was bad politics, but good government. I hope that Ministers will not take that message. I usually agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds, but in this instance he is wrong. The Government's action was bad politics and bad government.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend knows that the TSRB reports on top people's pay have been accepted in the past. What was different about the policy put forward last night? What was so wrong last night which has been right in the past?

Sir Philip Goodhart: I can give my hon. Friend one example. Under the Labour Government we had massive inflation and top people had to have massive salary increases merely to stand still. Because of this Government's wise policies, we do not have massive inflation and, therefore, it is less necessary to give those people substantial pay increases.

The Government's decision has made it more difficult for Ministers to put forward wise policies. Good government consists of trying to remove the excessive divisions that make conflict within the community more likely rather than to exacerbate them.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said in a thoughtful intervention last night that the Government were running three separate pay policies. He pointed out that they argued that young workers should price themselves into jobs and were implementing that policy by changing the structure of the wages councils. I think that that is the correct policy. It is one that I advocated before the Government took it up themselves. I wholly support the Government in their activities in that respect.

At the same time, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney pointed out that the Government are telling those in the middle ranks of the public sector that they must show restraint, or inflationary monetary pressures will put the overall economic position in considerable jeopardy. Again, I believe that the Government are right in arguing this point.

When it comes to those at the top of the tree in the private and public sectors, the Government, again I think rightly, are arguing that the differential should be increased. But it requires very great skill to argue all three policies at one and the same time. By accepting the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body the Government have made it much more difficult to do so. I think that the Minister will find it much more difficult in future to put forward these sensible policies, and I do not believe that this is good government.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): As one who went through the same Lobby as my hon. Friend did last night, I wonder whether he has left one factor out of consideration in what he has said. Far from there being no good time for these matters to be dealt with so that one has to deal with them when they crop up, there is a good time for dealing with them, and this answers the last of his points in particular. When the economy is booming, one can do these things. However, when one is running an economy which might be a banana republic or lame economy, that is always the wrong time to give those who are in the best sense of the word parasitic, in that they are not wealth creators, an extra large amount of money.

Sir Philip Goodhart: Most certainly I do not accept my hon. Friend's point. I do not believe that the Government are presiding over a banana republic economy. We have one of the strongest economies in western Europe with a higher level of non-inflationary growth than any of our partners in the EEC.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend understand whether the Government now believe in comparability? I understood that they regretted having underwritten the Clegg awards, that they were trying to get away from comparability, that, for that reason, they did not support the proposal of the review board two years ago in respect of the pay of Members of Parliament, and were trying to avoid it in other respects. I have not understood the Government's position from any of the speeches that we have heard in the last two days. Can my hon. Friend enlighten me?

Sir Philip Goodhart: That is a point on which my hon. Friend had better expand for himself. If I sought to deal with it, I would detain the House at excessive length.

I note that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) argued last night, again with some force, that Opposition Members were always hostile to pay increases for those at the top of the salary scale, and that they were against people with large incomes. I think that there is considerable force in my hon. and learned Friend's words. In the past decade, however, I have noticed that there has been a more ready acceptance by the public of the idea that differentials between the top——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address the Chair rather than turn his back on it.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I believe that there has been a more ready acceptance that there should be wider differentials. By accepting, as they have done, the whole of the Top Salaries Review Body report, I think that the Government have inadvertently put a road block in the way of the wider acceptance of differentials by the public as a whole. I shall therefore vote against the amendment, and I shall support the Government wholeheartedly.

I recall that towards the end of another debate some 45 years ago, when the majority of a Conservative Government fell very dramatically, Leo Amery stood up, pointed to Ministers on the Front Bench and said, "In the name of God, go!". I certainly have no intention of making any such dramatic pronouncement this afternoon.

My prosaic message to Ministers is this. In the name of common sense, go and have a good holiday, go and paddle on the beach, go and build sandcastles, go and read the excellent thriller by our colleague, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. What this whole episode shows is that the Government need a little rest. I am sure that they would not have made the decision that they have made had they not been as tired as Governments get at the end of a long Session. But, when Ministers return at the end of the summer recess, I hope that they will be a little more receptive to the views of Back Benchers, and will recognise that good government does not consist of trampling on the sensibilities of friends and supporters.

6.48 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): I hope that the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) will forgive me if I do not follow him. He and other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have quite properly turned it into a debate on matters of national importance and great moment to the country as a whole. But the summer Adjournment by tradition is also a time for constituency problems, and I think that the House, and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will forgive me if for a moment I bring it back to that.

A number of the speeches that have been made so far were so well argued that it was almost impossible to know whether hon. Members were in favour of an Adjournment or against it. I wish to put it to the Leader of the House, who I hope will respond to the debate in due course, that the House should not adjourn without a promise to intervene with the Home Secretary in a constituency matter, the matter of my constituent, Mr. Michael Thynne. I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure—and this has not always happened in the past—that the Home Secretary replies to my request today and that I get a favourable answer from him.

My constituent Mr. Thynne received a sentence of life imprisonment for a particularly odious crime—rape. The circumstances were appalling. At some time in 1983 he absconded from an open prison—I am putting the worst points first—and was at liberty for three months. He absconded later and was at liberty for three days. His term of imprisonment was then increased.

However, my constituent has come up for review by the parole board, which says that it will always report within six months. I have been writing to it since September 1984 because the review committee made a recommendation that the case of my constituent should be considered by the parole board as long ago as June 1984. Therefore, the question of the House adjourning for three months while that man has to wait to know what the parole board will decide is something that I, and I hope other hon. Members, find intolerable.

What the parole board decides is a matter for the board. But that a man should have to wait that length of time after 10 years of imprisonment is an absolute disgrace—[HON. MEMBERS: "What?"] It was 1975 when he was first convicted. He has applied for parole and, in the normal course of events, the decision of the parole board is given within six months. It is 13 months since he applied and he is going through agony, and that should not happen.

I hope that the Leader of the House will take my point on board. It is to consider constituency cases as well as matters of national importance that Adjournment motions were instituted. It is important that we vote on the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but I hope that the House will never lose sight of this opportunity to raise questions on behalf of our constituents.

6.52 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): We owe it to the Opposition that this afternoon we are, in part, debating the award for top people that was fully debated last night. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mentioned public reaction. I did not attempt to intervene at that time because it was a little difficult. On Saturday I had three meetings in three different towns in my constituency, and on Sunday I had two further meetings in two other towns. I met many people, but not one of them expressed opposition to the course taken by the Government. I have received only three letters from constituents objecting to the proposed increases.

If the country is to be run in a proper manner by top-class people, we must pay them the top-class rate for the job. If we cheat and cut down or ignore the recommendations of the review body, we deserve the fate of the country being run in a second-class way, which would be disadvantageous to everyone.

Having explained why I was pleased to vote for the Government last night—and would do so again—I wish to raise another matter. We are discussing whether the House should adjourn on Friday, and I am tempted to support the Opposition amendment suggesting that we sit into next week. The Government have left a vacancy in their public information that should be made good before the House rises. It concerns the Government's attitude towards Northern Ireland and the discussions that have been held with the Republic of Ireland.

There has been so much rumour and mischievous talk about whether this or that decision has been taken that communities on both sides of the border in Ireland have real cause for concern and anxiety about what the future holds. I have every confidence that the Government will preserve the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but I say that only because I know so well the Ministers who administer Northern Ireland so effectively. Public opinion in both the north and the south of Ireland does not take the same view of Ministers as that taken by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It would have been proper and right to have had a debate next week to discuss the progress or otherwise of the talks between Ministers in London and in Dublin. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could have given an analysis of the position, outlining the state of play. That would have set at rest any unjustified fears. He could have given the House an assurance that when it returned there would be a full and early debate before any final decision was taken.

Many of my hon. Friends have said that the Government are tending to slip on banana skins, are prone to making mistakes and are bad at public relations. The matter I raise is an example of bad public relations. There is a growing need for knowledge in Northern Ireland about

[Sir John Farr]

what, if anything, has transpired. A Government who are as conscious of good public relations as this Government should be would have recognised that defect and have taken the opportunity—and may yet do so next week—to make a public statement in the House that would have allowed a short exchange on both sides. It would have reassured hon. Members that the United Kingdom is to be preserved, so that we could then go away and enjoy a well-earned and prolonged recess.

6.57 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I cannot imagine that there will be any shortage of hon. Members able, willing and even eager to carry on the debate on the subject of the opening speeches. Therefore, I hope that the House will forgive me if I join my good friend the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) in seeking to divert its attention to a matter of rather greater concern to us, to the hon. Gentleman and to many of his hon. Friends. I refer to the worsening political position in Northern Ireland—something that could easily have been avoided had not the impression been deliberately given that fundamental decisions would be taken and that significant announcements would be made while the House was in recess.

I heartily support the hon. Gentleman's call that the House should meet next week. My colleagues and I are willing and eager to come here next week if the Secretary of State, even at this late stage, can be induced to lay before the House a factual and up-to-date report of what is or is not being discussed in the Anglo-Irish discussions. As the hon. Gentleman said, there is nothing more likely to cause confusion or prove a greater incentive to trouble makers than the current uncertainty and suspicion, which can be dispelled only by responsible Ministers.

In a similar debate on 26 March last I illustrated how an atmosphere of stability and confidence had been created by the Prime Minister's forthright statement after the Chequers summit with Dr. FitzGerald in November. I explained how, in the aftermath of that, there had been something like a sigh of relief from Protestants and Roman Catholics alike, who said to themselves and, more important, to each other, "Now at least we know where we stand."

In the debate in March I expressed fears that that stability, confidence and relief of tension were being put at risk and eroded by inspired leaks about the Anglo-Irish talks. That was four months ago, and who can say that I was wrong? Northern Ireland Ministers have forfeited confidence not just by refusing until today to clear the air and remove suspicion. They have allowed substance to be given to the leaked proposals.

The first leaked proposal was that of Dublin judges sharing benches with Her Majesty's judges in Belfast. How does that square with assurances of no weakening of the Union? The second was that Dublin's demand for the abolition of the Ulster Defence Regiment had met with the possible phasing out of the part-time element of that regiment. The third was the inexplicable decision in recent weeks to increase tension by curbing parades which in past years had caused only comparatively trivial incidents. Those three examples are wholly at variance with the Government's earlier rejection of joint control or shared sovereignty.

Why has all that occurred? The answer is beginning to emerge through the same channel as was used for the inspired reports and leaks. It is that when British civil servants met their Dublin counterparts about six months ago—in the words of one of them, to repair the hideous damage done by "that woman" to Anglo-Irish relations—they offered the Dublin Government a consultative role in Northern Ireland affairs. Not surprisingly—Dublin politicians being old birds—Dublin said that consultation without real influence was worthless. Therefore, after months of haggling, it was decided to lay on demonstrations of good intent.

The Ulster judges were approached and suitably bullied. The Ulster Defence Regiment, apparently unacceptable to Dublin because Catholics would be murdered if they were to join, would have to be "trimmed", as *The Guardian* delicately put it. The Royal Ulster Constabulary was required to show its evidence of good intent and was forced to provide a demonstration of what it could do with a force of 2,000 in a situation where only 200 were required a year earlier.

We do not know whether Dublin has been impressed by those three examples of the results of consultation and advisory roles. It seems more likely that they will be regarded as a down payment and, like danegeld, more and more will be demanded.

Ulster people see all of those as the first fruits of the Anglo-Irish secret talks, and costly fruits they are and costly they will prove to be. The cost has been the greatest loss of confidence in Northern Ireland Ministers since the ill-fated Sunningdale experiment. They have succeeded in destroying in eight months all the stability that was established by the Prime Minister and the Government in the aftermath of the Irish Forum and the Chequers summit. And now, as the House prepares to adjourn for almost three months, I beg Ministers to desist from encouraging a monsoon of leaks, rumours, proposals, studies, deals and initiatives.

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) suggested that the Government might be tired. I do not know whether he included in that remark his successors at the Northern Ireland Office. Tired or not, they should take a rest. Let us have an intermission in the weekly speculation by Ministers on the prospects of success of the Dublin talks.

To those Ministers who have plunged the Province into a state of unbelievable political confusion, we on this Bench say, "For God's sake, face up to the consequences of your indiscretions." On behalf of all who wish to preserve the democratic process, I suggest, as did Clem Attlee before me, that a period of silence from them would be welcome.

7.5 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am grateful for this opportunity before the House adjourns to speak on a subject of great interest to my constituents. I refer to the situation in the Kent coalfield, which has a reputation for being the smallest, most isolated, most militant—and, now, the most vulnerable—mining community in Britain. A large question mark hangs over its future. I wish to comment on its future and on the future of the economic activity and employment that surrounds the east Kent coalfield.

I should at the outset explain that about a quarter of the Kent miners live in my constituency, although the three

pits are located in the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who is the most diligent of constituency Members and whose Cabinet responsibilities have not prevented him from being in his place as I raise this issue. I know that he shares many of the concerns and anxieties about his constituents that I now voice about mine.

The coal strike had a devastating, although predictable, effect on the Kent coalfield. Of the nine coal faces that were in production before the Scargill strike, five have been lost, two at Betteshanger, two at Snowdon and one at Tilmanstone. In addition to those geological losses, the Kent miners worsened their reputation for mindless militancy, for even after all other coalfields had returned to work the Kent men held out for a short period of senseless further strike.

Even after they went back, some of the most unpleasant acts of intimidation and victimisation of working miners took place in Kent. One sad statistic tells the story. Out of the 2,400 miners in Kent, 331 were working miners, but of those only 12 are today still employed in the Kent coalfield. The other 319 have left the industry and taken voluntary redundancy. The word voluntary in many cases should be in quotation marks because many of those men have been hounded out of the industry by the unpleasant and hostile attitudes of their colleagues.

That is a sad commentary on the deep and passionate divisions within the work force. But at least that phase of intimidation seems to be over. Just after the strike, one incident of intimidation was being reported to the police or NCB every day. In June there was only one such incident reported in the whole month, and there have been no reports of intimidation in July.

From my contacts with the NUM, and particularly with the NUM president, my constituent, Mr. Malcolm Pitt, I now detect not only a long overdue willingness to heal the wounds but a new mood of realism about the economic realities. Those realities are that it now costs £100 per tonne to mine coal in Kent. That coal can be sold on the market for only £50 a tonne. That is why the Kent coalfield is losing well over £2 million a month, or nearly £25 million a year. Those losses must be staunched if the Kent coalfield is to have a future.

Nobody on the Conservative Benches, in the Government or in the NCB wants to see the Kent coalfield close down. The new NCB manager in Kent, Mr. George McAlpine, is adamant in his view that he has arrived not to close a coalfield but to make it economically viable and successful. He and some leaders of the NUM believe that that can be done and that coal can be mined in Kent at half the present cost.

How is that to be achieved? First, there must be continuing improvement in management. For far too long the Kent coalfield was regarded as an appendage of the south midlands area. The most welcome change is that it has become a unit on its own. It has its own general manager with a short line of communication to the director of operations at Hobart house. That is a welcome management change. Secondly, the old reputation for union militancy has changed as well. That reputation meant clinging to outdated and inefficient styles of work on the surface and underground for far longer than at other coalfields. That must be replaced by new realism and new determination for productivity. Thirdly, a strategy must be arrived at for slimming down the work force. That has already been done eslewhere and 900 voluntary redundancies have already been taken.

As I have explained, the Tilmanstone pit is located in the constituency of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. It is scheduled for closure, subject to the colliery review procedure, in about nine months' time. Since the end of the strike it has cost £1 million a month to retain a mining presence at Tilmanstone, where 700 men have jobs. One new face has been in operation since 1 July. The NCB says that Tilmanstone face No. 5 has a life of only about nine months and that after that the exhausted pit must close. The NUM and NACODS are arguing—this is their case in the colliery review procedure—that face No. 5 has a much longer life, especially if mining operations can be extended to reach a nearby seam at a lower level.

It is not for me to prejudge the outcome of the colliery review procedure. I recognise that there are strong arguments on both sides. The good news is that they are both economic arguments that are based on realism. The Kent coalfield, whether it is at Tilmanstone or anywhere else, must achieve a production cost of £50 a tonne. If that is achieved, the field will have a chance of survival.

Employment prospects in the Kent coalfield are encouraging. First, there has been vigorous activity by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., an organisation that has a special remit from the Secretary of State for Energy to create new jobs in areas that are affected by redundancy. It has already made a substantial investment of over £350,000 in an insulating material factory at central stores, which will create 95 new jobs in east Kent. Other investment projects are under active consideration involving up to £1 million in grants and loans from NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. This is good news for the business community and the job-creating world of Kent.

Secondly, there is a future for hitherto untapped coal-related industrial activity in Kent. One private company has estimated that 3·3 million tonnes of recoverable coal lie on discarded tips on the surface of Kent coalfields and that much of it could be recovered by modern technology at competitive prices, thereby creating 200 new jobs using NUM labour.

Finally, it should be reiterated that a viable coal industry with the £20 million to £25 million of economic activity that it creates is well worth fighting to preserve in the depressed economy of the area which I represent. If only the management and the work force can co-operate to reach the cost figure of £50 a tonne, which everyone agrees is attainable, I, for one, foresee a successful going concern for the Kent coalmines in future.

7.14 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): It is clear that the Prime Minister herself was responsible for accepting with alacrity all the proposals in the report from the Top Salaries Review Body. The Opposition think that she had a duty to the House and the country to defend the Government's decision in the form of a speech. The Procedure Committee is investigating the form in which Prime Minister's Question Time is handled, and I took the opportunity to send a memorandum to the Committee in which I observed that it is rather strange that the Prime Minister makes fewer speeches in the House than an active Back Bencher. She gets away with literally murder at

[Mr. Willie W. Hamilton]

Question Time. It is highly unsatisfactory that she is allowed to go from the beginning of a Session to the end of it without making one or two major speeches in the House.

The Leader of the House is an astute politician and he must recognise, whatever he said last night, and whatever he says this evening, that in accepting the report from the TSRB the Government have made asses of themselves. It is clear that there is a yawning chasm between the Prime Minister and the public. The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) told us that when he returned to his constituency he heard not one complaint about the report. He must be the only Conservative Member to have that experience. The majority of Conservative Back Benchers who voted against the Government's decision to increase the Lord Chancellor's salary did so to save their own skins. Most of them represent marginal constituencies and they know that they are on a hiding to nothing there as a direct consequence of the Government's acceptance of the report.

Today's edition of *The London Standard* states:

"It was the grossest piece of political ineptitude perpetrated by Mrs. Thatcher since she came to office."

By jove, that is a claim. She and her poodles—I accept that the Leader of the House cannot be so described—seek to defend themselves. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Government's courage and boldness, but to others their decision reflected stupidity and insensitivity. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, the Government's action can be said to show ineptitude and callousness. At the same time that the Government were saying that some people deserved or needed an extra £23,000 a year, they were saying to others, "You must price yourself into a job by taking employment at 50 quid a week." So we have a Government whose policy is based on unfairness and ineptitude.

The Scottish teachers have been on strike for many months for a living wage. The highest salary that can be obtained in any school in Scotland is £21,000, and that is not payable to anyone now. However, the head of the Civil Service is to receive a £23,000 increase to maintain his morale, to prevent him going into private business, or whatever. No one can seriously pretend that the man needs such an increase. As *The London Standard* today rightly says, the people will never forget the Government's acceptance of the TSRB's report. The decision will haunt the Government from now until the next general election, and they know it.

The later edition of *The London Standard* tells us that the Prime Minister last night threatened to resign. When I first read the article I thought that the right hon. Lady had promised to do so. I was hoping that it was a promise. The article describes how the Government Chief Whip was taking into his office half a dozen Tory Back Benchers at a time—rather like the Gestapo—and telling them, "You either support us tonight or instead of going to the beaches of Spain, France or elsewhere, you will be trundling the streets in a general election campaign."

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government should introduce work-sharing for the top posts that are the subject of the TSRB report? If we had two people for the price of one, we might even have a better service.

Mr. Hamilton: The Government have suggested that that should be done in other sectors. This is an example of the double standards that we are getting from the Government. They say that low-paid workers must accept even lower wages to maintain or increase the number of jobs that are available. At the same time, they say to the people at the top who do not need the cash, "To maintain your morale and way of living you have to have a salary increase of £20,000 or £30,000"—in some instances an increase of 46 per cent.

I hope to get a more sympathetic response from the Leader of the House to my next point. Last Thursday, he said that the Government might find time to debate the recent report on Members' outside financial interests. On 4 July, writing in *The Times*, Mr. Anthony Bevins stated:

"Some MPs are more than doubling their £16,904 parliamentary salary with outside business consultancies under which they provide political 'intelligence' to their paymasters.

More than 140 MPs are acting as consultants and advisers to firms such as Imperial Tobacco, Grand Metropolitan Hotels, Texaco, British Aerospace, Tate and Lyle, and Rank Hovis McDougall, which are all in the top 50 British companies."

He went on to say that some companies pay £5,000 a year per consultancy and that a number of Members of Parliament are consequently doubling their salaries.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I shall continue because I am going to refer to two Conservative Members. I gave them notice that I would do so. Peter Riddell, writing in the *Financial Times*, stated:

"The committee"—

I have referred to its report—

"also discussed the increased number of secretaries and research assistants to MPs concurrently pursuing other vocations and using their access to parliament to further them. In evidence, Mr. Peter Luff, a director of Good Relations Corporate Affairs, who holds a pass as a research assistant to Sir Anthony Grant, Conservative MP for Cambridgeshire, South-West, said he held the pass, 'under great protest because it is the only way I can gain access to certain information.'"

A short time ago, the Leader of the House said, when replying to a question from me, that 120 Members had registered their parliamentary consultancies—an increase of 50 per cent. over last year. He did not say that the number of declared consultancies had also increased by 50 per cent. to more than 300.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) lists in the register three directorships and 22 consultancies or clients, including Thames Water, the Lead Development Association—that association held an exhibition upstairs last week, but I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman organised it—the Take-Away and Fast Food Federation, Kentucky Fried Chicken Ltd, the Cement and Concrete Association, the National Bus Company, Pye Telecommunications, London Country Bus Services Ltd and the Scottish Transport Group. I had a word with the hon. Gentleman just before the debate started and told him what I would say. He has defended himself on the ground that his parliamentary salary is inadequate—£16,000-plus is not enough. However, we may not know how much he is paid for his consultancy work or what he does to earn it. God knows what these companies think that they will get from a Back Bencher for this service, but they must think it is worthwhile.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): To be attacked by the hon. Gentleman is often regarded by Conservative

Members as a compliment. It is almost a battle honour that one wears with pride. So far, the hon. Gentleman has not shown that anything that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) or I have done is in any way improper or in any way offends against the rules of the House. It is up to the hon. Gentleman to make it clear if he thinks that there is anything improper. If so, he owes it to us, as Members of Parliament, to spell out his claim so that we can adequately answer it.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech. I am putting on the record what is in the Register of Members' Interests. That is a voluntary register. Of course the hon. Gentleman is acting within the rules, but certain conventions should be followed. I believe that a Member is elected to represent his constituents, not to line his pockets, as is so blatantly done by an increasing number of hon. Members, especially Conservatives.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice that he would raise this matter. Is he, or is he not, alleging any impropriety against me or any of my hon. Friends?

Mr. Hamilton: Indeed, I am. The hon. Gentleman never misses an opportunity to ask the Leader of the House, as he did last Thursday, for a debate on an early-day motion that specifically refers to the privatisation of local authority services in which he has financial interests.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that I heard the hon. Member allege impropriety or improper conduct. He may disagree with the rules, but he must not make personal allegations of that kind.

Mr. Hamilton: If I implied impropriety, of course I withdraw. I would not act in that way. I would not use the Order Paper or the procedures of the House to further my outside financial interests, which have nothing to do with the people who elected me. I leave it at that.

When I was talking to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West about this matter, he asked, "Why pick on me?" That is a fair question. I could have picked scores of others. I shall put the activities of some hon. Members on the record. They are all Conservative Members. The list includes the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), who registers—I do not know how many are not registered—three directorships and four consultancies, the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)——

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I shall continue. The list includes the hon. Member for Wealden, who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests and has four directorships and three consultancies, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths)——

Mr. Nicholls: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an Opposition Member to refer to all the directorships which he thinks Conservative Members have without pointing out that many of his colleagues have directorships as well?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is quite in order. This is not a matter for me.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) can make his own speech.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. I am going to put on the record what should be on the record.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman in getting this point on the record. Is he implying that the possession of these outside interests influences the way in which those hon. Members behave in the House?

Mr. Hamilton: It may well do. The code of conduct laid down for local councillors is much more stringent than the code for hon. Members. Farmers and directors of companies can go into the Lobbies——

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I know that this is irritating Conservative Members, but I shall put these points on the record. I am asserting that the code of conduct laid down for local councillors is much more stringent than the code for hon. Members who can vote for vast sums of money for their farms and companies without fear or favour. That is a big temptation. From the record of hon. Members' outside interests it is clear that they are using this place to further their private financial interests. A few weeks ago I gave an example of that in the House when a lobby correspondent drew to my attention the fact that two hon. Members were in the pay of drug companies. When the drug companies were in bad odour a few months ago, those two hon. Members tabled 70 oral questions to the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he must relate his remarks to whether we should adjourn in accordance with the motion before the House. Secondly, he must not allege that hon. Members are using this place to further their financial interests.

Mr. Biffen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a legitimate matter for debate, but debate cannot proceed with this type of innuendo, unless it is clearly established that hon. Members are using this place to enhance their financial position. I suggest that to make that allegation is an infringement. It is important that the House should know your ruling on the matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have made it clear that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) must not make an allegation of that sort.

Mr. Biffen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The allegation has been made. May I suggest that it be withdrawn?

Mr. Hamilton: The allegation has not been made. I am merely laying the facts before the House to let hon. Members and the country make their deductions from them. I have put some of the facts on the record. As the Leader of the House has made it clear that he is sympathetic to such a debate, I hope that he will find time for one in the autumn because much more remains to be said about these matters than I have been able to say now.

A few weeks ago, when I attended the annual meeting of the United Kingdom America Parliamentary Association, the secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), said that a dinner was to be held later in the year for an anniversary celebration or some other reason. He sought to book a room downstairs,

[Mr. Hamilton]

but they were all booked until the end of the year. I am not making any assertions, but the Select Committee and I are worried at what goes on in those rooms night after night. I hope that if I ask the Chairman of the Select Committee, the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving), for a list of the names of hon. Members who have booked the rooms and for whom, he will give me that information.

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to correct him? The rooms are all booked until the end of next year because the quality is so good.

Mr. Hamilton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accede to my request for that information. Will he give me the names of hon. Members who have booked those rooms, and state the purpose?

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): The hon. Gentleman may care to know that on Monday night this week I addressed the Kettering rotary club—an institution of the highest probity—in Dining Room A. I hope that he does not seek to cast a slur on it.

Mr. Hamilton: I am not casting slurs on anybody. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Will the hon. Member for Cheltenham guarantee to give me that information because even the Select Committee has expressed anxiety about the probable abuse of both Dining Rooms and Committee Rooms in the House? When the Speaker, who was at the meeting, heard that the rooms were fully booked, he generously offered his banqueting room, or whatever it is called, to the association, which it accepted.

The report is an important one. It impinges on the integrity of the House. If it is not debated, rumours will circulate in the press and outside. When the Leader of the House replies, I hope that he will undertake to find time to debate the report in October.

7.36 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): The only comment I would make on the mean speech of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) is that it tells us something about his mind. I am satisfied that, when compelled to do so, he withdrew allegations of impropriety.

To return to more serious matters, it was with great regret that last night I found myself unable to support the Government. Tonight I have no hesitation in supporting them. I resent the fact that the official Opposition have chosen to take up time with this motion. They had the whole of yesterday to debate the matter, but they chose to put up only one speaker. Traditionally, this is a time when Back Bench Members can raise constituency matters, as I propose to do now.

I can give the House a much better reason for not adjourning than that offered by the Opposition Front Bench. I do not want the House to rise until there has been an opportunity to consider coroners' courts and the appointment of coroners. I am prompted to do so by the tragic case of Harriet English, the daughter of my agent in south-west Cambridgeshire.

Harriet died in horrific circumstances in the London Clinic. She was 22, and a completely fit and, indeed, athletic girl. On 19 May she felt tired after playing badminton, and later she complained of a pain in her shoulder. A general practitioner, Dr. Barretto, was consulted. He diagnosed a torn ligament, and administered an injection to ease the pain. During the following days, she became extremely ill, and, in the absence of Dr. Barretto, she was treated by his partners. During four days she got worse, and was ultimately rushed to the London Clinic where she died in agonising circumstances. The cause was said to be septicemia, which was at no time diagnosed. Obviously, the doctors recognised that something serious was wrong because the pain-killing drugs were strong ones used only in serious cases.

The death of a healthy 22-year-old girl in four days after being injected for a painful shoulder calls for a meticulous investigation. On 17 July the inquest at Westminster raised as many questions as it sought to resolve. How did she get septicemia? Why was it not diagnosed? What drugs should have been used? What was the effect of the drugs that were administered? Yet the verdict of the coroner, Dr. Knapman, was natural causes. That seems extraordinary. A verdict of death by misadventure would have been more realistic. However, probably an open verdict would have been the wisest decision.

I intend to bring the whole matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General so that he can consider whether there should be a judicial review to bring out the missing facts. However, in the House now I want to raise the broad question of coroners' courts and the appointment of coroners. Coroners' inquests are inevitably highly emotional, being concerned with life and death, and tragedy. They must be conducted with scrupulous care and in accordance with the highest judicial standards. Unlike some courts dealing with quite minor matters, the only appeal from them is by leave of the Attorney-General. Perhaps the informal style of conducting inquests is appropriate in some cases, but in major cases that is not so.

Coroners must, by statute, be lawyers of five years' standing or more, or legally qualified medical practitioners. Most frequently coroners seem to fall into the latter category. They seem to be primarily doctors and only to a lesser extent people with legal qualifications. For my part, I believe that it is desirable for a corner to be a person of legal and judicial experience rather than primarily medical experience. Very often at inquests, the conduct of medical practitioners comes into question. Let me emphasise that I am not making any suggestions of impropriety against Dr. Knapman, but it is important that inquests be conducted in such a way that justice is not only done but seen to be done, as we require in the major courts. That is especially so if complex medical evidence is involved and has to be sifted by lawyers. It might even be desirable for major inquests, or ones of great complexity, to be conducted by a High Court or senior judge brought in for the occasion. That would give greater confidence to the unfortunate people involved.

That is the point of principle that I seek to make. My unfortunate constituents know that nothing can bring their daughter back, but they seek all the facts so that others may be spared Harriet's tragic fate.

7.42 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I am mindful of the comments that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) made about the use of the time in this debate, particularly because I

am sympathetic to the views that he has just put forward, which many hon. Members with experience of coroners' courts will share. There is widespread anxiety about the way in which they operate, particularly in some recent prominent cases.

However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand the anxiety, which many hon. Members share, about the implications of the events over the past two or three days connected with the top pay award, which further undermines the Government's economic policy. I am sure that he will also understand our belief that, because of that, there is a case for extending the present Session to provide an opportunity for a much fuller debate than last night's debate to consider the implications of the past two or three days.

In the light of the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), this is also an opportunity to consider Labour's alternatives to what the Government have done and to the pay policy that the Government are or are not pursuing, as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said in an intervention. The credibility of the case put by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was undermined by the fact that he had no alternative to bring forward to the House and the country from the Labour party's locker as a way of resolving such problems.

Last night's vote was unprecedented in the Government's period of office. It was in fact a vote of no confidence in the Government by their own supporters. I think that it will be seen by the country as a vote of no confidence. As Conservative Members so ably showed last night, it is a vote of no confidence in the Government's pay policy.

On several occasions, in interventions to the Chancellor and other Ministers, I have criticised the lack of a coherent pay strategy or policy. That was made absolutely clear in Conservative Members' speeches during last night's debate. The events of the past two or three days, the Government's acceptance of the top pay award and the reaction to it are an inevitable consequence of the Government having no strategy for pay in either the public or the private sector.

Pay in the private sector is now increasing by around 9 per cent. a year. Clearly, that will further undermine the Government's economic policy. However, in the public sector there has been different treatment for different public sector workers since the Government came to office. For example, the police and the armed services have been marching ahead of people in other parts of the public sector, whereas teachers, those in the National Health Service and civil servants have been held back unjustifiably compared with increases in the private sector.

There is no doubt that the award, which the Government have allowed to go ahead with no staging, has undermined the Government's exhortations to workers in the private sector to restrain their claims, and their exhortations to members of the Confederation of British Industry and employers to resist pay claims that will make British industry less competitive. It has undermined the Government's policy towards the teachers and the nurses, to whom a staging agreement was offered, so that their 8·5 per cent. increase was phased over a period. It has undermined the whole of that strategy, if one can give it that name.

That is the result of the high pay awards and seeking to accept the basis of comparability contained in the top salaries review. The problem has been with us for many years. Not only Conservative but Labour Governments have had a great deal of experience over the past two decades. A great deal of work has been done. The Government swept away the pay research unit after they came to office and established the Megaw committee to look into ways of introducing a new system of settling Civil Service pay, but as yet, after all those years in office, the Government have still not succeeded in reaching any agreement on a sensible method of comparability and settling pay disputes and negotiations in either the Civil Service or other parts of the public sector.

Our view, based largely on the detailed and comprehensive work by the Megaw committee, is that the recommendations from the ad hoc and inconsistent inquiries should be swept away and replaced by a comprehensive system of comparability between the public sector and the private sector. A proper non-inflationary comparability system is the only real solution to the problem. Different sectors of different workers have been left to catch up after a period, such as the teachers with the Houghton award, or other public sector workers with the Clegg award. If public sector workers fall behind, as they have done in those instances and on this award, inevitably any hope of a sensible pay strategy for the whole country is undermined.

The past two decades show that that system is the key to getting the economy into equilibrium and to getting expansion and people back to work without inflation. That is why there is an overwhelming case for supporting the amendment and for giving the House an opportunity to debate this central economic issue—how to determine public sector pay and avoid the knock-on effect of high and unjustifiable pay awards such as the Government have given top people.

7.50 pm

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): I support the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) regarding the future relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic and the request by the leader of the Ulster Unionist party for a statement on current discussions between officials in Dublin, Belfast and London. That must be essential for the stability and development of the Province, which should be of concern to us all.

Before the House rises for the summer recess, it should have the opportunity to consider wind energy. Any mention of the advantages of wind for hon. Members is open to misinterpretation and perhaps energy at the end of the Session is more than usually difficult to summon up. However, alternative sources of power deserve increasing attention.

Several options have been considered, including geothermic, wave and tidal power, but current development shows that the greatest potential might lie with wind energy. Its advantages are considerable, but the most striking is that it derives from a consistently available resource which is natural and renewable.

Additional to the economic pluses of saving or replacing the use of expensive fossil fuels and the reduction of dependence on imported energy or on unreliable sources due to industrial disruption are the environmental advantages, including the lack of

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atmospheric pollution. British Aerospace is a major company in my constituency and its experience, derived from propellers and high performance engineering, has been put to good effect as a member of the Wind Energy Group. Windmills, which are often less romantically referred to as wind turbine generators, are already in use and under construction, making a valuable addition to the production of electricity, but anxiety that we may not lead the way as we should in windmill technology must be sounded.

Because of a lack of speed in initial Government support for such activity in the United Kingdom, despite undoubted and leading expertise, the competition must now be overtaken. It would be another example of lost opportunity if the Central Electricity Generating Board and others had to look overseas to buy windmills.

Mr. Pawsey: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in south Warwickshire, the National Coal Board is proposing to invest £500 million to develop a new super-pit? Would my hon. Friend care to speculate on how the companies involved in the development of alternative sources of power might spend that money if it were made available to them?

Mr. Murphy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His deep understanding of the problems of energy leads me to my next point. The involvement of different Ministries has perhaps contributed to the difficulties to which I have referred. The Department of Energy and the Department of Trade and Industry are already involved, and the Overseas Development Administration might now also be involved, with potential for export to Third world nations. The Government should consider a lead Ministry for alternative energy development. Companies such as British Aerospace, which are involved in the Wind Energy Group projects, would then benefit directly from such money.

British Aerospace has also been deeply involved with the European Space Agency, which has pointed the way on international co-operation. An example of the benefits of such co-operation has been the company's prime contractor role for the Giotto spacecraft, which has successfully been launched to encounter Halley's comet and deserves all our congratulations. Such an agency might be an appropriate way in which to advance with alternative energy to minimise experimentation costs and to maximise earning potential. New job opportunities might also flow from that.

Right hon. and hon. Members are often accused of tilting at windmills. On this occasion, before the House rises, perhaps such tilting will have been put to some good effect.

7.55 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I shall not follow what the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) said about Northern Ireland but rather follow what my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said about the amendment concerning the thorny subject of whether the Lord Chancellor's salary should be £77,000 a year to stay £2,000 a year ahead of that of the Lord Chief Justice. That is a singular reason for giving a man £77,000 a year.

I recall a time in my distant past when, if I may quote L.P. Hartley, things were done differently. I remember why pit pay was kept low—pitmen had free coal and lodging. The houses in which they lived belonged to the coal owners. When the Lord Chancellor is given £77,000 a year, no reference is made to his having free coal and lodging — or rather, free heating, rates and accommodation.

As it happens, I have a soft spot for the Lord Chancellor. When I heard that his salary increase was to be debated in the House, I laid a side bet that he would not take it. I knew my man, or rather I knew the noble Lord who sits on the Woolsack, and who has the unique distinction of being head of the legal profession, a member of the Cabinet and at the same time Speaker of the upper House. The post was not envisaged by Montesequieu when he wrote about the separation of the powers.

I have a soft spot for the Lord Chancellor because he was part and parcel of my first political act. I heckled him during the general election campaign of 1964 when he visited Newcastle upon Tyne. I doubt whether, in this day and age, I could have got close enough to a Conservative Minister to heckle him, but that is how it was in those days.

Mr. Murphy: The hon. Gentleman is making very kind references to my noble Friend. Is he aware that my noble Friend's involvement has enhanced many a Conservative cause? I can bear witness to that in my constituency. He has come to support me in each general election I have fought there and each time I have been returned with an increased majority.

Mr. Bell: I am sure that, during his long career, the noble Lord has enhanced many Conservative causes. I remember that, in the late 1950s, I shared one distinction with Lord Soper—we never understood the noble Lord when he talked about the British empire. I have not had an opportunity to discuss his views since then, but I am sure that he may have been as opaque in other directions as he was on that subject.

There is another reason why the Lord Chancellor is close to my heart. He was Minister with responsibility for the north-east in 1963 when we had a compassionate Conservative Government which sent him to the north-east——

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): Wearing a flat cap.

Mr. Bell: —when we had high unemployment there.

My right hon. Friend refers to his flat cap. The fact is that the noble Lord got as far as Darlington in a bowler hat, but when he reached Darlington he changed it for a flat cap. However, his visit resulted in the building of the Newcastle and Teesside airports and a road infrastructure in the north-east. He helped us to build up the region so that when, thankfully, in 1964 a Labour Government were returned to power we were able to build upon his efforts. I have to tread somewhat carefully because the noble Lord is also the head of my profession. That happens to be one of my declared interests. I am aware of the fact that I am sailing close to the wind. The point is that the Government have deemed it necessary to give a salary increase to the noble Lord that increases his salary to £77,000 a year.

A great deal was made of what the Chief Secretary described as "synthetic indignation". Unfortunately, there was nothing synthetic about the public indignation. Those

who receive invalidity benefit live in dread that a Department of Health and Social Security medical examination will remove them from the sick list to the dole queue. Those who are seriously ill now find that the prescriptions for the drugs which are necessary for their survival cost £4·50 each. My constituents in Middlesbrough have to wait longer and longer for home improvement grants. The changes in the regulations mean that those who are young and homeless have to sleep rough. These people, and others like them, realise that under the social security review they will be the losers. They perceive that there is one rule for the rich and another rule for the rest of us.

Last night, one hon. Member referred to the fact that the implementation of the 1978 top salaries review by the Labour Government was followed by the general election in 1979. More aptly, he might have said that the freezing of nurses' pay in 1962 led to the electoral defeat of the Conservative party in 1964. To use a colloquialism, by implementing the top salaries award the Government have revealed to the people of this country that they believe in a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power to the rich. This perception will not be clouded by rhetoric, news management or any other manipulative sleight of hand. It has left an indelible impression upon the low paid.

I ought to refer briefly to what low pay is. The Low Pay Unit defines low wages as

"at or below two-thirds of the median (mid-point of the distribution) earnings of full-time male workers, giving a figure for 1984-85 of £107 for a basic 39 hour week or £2·75 an hour for part-timers). This is very close to the TUC's minimum wage 'target' of £104 and to the Council of Europe's 'decency threshold' for earnings as specified under Article 4 of the European Social Charter. This is set at 68 per cent. of average male female earnings, yielding a 1984-85 figure for Britain of £108·32 a week."

All those people must wonder why the Government are giving top salaries to special categories of people while they have to live upon what is described as a "decency threshold". If that is linked to the fact that wages councils are to be abolished for those under the age of 21 and that the role of wages councils is to be limited to fixing hourly rates and overtime rates, one wonders how shop workers will be affected by the Government's trading proposals.

The entire purpose of the Government's review of shop opening hours was that if shops were to be allowed to open on Sundays there was no need to make special provision for shop workers; they could be dealt with by means of other legislation and their wages could be settled by the wages councils. If legislation is to be introduced which allows shops to open on a Sunday and if shop workers are expected to have recourse to the wages councils to look after their rights, they will find that the role of the wages councils has been reduced and that for those under 21 years of age they have been abolished altogether. This legislation will therefore lead to the low paid being put at a disadvantage.

In a letter, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers says of the Government's proposed legislation on Sunday trading and its consequences in my constituency of Middlesbrough:

"Some of us want to go to church on Sundays in order to give expression to our religious beliefs. Others of us find that Sunday is the only day of the week when all the family can be together, and it is important that the bonds with our families and friends should not be broken. Our employers have told us they do not want to open the shop on Sundays and will not be the first to do so, but they warn us that if the shop across the road is open and we are not, we will be forced to do likewise."

That letter relates to Sunday activities, to low pay and in the end to the Government's policy.

The Government are on a slippery slope. They have found that events are slipping out of their reach. Instead of having control over events, they have lost control. It will take some time before the walking on the pavement, to which the Chief Whip is alleged to have referred when his colleagues were threatening to vote against the Government, comes about, but when that walking on the pavement takes place it will be the walking of voters to the polls. When they do so, they will decisively reject this Government. We have to wait patiently, but:

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all."

The electorate are in that position. They will grind slowly, but they will grind properly. They will grind this Government into the dust.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Most speeches in this debate have been admirably short. I hope that this pattern will continue. Eight other hon. Members wish to speak before the wind-up speeches at about 20 minutes to nine o'clock. I therefore appeal for brevity.

8.9 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I should like to follow in the footsteps of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and refer to the National Coal Board. One matter which should be drawn to the attention of the House before we rise for the recess is the NCB's proposals for mining coal in Warwickshire in what it calls the south Warwickshire prospect. That includes a substantial part of my constituency.

The matter is urgent, and we should discuss it before rising for the recess, because the National Coal Board is even now having discussions with local authorities to fix a site for the proposed new pit complex. Those discussions are taking place without the benefit of any debate in this House.

We should have an opportunity to consider three basic principles. First, taking into account changing technology, will the coal be required in the 21st century? Secondly, can the expected investment of about £500 million be found? Thirdly, if the earlier conditions are satisfied, could not the coal be obtained from existing pits in Warwickshire, such as Coventry colliery and Daw Mill? The House should have an opportunity to express its opinion on those important matters.

The board's quoted investment figure of £500 million represents a substantial sum of public money — large even by the standards of the House——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Hear, hear.

Mr. Pawsey: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me.

It might help the House if I gave some details of the National Coal Board's time scale. By the end of this year, it hopes to have fixed a site for the pit complex. By the middle of next year, planning applications will have been submitted. By 1988, the board hopes that the site works will start, and hopes that the first coal will emerge by 1998. That time scale should not blind the House to the

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size and urgency of the problem. Once projects of this size begin, they seem to develop their own momentum, a momentum which it becomes difficult to control.

The NCB would not have put forward this proposal if it did not believe that the funding was readily available. Indeed, it would not now be discussing with the local authorities the site of the new super-pit if it did not believe that the money was available.

The south Warwickshire prospect will produce about 3 million tonnes of coal a year. It will be high-quality coal extracted from deep seams about 14 ft thick. The coal will be of sufficient quality to be used in industry, in the domestic market and in power stations. Indeed, about 60 per cent. of it is earmarked for the power stations of the Central Electricity Generating Board. However, will the CEGB require those enormous quantities of coal? We should remember the nuclear alternative, which is cheaper and cleaner than the extraction of power from fossil fuels. With nuclear power, there is no problem with acid rain or with the disposal of ash. There is no need for trucks and trains to move the coal to power stations. The NCB must prove that this enormous investment will benefit the nation, and not merely the board.

Hon. Members will recall that we have just come through a long and bitter coal dispute, which produced intimidation on a scale never envisaged in the United Kingdom. Those activities do not demonstrate responsibility. It is noteworthy that Mr. Scargill still preaches no pit closures, the class war, and the message of the strike. Against that background, are we justified in investing £500 million in this new super-pit?

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman come clean and say that the real reason why he and his constituents are against the pit is that it will intrude into a beautiful area of Great Britain? I might support him if he put forward that argument, and I will expect his support when I ask for some marginal investment by the coal board in areas such as the Rhondda valley, which I represent, and which has between 30 and 90 per cent. unemployment, skilled miners available, an infrastructure of education, transport and communications and people extremely anxious to work. We also live in a beautiful part of the country, but we have learned how to get rid of our despoliation. I will support him if he is honest, and I expect him to support me in future.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman anticipates my speech. If he listens patiently, he will hear my argument. I look forward to his continuing support.

The NCB says that the area of search lies between Coventry and Kenilworth. To paraphrase the words of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), it is a green and pleasant land. The pit complex will cover one square kilometre. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, who has responsibility for coal, now in his place. Knowing his interest, concern and conscientiousness, I would have been surprised were he not here. I am grateful to him for listening to my arguments.

The pit complex, which will cover one square kilometre, will include winding towers, a coal treatment plant, car parks for trucks and a massive coal storage area. The operation will involve between 300 and 500 lorry movements a day. It will involve the movement of 10 large trains each day. All this is in a green belt, which is already under considerable threat.

If the National Coal Board can justify the need for the coal, why should it not be extracted from the pits at Daw Mill or at Coventry? It seems that the only argument against the development of those pits is an economic one, but there is more at stake than pure economics. The environment must be protected. If there is a larger national interest, I take note of it, but the interests of those who live in what the hon. Member for Rhondda and I agree is a green and pleasant land should also be considered.

I recognise that planning applications must be submitted to the likely mineral authority, which is Warwickshire county council. I am also aware that we can have section 52 agreements and environmental impact assessments. Those conditions will help to safeguard the amenities of the area, but they are not enough. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House consider using the machinery that exists in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to set up a planning inquiry commission? That commission would be empowered to examine the entire issue in depth. It would examine the board's proof of needs and the environmental issues, and it would assess the transport considerations and implications, and the attitude of the public. It would give us an opportunity to evaluate the views expressed at two large public meetings—one attended by 350 people and the other by more than 700. The hon. Member for Rhondda was right to imply the depth of feeling in my constituency.

The position has changed since the inquiries into the Asfordby and Vale of Belvoir pits. We have had the Sizewell inquiry, with all its implications for the CEGB. We have had the miners' strike, and we know its implications for the industry. We are aware of the changing demands for coal and of the new technology that is emerging. All those matters would fall within the remit of a planning inquiry commission. It could and would examine those matters, and there is certainly time for such a commission to be set up. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider my suggestion and, at the right time, to give it his unqualified support.

8.20 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I support the amendment because it highlights the Government's attitude to two nations. It speaks about both the Top Salaries Review Body awards and the treatment of the wages councils. The Government believe in the north and the south, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick being divided.

It is disgraceful that the Government have singled out the lowest paid and then suggested that the abolition of the wages councils would create jobs. All that will happen is that unscrupulous employers will sack workers over 21 and employ youngsters on a lower wage than they are already getting under the wages councils. Wages councils wages are already low. In 1974, they were 73 per cent. of the national average and in 1984 only 65 per cent. Some of the wages in the hairdressing profession are only £57 a week. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) spoke about the Council of Europe's decency wage threshold of £108 a week, which shows how poorly some people are still paid.

The Government have already attacked the wages councils. They have cut the wages inspectorate and

unscrupulous employers are not being prosecuted when they do not pay the already low wages suggested by the wages councils. Last night, there was a rebellion on the Tory Benches. I would have been more impressed if it had been because they recognised the injustice of the TSRB awards rather than because they were looking after their own skins for the next general election.

None of my constituents will be affected by the TSRB awards, but a number will be affected by the proposals about the wages councils. A few days ago, we had a statement from the Secretary of State for Defence about the naval dockyards. He spoke about commercial management, but I do not think that he realised that, until 1977, the shipyards had commercial management, which virtually ruined the shipbuilding industry. One of the reasons for the high unemployment in my constituency is the commercial management of the shipbuilding industry. We do not need any lessons from the Government about that.

The Secretary of State for Defence spoke about reports, but in 1962 we had the Paton reports on the shipbuilding industry, in 1966 the Geddes report and in 1972 the Booz-Allen report. Every one of those independent reports criticised the commercial independent and private management of the shipbuilding industry. If the right hon. Gentleman were to take his suggestion of commercial management to its logical conclusion, he should sign the armed forces over to the mercenaries rather than have to pay the admirals and generals the fat increases suggested by the TSRB.

My constituency has been damaged by this Government since 1979. We have miners not millionaires, engineers not racketeers, shipbuilders not shipowners; they have all been hit by the Government's policies. In 1930, unemployment in Jarrow was 30 per cent. above the national average. Today, it is 40 per cent. above the national average and 46 per cent. of those who are unemployed have been unemployed for more than 12 months. That is the effect of the Government's policies.

We should not adjourn and swan off on our foreign holidays until we have had a statement from the Government about their attitudes and policies to the second nation that they have created.

Not only have the unemployed and the sick been hit; the pensioners have suffered. When the London Regional Transport Act was in Committee, the Government underwrote concessionary bus passes for pensioners in London, but refused to do so for pensioners in the rest of the country. That exemplifies the Government's attitude. Pensioners have also been hit by the closure of sub-post offices and the loss of such services as doorstep delivery of milk. They need protection, not attack, from the Government.

I support my right hon. Friend's amendment because I want the Prime Minister to make a statement on the wages councils and to explain to the House and the nation why she is attacking those at the bottom of the scale while she is giving fat increases to those at the top. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough referred to the Lord Chancellor's salary. We in the north realise that, when the noble Lord was Minister with responsibility for our region, he did a tremendous amount of work on the infrastructure there. It is a pity that the Government do not continue the philosophy that he carried out when he was a Minister.

8.25 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Despite the way in which the debate was opened, I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is still thinking of taking a holiday in the near future. If he is still of that mind, he could do a lot worse than consider going to Teignbridge. It is an excellent constituency, the full delights of which I set out in my maiden speech so many years ago. However, if my right hon. Friend were thinking of going down to Dartmoor and of dropping in at Two Bridges, which is a beauty spot in that area, he would find that others had got there before him. He would find there the remnants of the "peace convoy" of Stonehenge fame.

Perhaps many hon. Members regard hippies and hippydom with a certain nostalgia and think that hippies are an arcadian delight, splendid and marvellously charming creatures with long flowing hair, even if it no longer meets in the middle. However, the reality for the people in my part of the world is different.

I can do no better than quote from a letter in which the director general of the National Trust wrote to *The Times* about the peace convoy when it was at Stonehenge. He said:

> "Crowds of festival-goers disported themselves on the stones in scenes closer to desecration than to religion. About 1,000 young trees were torn or cut down; trenches and holes were dug with disregard for the ancient barrows; fences were ripped up, and a scarred landscape of burnt-out vehicles and rubbish was the legacy of the festival."

The people who live in my constituency and own private land that has been invaded by these people are now having to endure such conditions, as I saw when I went down there.

The rights of an Englishman come in many shapes and sizes. I would be the first to concede that one of them is that if a person wants to live his life in foulness, degradation, indolence and squalor, he should be allowed to do so. However, it is not his right to expect that such a life should be paid for by the taxpayer. Neither is it right that he should expect to be entitled to flout the law because of the way that he exercises his lifestyle.

Despite the fact that the vehicles in the peace convoy are manifestly unroadworthy and profoundly dangerous to anybody who might come into contact with them, the law is powerless. Mercifully, after the Police and Criminal Evidence Act comes into effect on 1 January 1986, the sections of it that deal with this problem will ensure that that side of things is taken care of. No longer will a hippy be able to tell a policeman that he is a little ray of sunshine or Donald Duck from Disneyland and be certain that his vehicle will not be taken off the road.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will take on board the fact that, under the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976, anybody who qualifies for supplementary benefits should be available for work. It is manifestly clear from the way in which these people live and travel from one part of the country to another and try to disguise who they are and what there whereabouts are that they are not making themselves available for work.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be prepared to consider the guidance being given to the adjudication officer, who has to decide these matters if supplementary benefit officers are not convinced that a person is available for work. I hope that he will say that this is an abuse of the way that the supplementary benefit system works, and of the system and should not be

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

countenanced. People should not be able to use taxpayers' money in that way, because that is not the reason for which supplementary benfits were instituted. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give me some comfort that in future outrages of that sort will not be financed by the taxpayer.

8.31 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I always understood that supplementary benefits were intended, as the name implies, to supplement inadequate income. Supplementary benefits do not require an applicant to be available for work as is the case with unemployment benefit. If people had an adequate income there would be no need for supplementary benefits. One out of every six of my constituents is unemployed and I am sure that people like that would be grateful not to have to rely on supplementary benefit.

I hope that this does not turn out to be a debate on mining. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) mentioned the investment of the Coal Board in his area. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if such investment is not welcome in his area, it would certainly be welcome in ours, if we could find a place to put it. Unfortunately, the 20 collieries which have closed have probably worked out all the reserves in the area.

I am reminded of the time when we were looking at Selby. The people in Selby had visions of hordes of cloth-capped, clogged miners appearing over the horizon and coming into the green acres of Selby. They were quite surprised when the gentlemen who work in the mining industry appeared in the Selby area, because they were quite different. The people probably thought that the miners would use the twin towers of York minster as up and down shafts to exploit the Selby coalfield. They found out after the planning arrangements had gone through that they could hardly see the Selby complex because it merged into the beautiful green countryside. The constituents of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth have no need to be afraid of the massive investment that the Coal Board will put into their area. If he does not get the investment, he will find himself with a lot of unemployed constituents, because the board is replacing pits and reducing capacity rather than extending it.

We shall have to debate the matter in about 10 years' time because, according to forecasts, much will happen around the year 2010. The gas and oil fields in the North sea will not have run out, but they will be so expensive to exploit that it will not be possible. In that same year, coal for the coal-fired power stations will have been burnt out. Therefore, many decisions will have to be made in about 10 years.

According to the gas undertakings, they will need about 100 million tonnes of coal a year in 2010, and that is the amount that the Coal Board intends to produce. The generating boards are a little worried about what is to happen after 2010. In 10 years' time, we will have to make decisions about what will replace the present power stations, whether they will be coal or oil-fired, and whether they will be of the conventional type or of the type which will counter the problem of acid rain. How many nuclear power stations will we have then, and will we have new forms of propulsion? All those matters could have been debated today if we had had time.

I support the amendment. There is no doubt that people realise how insensitive the Government are about the pay increases for top people. People are incensed about it. The unemployed rely on supplementary benefit and have seen welfare provision eroded. They have lost their earnings-related supplement because the Government abolished it, and their welfare benefits have been eroded by about 10 per cent. Those people are awaiting the Fowler review to see if it will make further inroads into their benefits.

Because of Government policies and rising unemployment, the Government have insufficient money to compensate for the disastrous policies that they have heaped on the country. One of my constituents, Mr. Eric Moxon, attempted, as many others have attempted, to take part in a job release scheme. That is a good scheme because it means that people are able to leave work early and create vacancies for others. That is what Mr. Moxon and a number of others did.

Then, suddenly, Mr. Moxon found out that the Government had conned him about increases for inflation. People in the job release scheme found out this year that they had received an increase of 60p. We made inquiries about such a low increase when everybody else was getting £3 to £4. I have a letter which says:

> "The taxable allowances have been increased by a lesser percentage than the tax-free allowances to allow for favourable developments in the Inland Revenue personal tax allowances."

That means that those people have paid for their own tax allowances. By a sleight of hand, the Government, through the Chancellor, have given those people an increase in the base of their tax allowances, then clawed it back by not giving them an increase in the job release scheme. Thousands of people are incensed and hurt about that, and suddenly they read that the Government have decided that top salaried people are to get an increase of £25,000. When a person receives an increase of 60p and learns that someone else is getting an increase of £25,000, he is going to be incensed. That is one reason why I will be voting for the amendment, and it is the reason why millions of people who have realised what Government policies are doing will say at the next election, "We have had enough." I endorse that sentiment.

8.38 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): It is now almost one year since the establishment of the six free trade zones in the United Kingdom. The principle is right, and in the optimum location a free trade zone can in principle become the focus of a significant increase in economic activity, attracting trading and in the right environment manufacturing, which in turn attracts investment and revenues from overseas, and encourages the growth of United Kingdom companies.

The Southampton free trade zone, with its enormous potential for industrial growth, is the optimum United Kingdom location. Given encouragement, it could be a significant catalyst for growth in employment and for additional wealth creation, and would be a major boost to the United Kingdom invisible earnings. After a year's experience, however, we face two serious and persistent areas of difficulty. It would not put too strong an emphasis on these difficulties to say that if they are not resolved, free zone development at Southampton and the other five areas will not be commercially viable.

The two areas of difficulty are over-regulation and the national dock labour scheme. I will not deal with the problem in any detail, but a brief explanation is essential.

We have found that, far from being a regime which is relatively free from bureaucratic interference and restrictions, there is a plethora of regulations. Many of them relate to VAT. The restrictions imposed, by their very existence, present a major problem, and this is exacerbated by confused and complex interpretation on the part of the relevant authorities, particularly the Customs and Excise. A full list of the regulations is set out in early-day motion 820.

The regulations and their interpretation are driving potential business away from the United Kingdom. We need to debate the matter when we return from the recess, and the national dock labour scheme must be analysed in regard to work within the free trade zones.

Southampton and Liverpool are both battling against the scheme and registered dock workers. I do not have time to explain the problem fully, but I stress that the scheme and the areas within ports that should be controlled and worked by registered dockers will have to be reviewed.

8.40 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It was not in a spirit of masochism that we tabled our amendment to force the House to sit for an additional two days. We tabled it because we thought that it was right for the House to have a full and proper debate on a matter that the country considers to be of the greatest importance.

We believe that the issue of public pay policy, with all its implications for millions of people at work, should be debated this side of the recess rather than our being forced into silence until the House resumes late in October. The speeches in the debate—I have counted 17 so far—have justified our decision, because nine hon. Members, from both sides of the House, have devoted their remarks, in whole or in part, to public sector pay and particularly to the Top Salaries Review Body report. We witnessed an astonishing event last night. During my time as an hon. Member I have never witnessed such a large Government majority plummeting so low. I believe that that genuinely reflected the great unease felt not only on the Opposition side, but, clearly, in a large part of the Conservative party.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House must have realised that there is a direct and personal link between the Prime Minister and the decision taken on the TSRB report. After all, the review body reports directly to the Prime Minister and all of us who have served in Governments know that, while the Cabinet should certainly play its part, this is a matter in which a Prime Minister's personal judgment is bound to play an important part.

It was interesting to read the comments of *The London Standard*, a great friend of the Prime Minister, on Monday — before last night's development. It said in an editorial:

> "The Prime Minister's political acumen has always lain in appealing to the popular instinct . . .In this second administration, especially during recent months, this acumen seems to be failing her. But it has taken the storm over top people's salaries—a storm which everyone but Mrs. Thatcher had seen approaching—to show that she has, with cruelly sudden completeness, lost the common touch."

The way in which the review body report has been handled reveals an astonishing insensitivity and an astonishing lack of touch, common sense and instinctive understanding of how ordinary people in their millions respond to such issues.

A succession of Ministers has exchanged views with us, always in somewhat restricted form. We had a private notice question on Friday, which was taken by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, though hardly to his great credit. We had exchanges with the Prime Minister during her Question Time on Tuesday, the Leader of the House opened a restricted one-and-a-half hour debate on a statutory instrument yesterday and the Minister of State, Treasury was wheeled on today.

I am inclined to think that it is right to describe top people's pay policy as being explosive material. Indeed, it is a sort of political gelignite. We are told that gelignite sweats, and I suspect that Ministers who have handled the issue so far have also sweated. The Minister of State, Treasury concealed his embarrassment with a great deal of bluster, but he did not add much except another attempt to describe the events of 1978 as though they were relevant to this year's decision. That is not the case and the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) put the issue fairly.

I assure the Minister of State, Treasury and the House that there is a genuine difference of perception and view. When we were in government our approach to top salaries was clearly that people at the top of the public services should be asked to take a lead.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: What about the 35 per cent.?

Mr. Shore: Including the 35 per cent. During the period of Labour Government, the real incomes of those on top salaries were considerably reduced. Top people did not have the sort of treatment under a Labour Government that they have received under the present Government. Not only did those on top salaries not even keep pace with the rise in the cost of living under the Labour Government, but they were held well below the average wage increases of ordinary people in that period.

In the present Government's handling of TSRB reports we have witnessed the precise opposite. In the six years that the Government have been in power, the pay of those with top salaries has substantially outstripped the cost of living and even more substantially outstripped the rise in average earnings. It is precisely the recognition of that unfairness and lack of even-handedness that has been noted and deeply resented by the country.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: I shall not give way, because I do not want to encroach on the limited time of the Leader of the House.

We are not debating only a matter of principle, although a principle is involved. I do not have to convince the House that the Labour party generally favours greater equality in earned and unearned incomes, whereas the Conservative party favours greater inequality in those incomes. That is one of the great divides between the two sides of the House. Therefore, our approach is bound to be different and has been different.

The Government's failure to understand the reactions of ordinary people to the review body's report and the Government's acceptance of it has serious practical consequences as well as being a matter of principle. Some of those consequences were stated clearly in *The London Standard* today. It said:

[Mr. Shore]

"The point is that the Government is operating a policy on pay restraint, and at a single stroke it has been torn to shreds."

It goes on to say:

"These pay awards will not be forgotten in the lifetime of this Government. They destroy every shred of moral authority it has to lecture the public and private sectors about holding down pay."

The practical consequences of that will face the Government and the country in the Government's inability to find a solution to the teachers' pay dispute. The dispute will go on, the schools will come back in September and, I fear, be subject to further disruption and the House will not be recalled until the end of October, with all kinds of developments, which could be of great damage to millions of families and their children. We shall have been rendered incapable of influencing these events by the lack of any proper debate in the House on a matter which we jolly well ought to have debated.

I believe that the Government have made a profound misjudgment of the national mood. I believe that there is a great and growing resentment of what they have done, and that they would be prudent to accept the amendment.

8.51 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has concluded the debate for the Opposition with characteristic courtesy. I join him in paying a tribute to all those who have taken part in a wide-ranging consideration of our affairs before we recess.

The debate, like the debate this time last year, has to some extent been hijacked by Front Bench considerations. Last year it was the situation in the coal industry. This year it has reference to the report of the Top Salaries Review Body. I quite understand that. Nonetheless, as Leader of the House, I feel that I have an obligation to take account of the traditional nature of the debate, which is that of Back Benchers raising all the topics which are of concern to them. If I have a somewhat truncated period in which to deal with the fairly well argued matters of the Top Salaries Review Body, I am sure that the House will understand.

First, I pay regard to the speech of the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), who explained that he could not be present for the reply, in which he said that I should try to secure a direct reply from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary concerning a constituency case—that of Mr. Michael Thynne, whose parole case is being considered, the right hon. Friend Gentleman thought, somewhat tardily. Of course I will concur with that request, and do all that I can to see that he receives a reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) reminded us of the fortunes of the Kent coalfield, and what good prospects there might be if one could move to much lower cost production. I thought that contribution Appropriate, because this time last year we were locked in the drama and agony of the coal dispute. Now we are liberated from that, and we can think in terms of recreating an industry on a happier basis than hitherto. It is a timely reminder that the processes of conciliation have proceeded. Perhaps it is a pity that we do not have a few days under our belt in which to discuss the coal industry and, more particularly, to inquire a little more closely into the attitude of Opposition Members to the organisation which is sought by mineworkers in Nottinghamshire and adjacent coalfields, and to hear from them a ringing denunciation of any comparison of that development with the Spencer movement of the 1920s and 1930s. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) would be at my side in urging unity in the situation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) made a powerful speech advocating the interests at stake in his constituency in the face of proposed National Coal Board development. When I campaigned with him some while back, the constituency did not have its current boundaries. I note that its name has been changed by the addition of Kenilworth. I have an uneasy feeling that my hon. Friend has been gentrified.

Mr. Pawsey: I needed it!

Mr. Biffen: Indeed, it is a gentrification which I would welcome. I can understand his concern that there should be use of the 1971 legislation on the planning inquiry commission. I will make the point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the NCB has issued a consultative document, and that he will be giving evidence in that context.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) made a thoughtful contribution about our future energy requirements. I reflected how Conservative Members should all be struck with great humility because, heaven knows, time and again all the forecasts which have been so confidently assertive about the future energy requirements of the country have been falsified by our experience. I was delighted that he made his observations with what I thought was a correct sense of humility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) told us of the difficulties in his constituency with the peace convoy, and the supplementary benefit situation which affects those involved. I will certainly refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Finally—in the sense of constituency interests—I much appreciate the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) about coroners' courts, and I will of course reinforce his representations to the Attorney-General on the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) discussed the prospects for Northern Ireland in the next few months. It is a great tribute to the attention and dedication which the right hon. Gentleman pays to the House that these debates always feature a contribution which reminds us all that the Province, no less than any other part of the United Kingdom, derives its authority from this Westminster Parliament. I am sure that the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, who has confidence that the Union will be preserved, will be echoed throughout the Chamber. Of course I understand the points made by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley. He will not expect me to comment upon them. The physical presence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was greater evidence than any words which I could say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) told us of the virtues of wind power as part of the alternative energies. Although one tends to mild hilarity about such thoughts, I strongly underline what my hon.

Friend said. The benign sources of energy, I suspect, will pay an increasing part in our total energy requirements and, as long as the House remains insensitive to these issues, we will insulate ourselves from what is potentially one of the most destructive facets of our public lives—green politics.

I deal next with the point of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton). I had a mild exchange with him, because I was anxious to protect our respective positions about Members' interests. I appreciate that there is a very real interest in the House in the Select Committee's report, and an anxiety that it should be debated when Parliament returns in October. But I remind the hon. Gentleman of an incident that occurred in this Chamber earlier today. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) objected to something in a Select Committee report which he avowed was untrue. That avowal was immediately accepted because this House proceeds on the basis that a Member's honour and integrity are assumed. When this House is not able to make that assumption, it will not be able to function by its traditional methods.

Of course Members' interests are a perfectly natural topic for anxiety both in this House and outside, but the hon. Member for Fife, Central used the words "the integrity of the House". The integrity of this House is better protected in this debate if it is not laced with innuendo and some kind of McCarthyism. That does not get us anywhere in our objectives, which I believe are common to both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman would think the less of me if I did not say exactly what I meant, but, having said that, I believe that there is a good case for the House turning to that matter in the autumn.

In the closing minutes I wish to deal with the Top Salaries Review Body. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) made a powerful contribution on wages councils. I can promise him that the matter will be the subject of debate and hard-fought discussion in the autumn. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) showed thoughtful concern for the pay of the Lord Chancellor. On at least two occasions he could have registered his objection, but he allowed the measure to go through, so it is a little late in the day to develop such acute sensitivity.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) talked about the Labour party having no economic policy. He ended with a rehash of precisely what was Labour party policy in the late 1960s, when the Labour party was fit for Shirley Williams. That is the slogan of contemporary social democracy. It is back to some kind of statutory incomes policy or one that leans heavily upon nudge and wink and political interference and direction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) reminded us that the Government had received a shock. He underlined that by saying that he had voted against the Government last night. However, he said he would be voting for the Government this evening. Well, there is no fallen angel like a born-again Tory. I am delighted to receive his support.

A great deal of the argument about the TSRB report related to structure. That is what, in some senses, made the report distinct from other reports. The House had to decide whether, given the judgment of the TSRB about what it thought would be the likely deterioration in the quality of senior ranks of the public service, we should take the remedial anticipatory action that it recommended. I think that I summarised that fairly. The decision was taken, and whatever its short-term popularity it is of long-term significance and advantage.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) showed an end-of-term spirit. Having been called to make a speech on the basis of an intervention — which I know is an emotionally destabilising experience — he said that the Government were proposing increases of 50 per cent. It is, of course, increases of 15 per cent. I wave farewell to the hon. Gentleman, who is not at this moment with us, and dispatch him with a pocket calculator in the hope that he will come back in the autumn that much better equipped to take part in our debates.

I have tremendous affection for the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He fits classically into the Macmillan description of politicians — that they are either bookies or bishops. He has a particular skill, in that he is a bookie on most days of the week and a bishop on Fridays, Thursdays, or whatever day happens to suit him. Today was the bishop's day, when we were told that the policy was flawed because it lacked social equity——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question,* That the amendment be made, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 12 (Periodic adjournments).*

The House divided: Ayes 172, Noes 311.

Division No. 291] **[9.04 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Craigen, J. M.
Alton, David	Crowther, Stan
Anderson, Donald	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Dalyell, Tam
Ashdown, Paddy	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Ashton, Joe	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Deakins, Eric
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Dewar, Donald
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Dobson, Frank
Barnett, Guy	Dormand, Jack
Barron, Kevin	Dubs, Alfred
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Duffy, A. E. P.
Beggs, Roy	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Beith, A. J.	Eadie, Alex
Bell, Stuart	Eastham, Ken
Benn, Tony	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Fatchett, Derek
Bermingham, Gerald	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Blair, Anthony	Fisher, Mark
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Boyes, Roland	Forrester, John
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Foster, Derek
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Foulkes, George
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Bruce, Malcolm	Garrett, W. E.
Buchan, Norman	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Caborn, Richard	Godman, Dr Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.	Golding, John
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Gould, Bryan
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Canavan, Dennis	Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis	Hancock, Mr. Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Hardy, Peter
Clarke, Thomas	Harman, Ms Harriet
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Coleman, Donald	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.	Haynes, Frank
Conlan, Bernard	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Corbett, Robin	Heffer, Eric S.
Corbyn, Jeremy	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*

Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Neillist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. John McWilliam

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry

Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Friday 26th July do adjourn until Monday 21st October, and the House shall not adjourn on Friday 26th July until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 113 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Local Authority Services (Tendering)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

9.18 pm

Mrs. Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): My objective in initiating this debate is to persuade the Government to consider including in the 1985-86 legislative programme a measure that would compel all local authorities to put perhaps all of their services out to some form of competitive tendering. At present some functions are supposedly undertaken by the private sector. I intend to persuade the Government to consider measures designed specifically to prevent the evasions which are practised and which negate seriously the philosophy behind my proposals.

A simple change in management procedures would lead to significant financial savings in the services rendered by local authorities to ratepayers and taxpayers. All taxpayers and ratepayers contribute to the money spent by local authorities. The savings would be considerable, and obviously the delivery of the service can be as efficient and effective, if not more so, through the private sector. The margin of choice within the private sector would be sufficient to benefit all local authority services and their recipients—taxpayers and ratepayers.

There are already cases of privatisation and of putting local authority services out to tender. Since about 1980 local government has moved in that direction. Southend was probably the first local authority to privatise rubbish collection. It bravely decided to put rubbish collection out to private tender to see whether its in-house service was effective and, if it was not, to see whether the private sector services, which were beginning to be drawn to the attention of local authorities, could be more cost effective. Southend proceeded and discovered that it was a good idea. Because of that, other authorities, mainly Conservative-controlled ones, were persuaded to discover whether savings could be made, while maintaining cost-effective and efficient services.

The approaches of local authorities were hesitant because it was a new area for them. The advice of their senior officers was negative and they were told that there would be considerable public relations and trade union difficulties. Moreover, local councillors and politicians everywhere tend to be conservative and careful, and to believe that their accountability to ratepayers is such a burden that they must be absolutely certain that their proposals are carefully thought out and will not place a greater burden on taxpayers and ratepayers, whom they are supposed to serve.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My hon. Friend may be coming to one of the most powerful arguments for privatising services, which is the borough of Wandsworth. Such savings have been made there that its rates are now half of those in the neighbouring borough of Lambeth, which persists with the services of its staff.

Mrs. Rumbold: I had every intention of coming to that point, not merely regarding the significant savings made in the London borough of Wandsworth by its brave entry into private sector transactions, but my London borough of Merton, whose courageous leader has led it into new private sector tendering, which has brought considerable savings.

I want to make this point absolutely clear, because it is important. When we talk about the effectiveness of local authorities tendering for services in the private sector, we must always accept that part of the philosophy behind that is to seek financial savings as well as good services and to look for the lowest tender, which had been the practice of every local authority which has gone out to and had dealings with companies in the private sector.

I urge the House to consider carefully that there is always a possibility of councillors, advisers and others making mistakes from time to time. The private sector is not always the absolute panacea. However, the possibility of a mistake and of having to retender is no reason for not pursuing the theory and, I hope, the practice of going out to competitive tender. Local authorities would always be able to extricate themselves from a tender that was proving less than satisfactory. I hope that they would always be able to go back to the market place to get a more suitable tender should the one that they have chosen prove not wholly satisfactory for the ratepayers in the delivery of services.

All that can be clearly demonstrated by boroughs such as Wandsworth and Ealing, which followed Merton in the last financial year and put out to tender its catering services and part of the provision for meals on wheels. The saving was over £700,000 on a £2 million contract — an extensive saving. At a time when local government is rightly under pressure to seek ways in which to reduce expenditure, but does not want to endanger the services that it delivers, it should examine more effective ways of delivering those services. It has been proved beyond doubt that the private sector can help in that regard.

Wandsworth has gone to the private sector for street cleaning, vehicle maintenance and other public cleaning services, and saved more than £1 million on a contract worth nearly £3 million. Many other district and county councils make similar or smaller savings in that way.

This is only the fifth year in which serious attempts to put out to tender have been made and become fashionable. The record of privatisation shows that many local authorities, of which there are well over 500, do not put any of their services out to tender in the private sector. Many have tried to do so and have then retracted. That is an even worse sign that local government lacks the motivation and is suffering from inertia, and therefore needs Government pressure to make it imperative that local authorities put their services out to competitive tender in the private sector.

Only one metropolitan borough outside London — Solihull — is actively involved. At least nine county councils have not put any of their services out to competitive tender. Even Conservative councils, which should be ideologically sympathetic to the concept, are far from a good example. That is a matter of some shame.

It is important to explain why councillors find it difficult to steel themselves to go out to tender. Many hon. Members will be familiar with the problems. A group of councillors decides to venture into the private sector. The imperative is usually the need to live within a budget. The councillors tell the officers that they have the brilliant idea of putting catering, cleaning or street cleaning out to tender. Many private firms are quick to attract local authorities.

The process is complicated because the officers tell the councillors that the idea is good and that the officers will make a report. Six weeks later, the report says that the idea is excellent and could achieve X or Y savings. The councillors think it is all good stuff and then turn over the page and see the big but. They are told, "If you follow that course, councillor, you will have problems with the work force. You will not make savings for at least two years because the redundancy costs will be enormous. Anyway, the direct labour force could probably come up with just as good an offer. Frankly, councillor, it would be better not to bother."

Many councillors will then consider that there is an election in 18 months and that they do not want difficulties with the work force and an adverse press. The easiest thing is to agree with the officers. The private firm then says that it has taken on board all of the on costs and other things in the complicated tender documents.

The councillors reply, "We will take the offer from the in-house people because, although we shall not make quite the same savings, it is better to keep our people and easier and safer for us."

That is the problem — there is no compulsion for local authorities to go out to the private sector. If local authorities have to go out to competitive tendering, councillors would concentrate less on protecting direct labour and more on getting the best services. There would be plenty of competition because there are plenty of people in the private sector who want to provide local authority services.

We must not set our sights too low in terms of what can be put out to competitive tendering. We have limited ourselves to manual functions such as council house maintenance, street cleaning, rubbish collection, park maintenance, school meals and some social services meals. But that is not nearly enough. Many more local authority services could be put out to competitive tender. There are many accountants, solicitors, surveyors, estate agents and architects in the high street, yet very few of them are employed by local authorities to do a complete job. It is possible to envisage a situation in which the high street professionals are just as much involved in local authority dealings as are the manual workers.

It is high time that we looked at in-house services. I wonder how many administrators in town halls disappear from council lists when contracts for rubbish collection, street cleaning, maintenance or school catering are given to private contractors. I am not saying that local authorities are not good at reducing the number of people that they employ. They have a very good track record. Indeed, it is far better than that of the Government who are supposed to be dedicated to the principle of reducing——

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): If I follow correctly the hon. Lady's logic, does that mean that the jobs of the town clerk and the director of finance will be put out to tender?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am not opposed to the idea that eventually councils could spend most of their time looking at competitive tenders and very little time looking at whether or not they will have 17 or 18 meetings each month.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My hon. Friend may care to know that when it was Labour controlled the Humberside county council decided to dispense with the services of its chief executive.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Many councils have toyed with the idea of dispensing with their chief executives, and many of them have done so. I have not found that many of the authorities that dispensed with the services of their chief executives have been won over to the idea of reappointing them.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Apart from Birmingham.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes, indeed, apart from Birmingham. That says something about the efficiency of local authority chief executives. I hasten to add that I have no prejudice against chief executives. The chief executive of Birmingham is an excellent gentleman who does his job, I am sure, just as competently as when he was the chief adviser to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

It is important to realise that nothing in local government is absolutely sacred. There is nothing sacred about any of our bureaucratic services. We must make it seem important and necessary for local authorities to consider competitive tendering. The sooner we do so, the better will be the services that are provided for the consumer. The ratepayer should be given every possible consideration.

I have no objection to paying some form of local tax, but the local rate or tax that is administered by locally elected councillors, for whom I have a great deal of admiration, should be spent to the best effect upon those who are least able to help themselves. It should not be squandered on massive bureaucracies when those in the private sector could do the job just as effectively for half the price. I urge the Government seriously to consider introducing some form of legislation as early as possible to make competitive tendering an absolute necessity for local government.

9.39 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The House should be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) for introducing the debate. She spoke for the vast majority of Conservative Members. Indeed, 205 hon. Members have signed early-day motion 895, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), which states:

"That this House believes that, in the interest of obtaining better value for money, local authorities should be required by law to submit to competitive tender a wider range of their functions and services."

I hope that the Government will pay attention to the strong feelings among Conservative Members, and will recognise our disappointment if the Queen's Speech in November does not contain a provision to extend contracting out and privatising in local authorities. It has been of great benefit to the ratepayers in the authorities where it has already been tried. My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden, with her customary eloquence, deployed the arguments with irrefutable logic. I hope that that view will be shared by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and that, even if he cannot leak the details of the Queen's Speech in public, he will at least give us a hint of what it will contain.

The argument behind our request that local authorities should be required to put out contracts to tender is that councillors are trustees of ratepayers' money. The little empires over which they preside, with their chief officers and all their employees, are not there for their benefit or to boost their pride; they are there to serve ratepayers and to provide value for money. Competition inevitably produces a downward pressure on costs and an upward pressure on standards. If that spur is removed, there is bound to be a diminution in standards and an increase in costs. That benefits no one except those who derive their incomes from the inefficiency which it disguises.

Those municipal empires should be broken up where there is palpably no will among those who are presently responsible to break them up. That would be in the interests of ratepayers and of those who benefit from the services provided by local authorities. Therefore, I disagree with my seven hon. Friends who signed an amendment to early-day motion 895, saying that it would be an attack on local democracy. It would be precisely the opposite. It would achieve what is desired by ratepayers in many parts of the country, even in areas that are Conservative-controlled, but which they are being denied.

There are many theoretical arguments to show why competition would be likely to reduce costs and improve standards. The experience of the private sector should be ample evidence. Many companies do not have so-called direct labour departments, because they believe that it is much more efficient to contract out their cleaning services and office maintenance provision. The reason is that contractors must provide high standards. If they do not, they will lose the contract. During the contract period, they may render themselves liable to penalties. With a direct labour department, it is almost impossible to apply discipline, because it is difficult to dismiss employees. However, it is easy to end a contract or to sue someone who has breached a contract. The person who purchases the services provided by a contractor removes from his overheads the worries and other complications that arise from running an in-house service.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden so eloquently explained, considerable cost savings can be made. As a ratepayer in the borough of Wandsworth, I am well aware of the great benefits that I have derived from the eight years of Tory control. That was first under the leadership of my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), who can be said to have pioneered this drive to efficiency in local government. This was recognised by Her Majesty, who made him an officer of the Order of the British Empire. We might extend the honours system to encourage councillors to provide the benefits provided by my hon. Friend for myself and other Wandsworth ratepayers as an alternative to making competitive tendering compulsory. This might be a more efficacious way to achieve the beneficial results that we all desire.

The difference between the borough of Wandsworth and the borough of Lambeth, part of which is represented

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), is marked. They have similar populations, about 250,000 inhabitants, but the number of staff employed to provide identical services is radically different. In Wandsworth, for example, there are 1,300 labourers, whereas in Lambeth there are 3,500. In Wandsworth, there are nearly 3,000 non-manual workers, whereas in Lambeth there are over 5,000. The borough rate in Wandsworth is 26·44p in the pound, whereas in Lambeth it is 129·34p in the pound. Between 1979 and 1983 Wandsworth decreased spending by 6 per cent. whereas Lambeth increased spending by 69 per cent.

The costs of the services provided by the authorities are directly responsible for the difference between those two figures. For example, refuse collection in Wandsworth costs £8·70 per head a year, whereas in Lambeth it is more than twice that—£17·58 a head. Caretaking costs £8·81 a head a year in Wandsworth and £25 in Lambeth. Street clearing costs £3·38 a head a year in Wandsworth and £9·17 a head a year in Lambeth.

Nobody visiting those two boroughs would think that Wandsworth's provision of services is any less expensive than it is in Lambeth. The difference in cost is accounted for entirely by the differences in efficiency. One could go through the services that Wandsworth has either contracted out or privatised and compare that with Lambeth and other boroughs and come to the same conclusion. I fail to see what arguments can be deployed against making it compulsory for local authorities to provide value for money in the provision of services for their ratepayers.

It is a mystery to me why, given the difficulties that the Department of the Environment has had with local government in recent years, particularly with rate capping, we have not fastened upon this before now as a means of keeping the rates down, thus obviating the necessity to introduce rate capping, which has been controversial. Such a move would not be controversial except for those who have something to hide or an empire to defend and are frightened of opening themselves to the spur of competition with somebody who would be more efficient in providing the same service.

We know how defensive the unions can be. They employ not logic but the bully-boy tactics that we saw in the miners' strike. In Wandsworth, some appalling examples of violence occurred in the early years when the council was contracting services out. Machinery was vandalised, lorries burnt out, sugar and sand put into fuel tanks of vehicles, tyres slashed, hydraulic systems severed, depots and offices burgled, papers and work rotas stolen. This abominable story occurred in other local authorities. Where such people cannot succeed with argument, rationality, logic and experience, they will resort to the bully-boy tactics which have happily proved ineffective but which, for those who had to suffer them, are frightening.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): Did the National Council for Civil Liberties demand an inquiry into these actions in the same way as it did in the miners' strike?

Mr. Hamilton: I regret to say that my knowledge of the National Council for Civil Liberties is hearsay only. I am not a member of that organisation, and will probably now be disqualified from membership, as its concern for civil liberties seems to be rather partial.

The experience of recent years is clear. It must now be in the interests of all ratepayers to oblige authorities to put contracts out to tender. Nobody is saying they have to be awarded to private enterprise, because if a direct labour organisation can produce a competitive tender, the work can be awarded to it. Many factors then have to be borne in mind to decide whether the contracts are being awarded on the same terms, but the evidence from authorities around the country appears to be that the requirements placed on contractors are much more onerous than those placed upon the direct labour organisations. Some of my hon. Friends who are hoping to speak might dilate upon that.

I will content myself with those few remarks, and seek to reinforce what I said at the beginning to my hon. Friend the Minister: there will be grave disappointment in the country if we do not take this radical but beneficial step which will benefit ratepayers and will also at the end of the day electorally benefit the Conservative party. That is not something which in present circumstances we are entitled to ignore.

9.51 pm

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on having the inspiration to call this debate, and on the eloquence with which she has deployed her powerful arguments, ably seconded by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton).

I must declare an interest. I am a ratepayer, and as such I have a vested interest in keeping my rates as low as possible and keeping the quality of my services as high as possible. There is only one conceivable way in which those twin objectives can be reached, and that is by improving the efficiency with which services are provided. There is only one way in which the efficiency of services can be improved, and that is to give those who provide and manage the services a financial incentive. The most likely way to achieve that is to follow the suggestions in this debate and introduce compulsory competitive tendering for local authority services.

There is ample evidence that competitive tendering works when it is applied. There is even evidence that it works when it is merely sniffed at. In every case where local authorities have suggested looking at compulsory tendering, savings have been found with almost miraculous ease by those providing the services in-house. Trade unions came forward with suggestions for improvements in manning which they had long resisted, and managements came forward with suggestions for new techniques and new ways of approaching problems which they had for years failed to suggest to elected members. If the smell of competitive tendering produces those desirable results, tasting it is likely to be even better.

The second piece of evidence that competitive tendering works is that it is applied by commercial companies. I recently visited a number of companies in my constituency and had the pleasure of eating in their canteens. In each case I asked the management who had provided the canteen facilities and I was told that management had contracted it out to the most efficient and most competitive supplier. I was told that that had been done not simply to save money on the service but also to save time and involvement in supplying a facility which

was necessary for the staff, in which management had no particular expertise and did not want to become unnecessarily involved.

I have visited a BUPA hospital in my constituency which puts its cleaning service out to tender. It goes much further than the state sector because the cleaners are not only required to clean the floors, but are responsible for ensuring that all the services in the wards and rooms in which they work operate effectively — that light bulbs and loo rolls are replaced, and so on. The hospital gets additional value for money from its cleaning services.

The third piece of evidence that competitive tendering works is that it is already applied by many local authorities that have made well-documented savings on various services by replacing in-house facilities with outside contractors.

In the blissful days when the district council in my constituency was still in the hands of the Tories, it contracted out the cleaning of toilets. In that small aspect of local government, the council saved £20,000 per annum to the benefit of the ratepayer, while improving the quality and cleanliness of the toilets so that people actually used them.

It is noteworthy how far people go to try to conceal the obvious savings that are being made by contracting out services. We saw an extraordinary example of that attitude in the sixth report of the Select Committee on Social Services which said that the £9 million savings made by putting NHS services out to tender constituted a saving of only 1 per cent. The Committee said that that was a derisory amount, but it failed to say that the saving was about 1 per cent. of the NHS budget, but more like 25 per cent. of the budget for the services that were contracted out. That shows the scope for savings if the practice is extended more widely throughout the NHS and among local authorities.

My main purpose is to emphasise that savings made by contracting out services are almost invariably far greater in the long term than those that can be measured in the short term. When a local authority contracts out a service, it makes the easily measurable, short-term savings in increased efficiency, but it also gains the immeasurable long-term benefit of flexibility.

We live in a changing world and demands for services are constantly changing, as are ways of supplying those services. If the supply is in-house, the council is fixed to a method and quantity of provision and it is difficult for it to adapt to changing needs and opportunities. Consequently, one finds throughout local government services that reflect past demands and not current needs. The ability of local authorities to adapt is hindered by the fact that they have a vested interest in the continued provision of a service.

If a local authority has regularly bought in its architectural services and requires less architecture and building for a while, it ceases to buy in so much service. The onus is then on the architects to find work elsewhere, which they are geared to do.

The long-term savings from contracting out are far greater than the short-term savings, which are already large enough to justify our making it compulsory for local authorities to go out to tender much more.

We should consider whether it ought to be compulsory for local authorities that contract out to use an external contractor or whether they should be allowed to continue using in-house services if they can show themselves to be as competitive or nearly as competitive as external contractors. Most of my hon. Friends would accept that in-house services should be allowed to win the competitive tendering process and continue to provide services. The reason why some people would advise against that possibility is that they believe that the contracting-out process is inevitably biased in favour of the in-house service and that no proper measurement can be made of the costs that that service imposes on the ratepayers.

Plenty of contentious costings have occurred in contracting out. In my local area, the North-West Hertfordshire health authority considered contracting out laundry services. It concluded that its in-house supplier was more efficient than any outside supplier. I have received a letter from an organisation called the Association of British Laundry, Cleaning and Rental Services, which claims that the costings of the area health authority concealed the fact that many costs were not taken account of when the in-house facility won the contract. I know many of the people in my local area health authority. They are able and competent people, and I am inclined to believe them rather than this body, with which I have no connections.

If the in-house service is more competitive than the private enterprise competitor, surely the in-house service should be hived off as a separate unit and enabled itself to compete in the market place and to provide the service. If the public sector has built up expertise and ability to satisfy demand more efficiently than the private sector yet can, the in-house services should be liberated to extend their provision. Indeed, my area health authority laundry service already caters for other hospitals from further afield, not just St. Albans. Surely those excellent and efficient local workers should be enabled to operate more commercially, and provide the benefits of their efficiency to other aspects of the Health Service. A similar process should take place in the local authorities when competitive tendering is extended to them.

If the in-house service in an area proves competitive and effective, the law should be changed to encourage and enable it to be set up as a commercial enterprise competing in the market place and extending its skills.

I join other hon. Members in urging the Government to recognise that this policy should be a pivotal part of the strategy in improving the quality and reducing the cost provision of the public sector. I hope that legislation will be introduced before too long to ensure that the country and my constituents gain the benefits of compulsory competitive tendering as soon as possible.

10.2 pm

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): I am grateful for the chance to make a brief contribution to the debate, which was opened so admirably by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold). My hon. Friend has summarised the arguments so eloquently and others of my hon. Friends have amplified them so effectively that there is not a great deal left to say.

My hon. Friends gave their own examples and the experience of councils that have gone to privatisation and competitive tendering, starting with the pioneer work at Southend. My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden referred to the experience in her constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) gave eloquent evidence of the experience in Wandsworth. These are not isolated examples.

[Mr. George Gardiner]

Anybody who consults an admirable publication entitled "The Public Service Review", which is backed up by a distinguished academic council on these matters, and details all the developments in an admirable way, will see a long list of local authorities — apart from health authorities, which are also covered — that have made substantial annual savings as a result of putting out certain works to competitive tendering.

We make a mistake if we concentrate entirely on the financial gains that are to be achieved for ratepayers. In many cases, real improvements are made in the quality of service. As it is so well documented, I refer to the experience of the city of Bath. In 1983, it awarded contracts for four municipal services, street cleaning, domestic refuse collection, trade refuse collection and public convenience cleaning to a private contractor, which got on with the job quickly and efficiently and established good local relations with the employing council and the local population.

It is interesting that six months after the contractor had begun work, the local daily newspaper, the *Bath and West Evening Chronicle*, which I know well, printed a questionnaire asking its readers what they thought of the new service. Ninety three per cent. said that the service was at least as good as hitherto and, significantly, more than one third said that it was far better. The ratepayers of Bath said that it was a welcome all-round improvement; that the dustmen kept to their scheduled days and were more reliable; that the services were provided by a civil and obliging work force and that in every respect the service that they were receiving was superior to the previous service. In addition, the council will save £1 million over a five-year period.

With those benefits available, why do not more local councils take up the opportunities offered by this policy? My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden summarised the sort of restricted choices sometimes put to councillors by their officers. Undoubtedly, the activities of many of the public service unions, organised and co-ordinated by the National Union of Public Employees in particular, constitute a positive disincentive to local authority leaders wishing to embark on that road.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton listed the gruesome experiences of workers in Wandsworth when services were first privatised. Many councillors have said that they do not want to suffer a similar experience. That is why I argue that local councils need the protection of a statutory duty to go for competitive tendering. That will protect them against bullying.

I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton said. I and many of my hon. Friends will be deeply disappointed if there is not a positive reference to this matter in the Queen's Speech and if steps are not taken in the coming Session to achieve far wider competitive tendering in local council services.

It is an appropriate day to say that I yearn for some popular decisions and popular policies to emerge from our Government. I have the feeling sometimes that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has, perhaps, forgotten what it is to be popular in the policies that he advances. Perhaps he shies away from it from fear of the unknown. I hope that I am being unfair to him and that in his review of these matters he will recognise that the policy that more than 200 of my hon. Friends have endorsed in an early-day motion will be popular not only throughout the Conservative party but in the country.

10.8 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I echo the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) that more than 200 of our hon. Friends have signed the early-day motion. It is something that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment could embrace in the certain knowledge that on the Conservative Benches it will be a policy which is popular and successful and which will be endorsed in the Division Lobbies.

It has been a difficult year for Ministers at the Department of the Environment. They have had to pilot through contentious legislation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is now invited to envisage legislation for next Session which would have the support of the overwhelming majority of Conservative Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) explained, in an eloquent speech containing some fine examples to support the case she was making, why that support would be forthcoming.

My county council of Humberside was Conservative controlled until 1981. I am pleased to say that, after the local elections earlier this year, it is again Conservative controlled. The policy of privatisation was clearly endorsed by the electorate who, having had the opportunity of privatisation removed from them between 1981 and 1985, now recognise the penalty that they had to pay for not having Conservative representation locally. As they voted they recalled the high rate demands that had been imposed on them during those four years.

However, there is a hesitancy to take positive action on the part of some local authorities which are still in pawn, as it were, to their chief executives and chief officers. I confess that the councillors in one of the district councils which I represent and which is Conservative controlled are more frightened of the council officials than of the electorate. I suspect, however, that as we move towards the 1987 district council elections, those Conservative councillors will recognise, as have Liberal councillors, the power of the electorate over the permanent officials.

There is a reluctance on the part of less professional councillors to initiate action which would conflict with that of the permanent officials. I am not criticising councillors who are not particularly professional. They bring to bear their experience of public life and it is important to have that reflected in local authorities. However, they become victims of the power of public officials, and I regret to say that there are some Conservative-controlled authorities in which the non-elected professional official is more concerned for the empire over which he presides than for savings that can be made for the ratepayer. Many disappointed Conservative voters look to the Government to redress the balance where there has been an overbearing influence on the part of public officials over the elected representatives.

I need not add to the illustrations that have been given by my hon. Friends of savings that have been made in recent years. Bath, among other local authorities, has been mentioned. I have with me a list showing every authority that has voluntarily submitted itself to competitive tendering. The document contains the local authorities, contractors and savings that have been achieved, and it is

interesting to note that in the financial year 1984-85, the savings totalled £31,106,785. Ratepayers of every political complexion were saved that sum by local authorities which submitted themselves to competitive tender.

The time has come when we have had sufficient experience of competition in this sphere for the Secretary of State to acknowledge that if £31 million-odd could be saved by those local authorities, enormous additional sums could be saved if every local authority tried to achieve similar economies.

I accept that there are some professional well run in-house services that are as efficient as any private enterprise service, but competitive tendering would enable the in-house service to prove its efficiency. Unfortunately, my experience of voluntary competitive tendering is not a happy one. The local councillors of one of the authorities in my constituency decided finally to take note of the electors' voice and to accept competitive tendering. The lowest tender was provided by a private contractor, but the power and the voice of a public official was such that he had an overbearing influence on the councillors. Accordingly, they were minded to invite the in-house service to re-submit a new and lower tender. That is not good practice. Ratepayers should be protected from that experience by legislation, which Ministers at the Department of the Environment have the authority to bring to the House.

A relevant early-day motion has been tabled this year and the same motion was tabled in the 1983-84 Session, when it was supported by over 200 of my hon. Friends. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment richly deserves some popularity and the early-day motions on this issue signal that if the necessary piece of legislation is introduced in the next Queen's speech, it will have the support of the overwhelming majority of Conservative Members and that of the overwhelming majority of ratepayers and voters throughout the kingdom.

10.18 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) on initiating the debate. Likewise, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on having contributed to it in such a spirited fashion. It has been a useful debate and many interesting arguments have been advanced on the advantages of competitive tendering.

One of the most distinguishing features of the previous Labour Government, much to the chagrin of many Labour Members, was their virtual surrender of policy-making to the trade unions. When the Industrial Relations Act 1971 was repealed, the trade unions were given the right to immunity over a wide range of industrial disruption practices. Direct labour organisation and dock workers were given exclusive rights to jobs. Like Cromwell's new model army, trade union organisation became a monster. Finally, in the winter of discontent, it throttled its masters, and in 1979 the Labour Government fell, to be replaced by a Conservative Government. Some of the slogans that appeared at that time illustrated clearly what was going on. When the gravediggers were on strike, the following slogan appeared, "Vote Labour and dig your own grave".

It had become clear at that time to the British public that the monopoly supply of public services in the state sector had concentrated power in the hands of politically inspired union leaders. That led to an undesirable stranglehold over the public, with costly and inefficient services to boot. I put my remarks in this context because contracting out is not designed, as has been suggested by the unions, to line the pockets of private contractors. It has been designed for three specific purposes: first, to ensure that there are multiple sources of supply of services to prevent patients and the public from being held to ransom; secondly, to ensure the cost-effective supply of those services—often saving substantial sums of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money—and, thirdly, to ensure that those who supply the services can have the benefits of working in the private sector.

It is thanks in large measure to the efforts of my hon. Friends the Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) that the concept of contracting out local authority services has rapidly taken hold. It is true that a number of United Kingdom companies have already been engaged in the provision of ancillary services—for example, Crothall and Co. has been responsible for all the domestic services at Stoke Mandeville hospital for no less than 23 years. There is nothing new about what is happening. Crothall's parent company, Pritchards, and companies like Grand Met are extensively active overseas earning valuable foreign exchange for the United Kingdom.

What has been the record to date? According to the "Public Services Review", which an excellent publication—we can provide you with a copy Mr. Speaker, should you so desire because, if you find the rest of tonight's debate boring, it would make fascinating reading—no less than £31 million in public funds will be saved by using private companies instead of in-house labour to provide public services. Many of those savings have come from the NHS. The Select Committee's report was misleading in this respect. If the savings that have been made so far in the 3 per cent. of hospitals that have put their services out to tender were translated across the board, about £200 million would be saved—a substantial sum.

I welcome the answer that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security—the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten)—gave on 29 May when he said:

> "The competitive tendering policy in the NHS is proving a great success. These are real savings in the cost of support services. They are not being achieved by lowering standards."

Significant annual savings have also come from local authorities. In Southend, the street cleaning operation has saved £600,000. Under the guidance of my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen about £2,670,000 per annum is being saved. Wandsworth will be the first local authority in London to hand over council estate caretaking to a private firm. That company will employ 23 caretakers and is expected to save the council £400,000 per annum and to give improved services.

It looks as though this is a catching mood, because not only is the Conservative party committed to this policy but the Liberals appear to have jumped on to another bandwagon — this time a sensible one. That is extraordinary. I notice that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) has joined us. It is a pity Liberal Members were not here earlier to hear much that would have enlightened them. Six Liberals on Bristol city council recently supported a Conservative proposal calling for all council work over £20,000 to be open to competition,

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

instead of being handed to the council's direct labour organisation. Last year, the DLO lost more than £2 million. As the Liberal deputy leader on the council said:

"We don't want to keep the organisation afloat by feather-bedding. It must become viable and efficient."

Undoubtedly, those words will haunt his colleagues when they find themselves voting for Socialist measures.

Further progress is threatened for three reasons. First, some Conservative local authorities are reluctant to put their services out to tender. They think somehow that going out to tender is an admission of their inefficiency. A couple of years ago, I asked my father, who was a member of the council of the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, what services he had put out to tender that week. He said, "We have the finest refuse collection service in the country." When I said, "Put it out to tender and then you will see whether it is right" he was less than keen to do so.

Tendering should not be seen as an admission of inefficiency. It is felt that the public sector alone can handle these matters, but we must not forget that the private sector provides our fighter aircraft and our food. The private sector can provide those goods.

The second reason why further progress is threatened is union sabotage. Mr. Sid Cresswell, branch secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, commenting on his campaign against the privatisation of refuse collection by Rugby borough council, said:

"We have to meet atom bombs with atom bombs."

In many other cases the unions are clearly endeavouring to prevent the privatisation programme from continuing by disrupting it. I hope that Opposition Members will reject that.

The third reason is because of the unfair conditions being imposed on private contractors. I shall cite two examples. First, to compare like with unlike, in-house departments, sometimes intentionally and sometimes in all innocence, omit overhead costs from their tenders. Typically, they include a share of central administration costs, such as payroll, training and recruitment. Other examples abound. Secondly, regarding obstructive contract conditions, NUPE's education pack,

"Improve Public Services . . . Shut Out Contractors"

—note that contradiction—states

"If action to prevent the council (or by implication health authority) proceeding with tenders fails, then the next tactic should be to make the tendering conditions as tough as possible. Imposing conditions will cost the contractor money and that means (his) tenders will be higher."

That is absolutely disgraceful.

Competitive tendering has been a proven road to greater efficiency of operation, reduced burdens on the ratepayer, and better job satisfaction for the employees. To encourage our more timid councillors of all three parties, I hope that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will take back to his Department the clear message from my hon. Friends and me that we should like to see compulsory competitive tendering in the next Queen's speech.

Local Authority Services (Tendering)

10.27 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): There are many propositions on competitive tendering. The first is that every service or all goods that are bought in by a local authority should be subject to competitive tender. I endorse that proposition, and have helped it by tabling an amendment to the Competition Act 1980, as a result of which local authorities can be accused of anti-competitive practices if they try to have cosy anti-competitive arrangements, for example for demolition contracting. There is no difference between the two sides of the House on that.

The second proposition was adopted by the Government in 1980 with the Local Government Act 1980. It is that direct works departments should be subject to tendering. From that comes a further development in the Government consultative document, which is that some other services should be put out to competitive tendering, not as a matter of choice for an elected local authority, but of compulsion. It includes refuse collecting, cleaning buildings and vehicle maintenance.

Tonight a fourth proposition is being argued, which is that virtually every service run by a local authority should, if possible, be put out to private tender. That seems to fit in with some of the Government's suggestions, for example on housing management, and that the ownership of housing should be placed in the private sector. In other words, there should be limitless opportunities for the private sector to compete.

The Opposition agree that ratepayers are entitled to efficiency from their local authorities. I constantly urge my local authority to be efficient and to get value for money, as I am sure many hon. Members do with theirs. That is why I tabled an amendment to the Competition Bill, as it was.

We are not opposed to direct labour organisations being able to compete on fair and equal terms and being exposed to the wind of competition. For instance, in Sunderland, the passenger transport executive is putting the construction of a bus station out to tender. Previously bus stations were built by the direct labour organisation. We see no reason why the direct labour organisation should not even be able to compete with people in the private sector. That is an excellent idea.

One often sees large scale renovations undertaken by direct labour organisations. One or two houses on an estate bought by people under the right-to-buy legislation might need a new roof as badly as houses owned by the local authority. We see no reason why a direct labour organisation should not be entitled to compete with the private sector on such house renovation and improvement work. The odd thing is that in several contributions to the debate we have not had a single word about such competition from the public sector——

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: I shall not give way, as I am short of time.

The GLC's supplies department is now being broken up. It has added a great deal to the competitive buying edge of local authorities in Greater London.

Those matters should be subject to the choice and judgment of the local authority, not compulsion. Local authorities are entitled to make a rounded judgment on how they spend their money and provide their services. Those are matters for local authorities chosen by electors who have a vote. If electors do not like the way in which a local authority is conducting its affairs, they can change those arrangements.

Local authorities are also entitled to consider a wider measure of performance than mere price, such as the quality of service and the fulfilment of social objectives. They can take account of employment policies, equal opportunities among different races, and the elimination of sexual discrimination, for example. The real reason for debates such as this, for the one-sided attack on local authorities and the desire to push out to competitive tendering, is that Conservative Members want the private sector to get more noses in the trough and to make more profits. Those profits are made with low pay, lack of security and the Government's 20th century version of slave labour——

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fraser: No, because I must press on.

The Government want those profits to be made through the abolition of wages councils. They want to see Tory strength through suffering — the strength of the private sector at the expense of those who work for some of the services put out to tender.

The Government are concerned that not enough noses are in the trough. Even some Tory authorities are cutting off that access to private profit making. Many of the district councils are controlled by the Conservative party. I know what Conservative Members are worried about. Despite all the propaganda and the fact that we have had a Tory Government since 1979, they are worried that the number of local authorities that go out to private tender is dropping in the light of experience. It has dropped from about 12 per cent. in 1982-83 to 11·3 per cent. in 1984. In Scotland, only Orkney and Shetland goes out to tender. Conservative Members are concerned that not enough is happening. In the words of Rodney Bickerstaffe, they know — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, him."] That gives the game away. They know the cost of privatisation. In Wandsworth, Merton, Dudley, Eastbourne and Gloucester there have been unswept streets, uncut grass, uncollected rubbish, late, missing or cold meals, thousands of people thrown on to the dole queue and an exploited work force. Local authorities are entitled to make a judgment.

We should consider what companies are undertaking the work. Reckitt Cleaning Services does cleaning for local authorites and hospitals and has interests in other parts of the world. It has interests in South Africa where it employs 2,000 staff. It has just opened a new factory outside Johannesburg. It is investing in South Africa when many firms are taking investment out, sometimes under pressure from their Governments, as a sign of their disagreement with what is happening there. A local authority is entitled to say that it does not want to employ a firm that wants to invest in South Africa.

There is worse——

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): How does it make its profits? Selling mustard.

Mr. Fraser: I will tell the hon. Gentleman how it makes its profits. Virtually all of its employees in local

[Mr. Fraser]

authority cleaning services are employed for less than 16 hours a week. That is deliberate—they therefore have no protection against unfair dismissal and have few labour rights under their terms of employment.

Mr. Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: I shall not give way.

ICC Cleaning Services has been employed by some local authorites. [HON. MEMBERS: "NUPE."] Yes, I am quoting from a NUPE document. I am very grateful to NUPE. I am sure that I am as grateful to NUPE as the Tory party is to ICC Cleaning Services, the parent company of which gave £3,250 to the Tory party in 1984, which won a contract to clean schools in Shepway. Officials had to alert Kent county council to the fact that there were uncleaned schools and that the firm had to draft in cleaners from London and Essex because a local recruitment drive had failed. There were headlines in local papers saying:

"Cleaners Crisis May Shut Down Schools."

Heads of schools were worried about the operation of that firm.

We should consider how these cleaning firms make their money. I shall give some examples of the grave abuses. Staff are employed part-time, so they are subject to instant dismissal. In one well-known case, the staff were subject to dismissal even for taking a tea break. There has been outright refusal to recognise trade union membership, as happened, for example, with the Victoria Cleaning Company. There has been a case of compulsory weekend work in a six-day week for which the remuneration was only £62·90—I refer to ISC. Other companies have given no holiday entitlement.

In many cases, the profit is made by lowering the pay and conditions of employees. A local authority, which has a social objective, not a profit objective, is entitled to make a judgment about proper terms and conditions of employment and about what is in the best interests of the community as a whole, rather than just shareholders.

Office Cleaning Services is a typical company. A Conservative Member of Parliament is one of its parliamentary consultants. Wages in that company have been driven down while the director's pay increased by 42 per cent. in 1982-83. In direct labour organisations, more than the price for the job has to be taken into account. There are other social responsibilities such as training. One of the results of competitive tendering has been a 36 per cent. reduction in apprentices being trained by local authorities. We do not need any lessons from the Government. On capital finance for local authorities, a member of the Audit Commission was able to tell the Government:

"If I were asked to design a system that would produce more waste and inefficiency to control capital expenditure it is not immediately certain to me what additional complication I would build in".

We know the reason for this assault on local government. It is an assault on their democracy and autonomy and it is intended to bring profits into private purses at the expense of the pay and conditions of working people who are already badly off.

10.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) started his speech quite well. He reminded us that when he was in office he was on the side of the consumer, championing their interests against the vested interests of other large organisations. He even made a passing criticism of the extravagance of Lambeth council, but towards the end of his speech there was a Pavlovian over-reaction. Having to listen for an hour and a half to six speeches from my hon. Friends was obviously too much for him.

There was a lot of emotional ranting about snouts in the trough and a list of what he regards as abuses. But what about the abuses on the other side? Look at what is happening in Southwark's social services department; look at the abuses in Liverpool city council, where there is far too close a relationship between the direct labour organisation and the councillors; look at the restrictive practices in Lambeth. The hon. Member for Norwood said that these matters should be left to the good sense of the local authorities, but as my hon. Friends showed during the debate, a whole range of abuses have been introduced by local authorities to make sure that a choice cannot effectively be made.

For example, in Chesterfield Mr. Ernest Grosvenor, a caterer, has been barred from catering for next month's banquet for the new mayor of Chesterfield because he provided tea and sandwiches for the police during the miners' strike. Mr. Bill Flanagan, the Labour leader of the council, said:

"Mr. Grosvenor has been blacklisted for feeding policemen drafted into the area to confront strikers during the pits dispute."

If one looks at what Labour councillors get up to in order to avoid the existing regulations, it is no argument to say that this should be left to the good sense of local authorities; where there is a good case they will put it out to tender; otherwise they will leave it to the DLOs. In Burnley, the DLO put in a bid that was £90,000 higher than the contractor's bid, but it subsequently reduced it, by various means, to bring it below the outside figure. I received in today's post some minutes from Councillor Lobenstein, a Conservative councillor in Hackney, giving details of how Hackney had abused its position and reduced its price, after all the other tenders had been opened, in order to get a particular item of work.

In opening this debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) put the case absolutely correctly when she said that the Government are not insisting that everything should be put out to tender, because that is not a universal panacea. She said that outside contractors should be invited to put in bids in competition with the DLOs to see who could provide the best deal for the ratepayer. I do not understand how anybody can possibly object to that.

As my hon. Friends made clear, good, efficient DLOs have nothing to fear from Government policies that have already been introduced, or from those that my hon. Friends urge us to implement. Indeed, in 1975 the then Under-Secretary of State in my Department—a Labour Minister—said that the efficiency of the direct labour departments would be tested in competition with private contractors. That is exactly what my hon. Friends have been urging the Government to do for the last hour and a half. The emotional response of the hon. Member for Norwood to the sensible and realistic package of proposals put forward by my hon. Friends does him no credit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) reminded us of the contrast between the rates paid in

Wandsworth and in Lambeth, a point that was followed up by a number of my hon. Friends. Ever solicitous of the fortunes of Ministers in the Department of the Environment, my hon. Friends urged us to find popular legislation which the Department could introduce and which my hon. Friends could support with a spring in their step in the Division Lobby. The right-to-buy policy was introduced by my Department. That has been successful. Many of my hon. Friends have urged my Department to introduce very quickly more legislation to build on the initiatives that we have already introduced. I thought I detected some impatience among my hon. Friends about legislation from my Department. After the abolition Bill and rate capping, I thought they might have seen enough of Ministers from the Department of the Environment. However, I was heartened to hear my hon. Friends say that they want even more legislation from the Department, which they would be more than happy to support.

May I outline the position that we have reached? As my hon. Friends know, in February this year, we sent out a consultative document with some proposals for building on the initiatives that we have already introduced, and extending the obligation to go out to tender to several other services. We have received about 400 representations. Nothing in them has affected our determination to proceed down this path. We are convinced that it is right and, what is more, we have seen growing evidence from other commentators in this area that more should be done.

For example, in a recent publication, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy reported:

"Competition offered by private contractors has undoubtedly contributed towards the general improvements in performance measures of council operated refuse collection in recent years."

Speaking of the existing DLO legislation, the chief executive of West Midlands metropolitan county council —a well-respected officer on local government—said:

"The DLO legislation has resulted in increased efficiency and improvements in accountability that were long overdue."

Those who run the DLOs in local government say that, for the first time, our legislation has enabled them to manage, instead of being at the mercy of spendthrift councils and militant unions. Of course if is far easier to terminate an unsatisfactory agreement if one puts services out to tender than it is if one relies completely on in-house services, which are often dominated by local government trade unions.

The *Municipal Journal*, which does not always support the Conservative Government's initiatives, states:

"It is regrettable that these improvements"——

the improvements in the DLOs—

"resulted from initiatives taken by Government rather than local government professionals."

The question is not whether there should be competition, but how we can extend it.

My hon. Friends asked me this evening to give commitments about the Queen's Speech in a few months' time. Their argument is that we must build on the momentum of tendering and extend the advantages to other services. My hon. Friends will understand if I say that it is not within my gift to outline the proposals in the Queen's Speech. That is for others. As I am sure they know, there are always more bids for legislation than can be accommodated, and the Government will have to take some hard decisions. I say that on the day when the House has voted, with a fairly substantial majority, to rise at the end of this week—not a day too soon, in my view. We must weight the merits of the legislation that has been urged on us this evening against other attractive packages, which I know my hon. Friends hope will be included in the Queen's Speech.

Of course my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government have noted the substantial number of Back-Bench Members who have signed early-day motion 895. That is eloquent testimony of the strength of feeling that has been demonstrated in tonight's debate. I shall ensure that my right hon. and hon. Friends are made aware of those strong feelings.

South Africa

10.48 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): It is right that the House should not rise for the recess before it discusses in more detail than we could today at Question Time the current position in South Africa. We are grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing us a longer debate than the one that has just ended. It will give us the opportunity to deploy some of the arguments at length and, I hope, allow the Government to deploy their arguments on a position that is clearly changing hourly.

Discrimination against people for various reasons is widespread on our planet. Our task should be to expose and oppose it wherever we find it. Without doubt—my hon. Friends will agree with me entirely—the most evil form of discrimination is that based on the colour of a person's skin. A Government whose existence depends on such discrimination are, by their nature, an evil Government. South Africa has such a Government. It is an evil system, where the Government rule by terror, and we should play no part in sustaining them. That is one of the reasons why we wish to put some reasoned questions to the Government about why they are not changing their policy.

By any international definition, South Africa is a high risk and unstable country. This has to be taken on board as much by those—if there are any left—who think of emigrating there as by those who are trustees of investment funds and have to approve investments there. There is no obligation on the trustee of a pension fund to approve investments in a high risk, unstable country.

For decades, warnings have been given inside and outside the House, and inside and outside the country, that South Africa would one day blow apart unless its rulers abandoned the evil system of apartheid. These warnings have been ignored both inside South Africa and, by and large, by United Kingdom companies operating there. There is the classic situation of a lack of movement and a stubborness to respond to reasonable demand, leading in the end to a clash that will be more serious and violent than it would have been if reasonable demands had been met.

As we sit here in the comfort and security of the Mother of Parliaments and debate the issues of the day, people are being arrested without charge—665 in the past few days—and are being killed by the hour. Concerned human beings around the world have trembled as they switched to the broadcasts of the past few days. World leaders, in the West in particular, are beginning to wake up, and we hope that our Government are not last in the queue.

We do not have to go back too far to see how much complacency there was in the West. I do not intend to recite the catalogue of history, as I need go back only a few months. I quote one question and answer in a press conference in December last year, just after the United States President had met Bishop Tutu. The questioner asked President Reagan:

"But the regime has become more repressive and the arrests have increased. Would you consider any kind of economic sanctions? And do you feel that your policies have, at all, given credibility to that regime?"

President Reagan answered:

"I know that there has been a surge of violence here and there, and that has resulted in violence from the other side. We regret this. But, as I say, I think the policy we're following—and it wouldn't be quiet diplomacy any more if I started talking about things openly—but, we have made solid progress, and we want to continue doing that."

In December last year, he was talking about "solid progress" and "quiet diplomacy". He now talks about "constructive engagement", a phrase that our Government have picked up parrot fashion. It means nothing, although the Minister may try to explain to us later what it means. At the moment, there is constant violence, a state of emergency in South Africa, with literally hundreds of people killed in the past few months. There was another large massacre on the 25th anniversary of Sharpeville, which came after the United States President spoke. People in South Africa are disappearing, in the well-known way of South America. There will be a catalogue of people who have disappeared.

Since President Reagan spoke, at least the Senate and the House of Representatives have voted for some form of economic sanctions. They have not voted for the same form, and I understand that discussions on that are taking place. At least the United States Government recalled their ambassador after the raid into Botswana—a raid purely designed to take out the peaceful opposition.

As an aside, I thank the Foreign Office and the Home Office for enabling two young teenagers to make a quick trip to Botswana to attend the funeral of their uncle, who was killed there, by making passports available. I know the Minister of State who deals with South Africa has put on record the Government's position about what happened.

We do not want our country to become isolated on the issue of South Africa. Between Question Time in the House today and this debate, it appears that France has moved. It has recalled its ambassador and has taken a United Nations initiative and banned all new investment. Some months ago, France was threatening to ban new investment after 18 months if things did not change. France has now responded to the changed situation and is to be commended.

I have a slight criticism of the BBC. When this was being reported on the "PM" programme earlier this evening, the BBC reporter in a London studio spoke to a reporter in France, and could not resist asking him if the news would be welcomed in France or would it be seen as a sop to the Left wing. The reporter in Paris said the public in France were scandalised by what was happening in South Africa. I do not know why the BBC have to put that kind of innuendo about a French action designed to meet the situation.

Norway has initiated a ban on the flights of Scandinavian Airlines System to South Africa. There will be no new investment from Sweden or Denmark, and Canada has also taken action. The Republic of Ireland has considered economic sanctions, although I admit it has been pushed on by what the South Africans would describe as 11 urban guerillas working for a Dublin supermarket. They were sacked for refusing to handle Outspan oranges and grapefruit at a checkout as a sign of solidarity over what was happening in South Africa. At least that Government have taken cognisance of that and they have to be followed by other Governments. New Zealand has called it a day and has broken off diplomatic relations.

When the United States imposes some kind of economic sanctions, as everyone knows it will, our Government will look stupid and isolated—until the day that we fall into line and then we will look like a client state

of the United States. That situation can be avoided. We do not want it to arise and, I suspect, neither does the Government. It is in their hands to do something about it.

I am not sure whether the Foreign Secretary in his speech yesterday called for six bold steps, or said that if anyone wanted to take six bold steps, here they were, or whether he said, "Here are the ones we think should be taken, and this is what we are going to do to see they are taken." I am not sure what he said, but I expect the Minister will give us more details. The Foreign Secretary called for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela; for an end to forced removals and detention without trial; an early end to the state of emergency; for progress on the abolition of discriminatory legislation; and for a commitment to some form of common citizenship. I would welcome an elaboration on the words "some form".

We also want to know what plans Her Majesty's Government have for turning the six bold steps the Foreign Secretary talked about into reality? Have the Government imposed a time limit before they will take some action to try to make the South African Government do something about the situation? Do the Government think that those six bold steps add up to political equality in South Africa? Do they think they meet that test? A generation of young South African blacks under the age of 24 have lived all their lives while Nelson Mandela has been in prison. Look at their existence today. They do not have a vote and 3½ million of them are unemployed. That is one in seven whereas the figure is one in 60 for the whites. They see after 23 years that there is still a stubborn refusal on the part of the white regime to meet and discuss the issues of political equality. They are told, in effect, that they will remain subjugated by the whites. In heaven's name, what is their choice? They will fight for freedom, as people all over the world will fight for freedom — to echo the phrases that the Prime Minister has used in the House — and they will fight in the knowledge that they will suffer most in the early part of the struggle. But they have no other road to take. They will pay the price that others have had to pay if they wanted to be free.

That is the position facing the young blacks. Their future looks hopeless and terrible. I wonder what people expect them to do when they see no hope. In the interview published in *The Times* today, Nelson Mandela was asked about one aspect of the "six bold steps". I accept that the interviewer said that the interview was conducted without notes, but the report says:

> "I asked Mandela if he took hope for the Government amending laws banning interracial marriage and easing laws that limit black entry into urban areas. He smiled: 'you are speaking about pinpricks', he said. 'Frankly, it is not my ambition to marry a white woman or to swim in a white pool. The central issue is political equality. Our programme is clear', Mandela went on. 'It is based on three principles: a unified South Africa —no artificial 'homelands'; black representation in the central Parliament, not membership in the kind of apartheid assemblies that have been newly established for the Coloureds and the Asians; and one man, one vote.'"

How does that square with the "six bold steps" for which the Foreign Secretary has called and how can it be related to the situation facing young blacks in South Africa?

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for missing the start of his speech. Perhaps he told the House when he was last in South Africa. If not, I hope that he will inform us. The hon. Gentleman proposes economic sanctions against South Africa, but will he tell us on whom those sanctions will bear?

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech. It goes without saying that I have never been to South Africa. One does not need to go to South Africa to understand the British Government's relations with that country.

Why have Governments of both parties tried to impose restrictions, conditions and codes of conduct on British companies operating in South Africa? There must be a reason for that. Even the Government understand that there is a problem. Otherwise, they would not propose codes of conduct. Is the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) saying that there is no problem in South Africa?

I accept that people in South Africa know that they will have to pay a price. It is easy for me in the security of the Mother of Parliaments to say that I will help to impose that price on them. Some in South Africa say that sanctions will hurt them more than the Government, but people are prepared to pay a price for freedom. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to contradict me, I shall argue that case with him, but I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) will recite chapter and verse how Governments have imposed economic sanctions to bring about changes in internal conditions in countries with which we disagree. There is nothing wrong with that. In this case, the ends justify the means because of the refusal over decades of the South African Government to act reasonably towards the majority of citizens in their own country.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the question of the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) is almost inane? Before the war, Labour Members could have been asked whether they had been to Nazi Germany. Was it necessary for people to go to Hitler's Germany to understand the terrible tyranny there? Is not it unfortunate that a number of Conservative Members go to South Africa quite frequently as guests of the South African authorities?

Mr. Rooker: I could not have responded better than my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wiggin *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: No, I will not give way. If the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare is prepared to participate in the debate, I assume that, should he catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, he will be able to make his own speech, as he is clearly such an expert on the situation.

We are told that British companies can help by following the code of conduct. I know that the code of conduct has been changed over the years and incorporated into European situations, but I want to raise two questions on the code, which British companies are supposed to follow. Why on earth should the blacks in South Africa have to rely on the company house, the company bus, the company school or the company medical centre as a way of improving their living standards? These are all points in the code of conduct. It is the right of the blacks in their own country to be able to organise the Government and the running of these facilities for themselves. It should not be for the British Government to say to a British company,

[Mr. Rooker]

"Help create the odd company town to help the blacks, because their own Government are not interested in doing it".

I raise this matter because some of these companies are the same companies which, in the United Kingdom, have refused British workers the right to hold ballots on political funds at the workplace. How on earth can we trust multinational companies which act in that way in our own country to do the right thing thousands of miles away in South Africa? They clearly cannot be trusted.

According to a reply to a parliamentary question on 2 July, United Kingdom exports of data processing equipment since 1982 have jumped into second place as our principal export commodity. Data processing equipment is the very equipment for running the bureaucracy of apartheid, and the exports should be stopped. The equipment did not appear on the list three years ago. The only use for it is in assisting that bureaucracy.

There are plenty of places in the world from which to get fruit and vegetables other than South Africa. It is not necessary for supermarkets to deal almost exclusively in products from South Africa. It is not necessary to fill up the stores with Cape and Outspan. People do not have to buy it, the supermarkets do not have to stock it and we should not have to import it. I accept that, in the early period, this would have a damaging impact on the economy of South Africa, but it is the purpose of economic sanctions to have a damaging impact so that the South African Government will effect some internal changes to bring about a situation acceptable to the civilised world.

What do we want from the Government? I will list a few points, and my hon. Friends can develop others. Will the Government and the Minister condemn the new apartheid constitution? I do not know whether the Minister has gone on record as condemning it. Will the Government support sanctions on the question of Namibian independence? We ought to have an answer to that before the international discussions which are to take place later this year. Will the Government stop blocking the efforts at the United Nations to improve collective international measures? Indeed, will they support today's new initiative of France, a country which is our closest geographical partner in the European Community? Will the Government agree to meet the President of the African National Congress for consultation? Will the Government implement the arms embargo strictly? It should be borne in mind that earlier this months five people were sentenced at Birmingham Crown court for arms smuggling. That may still be an issue which entrepreneurs somewhere are considering, and stricter implementation of the arms embargo is necessary. Will the Government accept the 10-point plan of the anti-apartheid movement?

Ministers can change their policy. I would rather that they followed the French and withdrew our ambassador for consultations than that they followed the Americans later. As sure as night follows day, when the Americans move, we follow them. I do not want that to happen. I hope that the Government will respond tonight to the changing position in South Africa in at least the same minimal way that the French Government have responded.

11.10 pm

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): About 20 years ago I found myself as the British representative on the third committee of the United Nations which dealt with colonial problems. My references to apartheid caused official complaints from the then South African Foreign Minister. At that time I and a number of my hon. Friends now in the House fought to keep Cape coloureds on the parliamentary lists. The Nationalist Government removed them and have now put them back into Parliament. We objected to the gerrymandering of the boundaries by the Nationalist Government to favour their party in the elections.

Since then I have visited South Africa many times and I have always made a point of talking to black African leaders such as Chief Buthelezi, the Chief Minister of KwaZulu and Mr. Motlana of the Soweto committee of 10. Each visit showed me a change, although slow, for the better. Under President Botha these changes have accelerated. Black trade unions are now legal; they were not some years ago. Pass laws, mixed marriages and influx control are being altered or abolished. That is progress. The Indians and the coloureds now have seats in Parliament — perhaps in a separate Chamber, but they have seats and votes. A commission of the Cabinet is sitting to try to find a constitution for the future of the black majority in South Africa. Their probable place in the kaleidoscope of states was explained to me some years ago. As yet it is not official, but we hope that the commission will report in the near future.

The trouble is that when there is a loosening of controls, those who want revolution rather than evolution resort automatically to violence. How can this House demand an end to the state of emergency when more than 500 black men have been killed mainly by fellow blacks—not by the police? They have been killed by members of the ANC or UDF. Would we like to listen to a debate in the South African Parliament interfering with our relations in Northern Ireland? How can we demand the release of Nelson Mandela when he refuses to give up violence? Would we release a convicted leader of the IRA if he refused to do the same in similar circumstances? Of course we would not. The trouble is that here, in the United States and in Europe, South Africa is equated with a European country and is treated by European standards. South Africa is not a European country, it is an African country. To be fair, we must compare what happens in South Africa with what happens in other African states such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana and so on. Then we shall have a fair perspective. But that is not done by the western nations, which is part of the trouble.

It is estimated that 1·5 million blacks from other countries may now be working in South Africa, and on whose work some 10 million non-South African blacks depend for their livelihoods. In other words, they prefer South Africa, with all its imperfections and all its racial overtones, to their own countries, ruled often by dictators or generals.

Our colonial history has shown that once we proceed along the road to liberalisation, there is violence, followed by concessions, followed by more violence, followed by a hand-over to a group or a tribe and then one man, one vote, once.

South Africa is not a colony. It is the most powerful industrialised state in the continent of Africa. The Government of South Africa will not, for reasons that must

be obvious to everybody, surrender to the concept of one man one vote. They see the consequences of that in the rest of Africa, where there are not large numbers of indigenous white people. They want progress towards some form of confederation between the various racial groups. That will take time to achieve, but it cannot be achieved under the threat of violence.

By all means let us apply moral pressure on the South African Government to move faster, but it is wrong to use that country as a whipping boy, and it would be wrong to impose sanctions or disinvestment. That would only cause the Afrikaaner section of the population to laager up and have disastrous effects on the black population, whose leaders are almost wholly opposed either to sanctions or to disinvestment.

Who can deny that progress was being made before the latest violence started? Only 2·9 per cent. of all job categories are now reserved for whites. It was a much higher percentage only five or six years ago. About 1·3 million people are members of 77 black or mixed trade unions. There were no African trade unions some years ago. Black workers' salaries increased by 40 per cent. between 1970 and 1979. The incomes of black people in South Africa are two to five times higher than in other independent African states. That is why the country attracts so many people from those African states. In 1970, the ratio of black workers' salaries to those of whites was 25 to 75 per cent. By 1980, that gap had been narrowed to 40 to 60 per cent. respectively. In other words, the salaries of the blacks are moving up rapidly, and there is now quite a large black middle class.

Since 1970, black wages have risen in real terms by 95 per cent., compared with a rise in white wages of 11 per cent. Thus, a levelling up is taking place. Not enough is being done, many will say, but give them time. All of that would be destroyed by revolution, which, there is no question in my mind is desired by some Opposition Members. Bloody revolution would destroy the whole country, and that would delight some of them.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Can the hon. Gentleman explain the paradox? If the situation for blacks in South Africa is as beneficial to them as he suggests, why is it necessary to deny them the vote that would enable them to express their satisfaction with the system?

Sir Patrick Wall: I am not saying that it is entirely beneficial for the blacks. I am simply suggesting that to bring them to equality, economically and politically, takes time and education, and that is not fully widespread at present. *[Interruption.]* If we imposed sanctions or disinvestment, black Africans would receive little education. One need only think of some of the other countries in the continent.

Nor should we lose sight of British interests. Those are often forgotten by some hon. Members. British investments in the Republic of South Africa are said to total £3 billion. Many British jobs would be at stake if, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) suggested we were to impose sanctions. South Africa controls many of the world's key minerals, not to mention the Cape oil route.

In a black Marxist state, or even in a non-aligned state that we should see if somebody such as Nelson Mandela came to power, would South Africa be likely to be a friend of the West in any future conflict? I doubt it. One need only look at some of the other states, for example, a little further north at Zimbabwe.

To sum up, we should stop comparing South Africa with Europe. They are completely unalike. Give the South Africans time. They have moved, and they are moving faster than ever before under P. W. Botha. Give them a little more time and I am sure that they will evolve a prosperous society which is fair to all. Their leaders—black, white, coloured or Indian—face the most difficult task in the world today. They will succeed if only we stop interfering with them.

11.20 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) has defended southern African regimes for a long time, including South Africa itself, what was Southern Rhodesia and a number of other countries, some of which were occupied by Portugal. He is well known for his views. He has lost out on all these places except South Africa, and I am convinced that he will lose out there as well.

Sir Patrick Wall: Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied with what has happened in Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and many other countries, either economically or politically?

Mr. Winnick: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman would like to revert to the former colonialism. When I said that he would lose out on South Africa, I meant that the regime and the sort of rule which he defends will not win. It is that to which I shall address myself, like my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), whom I congratulate on initiating this important debate.

No one should be surprised by events in recent months in South Africa. They are the inevitable results of policies pursued since the National Party won the election in 1948. All the instruments of the South African state have been used to oppress, harass and humiliate the large majority of that country's people. It is said that changes have taken place, but in the main the changes have been cosmetic. They have done nothing to give the African majority basic political and human rights. The hon. Member for Beverley has spoken about outside pressure; even the small changes which have taken place have arisen only because of international pressure. Does anyone imagine that there would have been any modification in the apartheid system if there had not been international pressure?

Mr. Wiggin: Of course there would. Has the hon. Gentleman been to South Africa?

Mr. Winnick: It was said that international pressure would merely harden the attitude of the authorities. There has been that pressure, and it will continue as long as the majority are discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. That is the reason for the unrest and the explosion in South Africa over recent months. That explains the renewed interest in the country, especially in the United States as well as some European countries, and the events taking place within it.

Many of us deeply resent the attitude of the Minister of State's ministerial counterpart, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), who I understand is now in Moscow. When he was interviewed on the radio the other day he gave a sort of lecture about Bishop

[Mr. Winnick]

Huddleston. We deeply respect the bishop, who has championed human rights and proved himself to be a steadfast campaigner against apartheid. Someone like him does not require any lectures from Ministers.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Winnick: I shall not give way now.

Mr. Carlisle *rose*——

Mr. Winnick: Not now. I am not giving way at this moment. I remember listening to and watching Bishop Huddleston interviewed as long ago as 1960 on "Panorama", when he was explaining the boycott of South African goods that was about to be imposed. Even before 1960—those who have read his book will understand—he was a steadfast champion of human rights in South Africa.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman should be fair to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). The criticism that he made of Bishop Huddleston was directed to his attack upon Alan Paton, the writer, whom he described as a broken man when the latter was criticising disinvestment. My hon. Friend was criticising the bishop for that reason and not because of the position that he held generally.

Mr. Winnick: The interview to which I listened made it clear to me that the Minister was wider in his criticism of Bishop Huddleston. What a contrast between the bishop and others like him, including of course Bishop Tutu in South Africa, and the attitude of the Prime Minister, who last year welcomed Mr. Botha to Britain. He was given a warm reception by her and he was a distinguished state guest. No doubt the Prime Minister told him that changes were necessary in South Africa. Mr. Botha expected her to urge changes along those lines. She was only going through a ritual.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): What about Gorbachev?

Mr. Winnick: The Prime Minister is not at all concerned about events in South Africa. She went through the ritual of telling the South African Prime Minister that certain changes were necessary, but she had no deep commitment. The Prime Minister has no greater commitment to fundamental changes in South Africa than the Conservative Members who are busy heckling me.

I welcome, as far as it goes, the statement on the state of emergency in South Africa issued by the Foreign Ministers of the European Community. We should bear it in mind, though, that more than 50 per cent. of foreign investment in South Africa comes from EEC member states. Britain remains the biggest single investor, with £7 billion of investment, accounting for 10 per cent. of total British overseas investment. A good part of the capital that should be invested in Britain to create employment goes to places such as South Africa. More than 600 British firms have invested there, some of them heavily. A third of the leading British firms in South Africa do not recognise independent black unions. Many invest to make the maximum profit by paying the lowest possible wage in a place where black employees cannot bargain collectively over conditions. These companies have a profitable stake in apartheid.

Conservative Members who do not like criticism of one of their favourite states will have to accept that their view differs greatly from ours. Let us give some credit to the Tory party—the views that are being expressed by the half a dozen Tory Members in the Chamber do not reflect, I hope, the views of the majority of that party.

I warmly welcome the French Government's action which was announced today. They were right to say that no more investment will go to South Africa. I am also pleased that they have recalled their ambassador. At Question time today I said that the British ambassador should be recalled. The trouble with the British Government is that they give the impression that they are firm allies of the South African authorities. They do not want to take any action that would be seen in South Africa and on the international scene as liable to cause embarrassment there.

There should be a policy of disinvestment towards South Africa; disinvestment along the lines announced today by the French Government should be pursued by the British Government. However long the fight, the African majority and its allies will win their rights in South Africa.

The hon. Member for Beverley said that some of us want revolution in South Africa. Surely this has been the essence of the argument all along—as long as apartheid continues and the large majority are denied their rights, there are bound to be events that lead to conditions like those at present. There is no better way of achieving outright revolution in South Africa than continuing with the policy that has been followed in that country since 1948. For all we know, some of the Conservative Members who are present may be underground revolutionaries who pretend to be otherwise. Perhaps their motive is the very revolution about which they warn.

On what side of the struggle in South Africa is Britain to be seen? For a long time we have said that the British labour movement is on the side of the oppressed majority in South Africa. We have made our position clear at conference after conference in the Labour party and in the trade unions. We shall want firm action by the next Labour Government, including economic sanctions. We want the United Kingdom completely to dissociate itself from the tyranny in South Africa.

There are many repressive regimes in the world, and I would be the last to claim that South Africa is the only tyranny. There are far too many dictatorships and regimes which my hon. Friends and I would in no way defend or condone. Some are in Africa and some are elsewhere, and there have been many in the past. However, there is one obvious difference between the tyranny in South Africa and other repressive regimes, which some Conservative Members refuse to acknowledge, which is that only in South Africa is one penalised from the moment one is born to the day one dies for one reason—the colour of one's skin. Even present Ministers have acknowledged that. No other regime is based on that vile principle. That is why there is such strength of feeling, and why, during the past months, the United States Senate has passed resolutions and the groundswell there has continued to press for firmer and far more effective action by their Government against South Africa.

There is no doubt in my mind that the people of South Africa will win their rights, despite the Conservative Right wing. No doubt there were such Tory MPs before the war. When Labour Members, such as Philip Noel-Baker raised the plight of what was happening in Nazi Germany, such

people said, "Why exaggerate? Why should we interfere in the internal affairs of Germany? What business is it of ours? Has the hon. Gentleman been to Germany?"—the same sort of reaction as that from Conservative Members tonight.

The Labour party stands with the large majority of people in South Africa—the blacks, the coloureds and their white allies. We want to see fundamental changes, and apartheid destroyed. Our message to them is that we are on the side of those who fight to overcome the evil that exists there, we stand for the liberation of South Africa, and we shall not yield any more than we have done in the past. We support Nelson Mandela and his colleagues, and I hope that the Government will adopt the same attitude

11.32 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Among men without hope there is no insurrection. When expectation rises, violence erupts. The Government of President Botha have aroused expectations by constitutional and other reforms, which only a few years ago most people would have thought impossible.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said that the changes and improvements in South Africa were merely cosmetic, but I disagree. My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) cited examples of the withering away of many aspects of apartheid. Nowadays white soldiers and policemen salute black commissioned officers. A decade ago, few would have imagined that Indians, coloureds and whites would combine in a parliamentary partnership and in government. That achievement serves to magnify the sense of grievance of blacks, now politically awakened but left outside the new parliamentary process.

The homelands are not merely to be dismissed and decried. They are as independent and as dependent as some other states in Africa. Nor is the Transkei, for example, just a barren waste. But the National party no longer regards the homeland policy as any solution, and by giving title to black householders in Soweto, the authorities have in effect announced the demise of apartheid. Nor can they expect anything other than black discontent with unemployment as high as it is—the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred to this — and 16 per cent. inflation. Black discontent will not be assuaged by even the most admirable schemes of local self-government.

There are movements in South Africa today that reject reforms because their aim is revolution. Often in the townships, vicious and murderous attacks on mayors and councillors, policemen and policewomen, are directed against the agents of evolutionary change by the forces of revolution. What has been happening in the townships is bad enough, but it should not be exaggerated. It is localised and is largely confined to the Rand and the eastern Cape.

There is complaint opposite of the state of emergency. I fancy that, if one were an ordinary black in a disturbed township, one would be less likely to complain that a state of emergency had been imposed. Like the violence, the state of emergency is localised, covering 36 magisterial districts——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Out of 300.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: —as my hon. Friend says, out of about 300. It is the duty of any Government to try to keep order and to protect life and property. This state of emergency prevails in part of the republic of South Africa, but emergency powers exist in a part of the United Kingdom. I know that they are challenged by the Opposition, but the state of emergency is challenged in South Africa, in parliamentary debate and question, and in the columns of a free press. In the republic of South Africa, there is an independent judiciary, and a judicial commission set up by the Government has censured police excesses and called for urgent reforms. In which other African country could these things happen?

The sanctions called for by the Opposition can only do harm. They can put British workers out of a job and ruin South African workers and producers, coloured and black. Have we not learnt anything from Rhodesian sanctions? They harden resistance, and Afrikaners are not soft people. They induce economic self-sufficiency, and they work to the disadvantage of former trading partners. Have not African states suffered enough from Rhodesian sanctions? They would suffer at least as grieviously if they were deprived of their trade with South Africa and the aid that they get from South Africa.

Disinvestment is called for by the Opposition. That has been rejected as a policy by Bishop Tutu. Frankly, I am not impressed by the withdrawal of the French ambassador. The French conduct their diplomacy and commerce with dexterity. There is an arms embargo, subscribed to by France, and France has replaced Britain in the supply of the South African navy. Indeed, had the Labour Government not denounced the Simonstown agreement, the hazardous operation for the liberation of the Falkland Islands could have been undertaken at less cost.

This very complex and agonising question of South Africa is bedevilled by humbug, self-righteousness, double standards and a willingness to sacrifice human life — overwhelmingly black African human life — to abstract principles of little interest to the poor and the hungry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: On this very point, I——

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I am about to conclude.

I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate, he will assure us that it is the purpose of Her Majesty's Government to maintain the trade and influence of the United Kingdom, using that influence to encourage President Botha and his colleagues to persevere in dialogue. In the wise words of the *Times* leader of 23 July, "he should be encouraged to stand firmly behind his reforms and to contain his emergency measures required to protect blacks who support his regime from the bloody fate which has overcome so many of them."

11.42 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I commend the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on the topic he has introduced this evening and on the way in which he introduced it. I must say, though, that, on looking around the House, I feel it is perhaps a shame that a more widespread body of opinion is not represented on the Government Benches that might have participated in the debate. It seems to be a particular strand of Conservative opinion that wishes to involve itself in this debate. As I did not hear the radio broadcast which has been referred to and which involved the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), I can only speak

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

as I find him in the House. I want to put on record my tribute to his forthright responses at Question Time on the issues of South Africa and apartheid.

Conservative Members have asked previous speakers in the debate whether they have been to South Africa. I have been there, although not for any great length of time. I had a job at one time that took me to parts of white Africa generally. There are great problems for those of us in such jobs who wish to go there partly, I suspect, because if one has any sensitivity one finds it virtually impossible to conform to the restrictions placed upon one. I found it difficult, if not impossible, to conform to signs that said "Whites only" or "Blacks only". I could not do that.

In addition, those of us who were involved in work with various groups in and out of Mozambique or Zimbabwe particularly found it difficult to work with people who were conscious that there were informers about the place. My presence with them was therefore in some way a challenge to their safety. It is not always easy to travel in those circumstances. One must thus discuss with a certain amount of candour what action is actually effective. I do not believe that many Conservative Members wish to maintain the present system. The difference in approach by hon. Members on both sides is in respect of how change is achieved. It is at that level that one's remarks and intentions should be related.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I shall develop my remarks a little further and then I shall willingly do so.

It is often a mistake to underestimate the skills of the South African regime in maintaining itself. At times, it gives little tokens which appear to contain the substance of change, such as the Bantustans. At times, the regime has worked quietly to undermine other countries such as Lesotho, which is wholly contained within the Republic of South Africa. It has given tokens in Namibia as if it was the reality of change when it was not. It has sought to undermine the precarious stability of Angola by involving itself with Unita within that country. That is all part and parcel of a trend. Latterly, to the surprise of many people who have to consider and deal with the situation in South Africa, the regime managed to find some basis of agreement with Mozambique, partly because of the pressure that was put on that country in its economic difficulties after independence. All those are interesting ways and means of demonstrating South Africa's skills in maintaining its own unpleasant and oppressive regime. We must address ourselves to the situation that we face in the light of what we have seen in recent years.

Mr. Corbyn: I was intrigued by a statement that the hon. Gentleman made earlier, that the only thing that divides hon. Members is not whether but how apartheid should be abolished. Does he seriously believe that all the Conservative Members who have such close links with the present South African regime seriously want to get rid of apartheid? Are they not acting in the House as apologists for the apartheid regime?

Mr. Winnick: Some of them are paid.

Mr. Meadowcroft: During many years in politics, not just in the House, I have always tried to work on the basis that, just as I object to people trying to attribute to me motives that I do not possess, I am not prepared to try to look into people's hearts and minds. I dislike what Conservative Members——

Mr. Winnick: They are paid.

Mr. John Carlisle: Name them.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I dislike what Conservative Members say—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The sedentary arguments across the Floor are not helping the debate in any way. If an hon. Member wants to intervene, he should do so in the proper way.

Mr. Winnick: I entirely take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker which was perhaps directed at me. However, I hope that I can draw your attention to the way in which the same sort of interruptions were made constantly during my speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that I was talking about sedentary dialogue across the Chamber, not just sedentary interruptions.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I fear that if some hon. Members lead with their chin, they always get it punched.

I am distressed by Conservative Members' remarks. I reject their arguments, but I am not prepared to say that they have an ulterior motive. If they have, so be it, but they must speak for themselves.

I am anxious to find ways and means of altering the oppressive regime, which is the disastrous consequence of the history of that continent. It is crucial that Conservative Members realise that and it is the other side of the coin. Their attitude is unfortunately self-fulfilling of the conditions that they talk about. If one says that the regimes that might follow will be unstable, that people are incapable of assuming office, that they are Marxists and that people who are now in prison are not safe to be released, it is as certain as night follows day that when change takes place, there will be instability, Marxist regimes and the oppressive regimes that we have seen elsewhere in Africa.

The problem is that if one resists people's ordinary aspirations and democratic desires, it is almost certain that there will be instability thereafter. That is true whether it is in Zimbabwe, with the imprisonment of Robert Mugabe for so many years, the present situation where black is killing black because of the complete frustration and inability to achieve democratic change, or the history of what happened in Kenya with Kenyatta and in Cyprus with Makarios. People who were thought to be terrorists eventually had to become the leaders of their countries, and had to be treated with. It would have been better had we not had such appalling attitudes to them beforehand.

Throughout my time working in South Africa, I found black leaders impressive. It was sad that because they could not achieve their legitimate aspirations, some were assassinated before they could achieve office. One of the great problems is the loss of leadership in black Africa because of the failure on the part of whites to give way when they should and let people assume office.

Sovereignty is a confusing and difficult problem. The boundaries of many of the states in Africa are not logical, partly because they were divided 100 years ago by a convention, with the consequence that natural tribes are divided between countries. That in itself causes instability.

Unless one addresses that problem, and looks at pan-Africanism and what one might do in terms of sovereignty, there will continue to be difficulties.

Which policies might have some effect? The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) legitimately, emotionally and properly expressed moral outrage. I feel exactly the same moral outrage, but it is not a policy or a strategy. It will not bring about change.

The recent history of Zimbabwe shows that the thought that sanctions could bring down Rhodesia was a falsity. Countries under such pressure will consider what might be done from outside and plan for sanctions. That will certainly be true of South Africa. There is no way that sanctions imposed by Britain alone would be effective. If sanctions are to have any chance of being effective, there must be unanimity on the part of the European Community and the United States. Unless the hon. Gentleman believes that that is possible, he is displaying no more than moral outrage. I do not reject the importance of having personal standards. I will not buy produce from South Africa, but I do not pretend that my not buying such produce will bring down the regime there.

Conservative Members have asked who gets hurt by sanctions. I do not doubt that, in the short term, blacks would probably get hurt most. That is not such an important consideration in South Africa. What matters is whether the people are prepared to accept the consequences of sanctions. One of the slogans of African nationalism is that they prefer the poverty of freedom to the riches of slavery. There is no validity in the paternalistic argument that we know what is best for the African people, that we know that they will suffer and that we will therefore maintain a certain economic standard.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman is presenting a rational case and the House is grateful to him. Is he aware that Professor Schlemmer has undertaken precisely the type of survey that the hon. Gentleman is talking about? An overwhelming majority of black South Africans have stated in two surveys that they are utterly opposed to disinvestment in their country. Will the hon. Gentleman give credit to the black people for voicing their opinions through those surveys?

Mr. Meadowcroft: The flaw in the hon. Gentleman's argument is that it is illegal in South Africa to call for a boycott. People there are so aware of informers in the black and white communities that no survey could properly represent the feelings of people there. Those who have been to South Africa and felt the repression there because of paid informers would never suggest that such a survey could be accurate.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Schlemmer report is a survey of 551 male black production workers in multinational companies and that their views were thought to represent the views of more than 20 million people? If the views of the African people are to be taken into account, why are they not given a vote and a real choice rather than a public opinion survey?

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on the flaw in the argument of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). If matters are progressing so well, it is strange that the South African Government are not prepared to test it at the ballot box.

Many of us who have worked to end the apartheid system have viewed with trepidation the approaching disorder and instability that now exists. None of us wanted that, but we believed that it was inevitable. We might be seeing the beginning of the end. If that is true, I take no comfort from the fact that it is ending in this way because many people will get killed and others will get hurt in the process. Bearing in mind the concessions that have been made, the South African Government might even now realise that they cannot maintain apartheid and would like to get rid of it but cannot because they have only a white electorate. Then the paradox would be that if there were a wider franchise they could get rid of apartheid and achieve what they may already accept as inevitable. Therefore it behoves this Government to say to the South African Government with all the diplomatic force that they can bring to bear that only one immediate step can be taken which might save South Africa from a bloodbath: the release of Nelson Mandela. That step must be taken as quickly as possible. Change might then be introduced more peacefully than will otherwise be the case.

Whenever I look around the world I realise that liberty never comes easily. I sometimes wonder why we in this country believe that the liberties that we would fight for are gained easily. They are not. They are gained by a lot of sweat, struggle and toil. That will be the case in southern Africa. Those hon. Members who care deeply about the people in that country are not satisfied with moral outrage or with ritual confrontation across these Benches. We are interested in effective action. I hope the Government will bring pressure to bear by taking the kind of action that will solve this problem once and for all.

11.55 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The House will have enjoyed most of the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). He spoke a great deal of sense and brought a somewhat calmer atmosphere to the various altercations we have had on both sides of the House on southern Africa. Many hon. Members are grateful to him for the tone of his remarks. He will understand that I do not entirely agree with all that he said; however, he introduced a fresh approach to this debate, which Conservative Members welcome.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for the fact that I missed his opening speech, but I welcome him to the ranks of those who are interested in southern Africa. I hope that he will take part in future debates on this subject, because future debates there will obviously be. It is interesting that Labour Members have, as usual, turned out in force tonight, although perhaps not so many as turned out for the South Africa (Sanctions) Bill of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn). I understand that they were under a very heavy three-line Whip to attend a vote that did not take place. There are probably more Labour Members in the Chamber tonight than we have seen since the debate on the Queen's speech in 1979.

Apart from the speech of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), which was characteristically boisterous and characteristically inaccurate, I think that so far it has been a fairly sensible debate. I refer in particular to the contributions of my hon. Friends. The Leader of the Opposition, who is now on the African continent, may return with a rather deeper knowledge of that country than

[Mr. John Carlisle]

he had before he went there. He may bring to our debates some sense of experience, which Conservative Members, but not Opposition Members, are able to bring to bear.

South Africa always seems to be a fairly convenient whipping boy for Opposition Members. Understandably, they are outraged by the so-called violation of human rights in Southern Africa, just as they are outraged by the so-called violation of human rights in other parts of the world. Where we take issue with them is that, in their persistent arguments about South Africa, they rather conveniently forget what goes on elsewhere. If they showed the same passion about events in Chile, South America and behind the Iron Curtain as they show about South Africa, I think Conservative Members would accept their arguments with a little more understanding.

The argument about South Africa in this House will always be on the basis of whether or not apartheid is acceptable. We in this country believe that it is an unacceptable form of government and an unacceptable form of society. The argument is whether that system can be dismantled overnight, whether the pace of change can be dictated by the British Government or by this House, or whether the reason for the existence of that system should be understood. Before the hon. Member for Walsall, North jumps to his feet I will say again, as I have said before, that I deplore apartheid, but I understand the reason for its existence. Understanding of the system by Conservative Members will help to dismantle it in a far more humane way than will the histrionics that are so often displayed by Opposition Members.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I give way to the histrionic Member who is about to rise.

Mr. Winnick: We know the views of the hon. Member, but may I return to his earlier remarks, when he said that Labour Members were selective. Does he know of any dictatorship that I have defended? Have I not constantly criticised the regime in Chile and the junta in Argentina? Have I not criticised eastern Europe? If the hon. Gentleman knew anything about these matters, he would know that I have criticised eastern European politics in some Labour movement journals, and I shall continue to do so. The explanation is simple. I am a democratic Socialist. I favour parliamentary democracy, and I oppose dictatorships completely.

Why does not the hon. Gentleman try to answer the point I made earlier? South Africa is different, in that it is a racial tyranny. Therefore, people are penalised, not for their politics or for anything they do, but because of the colour of their skin.

Mr. Carlisle: I am an avid follower of the hon. Gentleman's career and of what he says in the House. As a keen supporter of parliamentary democracy, he will understand that, even in the parliamentary democracies that we have bequeathed to Commonwealth countries, there are systems of apartheid. In the context of South Africa having been a member of the British colonial empire, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would compare the systems that still exist in some black African and other Commonwealth countries with the one in South Africa. If he did so, I might listen to what he says with a little more understanding.

Since hon. Members know my views on the subject, I shall confine my remarks to three subjects. The first must be the reaction of the British Government and people to the events in South Africa during the past few days—events that have been vividly portrayed on television and in the press. I say immediately how sad it is to see the terrible atrocities that have taken place in South Africa, mainly — as those of us who are interested in such matters will know—of the black communities attacking other black communities; of blacks attacking their elected representatives within their communities; of blacks attacking policemen; of blacks attacking administrators; and of the terrible atrocities that have not been reported.

This afternoon, at Question Time, when I asked about the alleged cannibalism, Opposition Members were surprised. They must understand that such things are happening in the present troubles such is the depth of the problems in South Africa.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Absolute rubbish.

Mr. Carlisle: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but if he took a little more interest in the subject, he would understand that what I said was accurate.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Would my hon. Friend highlight to the House the recent statement by Bishop Tutu, who is so often quoted by Opposition Members——

Mr. Winnick: Bishop Tutu has a right to speak, unlike the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winterton: I have a right to speak in the House. I hope that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who professes to support democratic processes, will grant me that right.

Will my hon. Friend highlight the statement by Bishop Tutu, who has urged his people in South Africa to desist from violence, saying that if they continue to burn their fellow citizens in the black townships, he will be forced to leave the country because he cannot be a party to this brutality?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend is right. We welcome those words, as they were welcomed by all responsible commentators in the media this morning. My hon. Friend is the vice-chairman of the all-party British South Africa parliamentary group. It is a great shame that the Labour party has not seen fit to send any representatives to that group——

Mr. Corbyn: Is it all-party?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman must understand that the all-party Whip states that the meetings are open to all Members of the House. The fact that the Labour party chooses not to attend and not to put any officers up for election is its decision. Not many weeks ago, some black South Africans came as witnesses and they testified to the atrocities that are taking place in the eastern Cape.

Mr. Winnick: Derisory.

Mr. Carlisle: I found that their words were easier to believe than the hon. Gentleman's spurious words. He admits that he has had party political propaganda fed to him from the anti-apartheid party.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I should like to give way, but I must get on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) expressed a sentiment expressed by Mr. Harry Oppenheimer not long ago in London, which is that when hope exists, as it now does, for the black majority in South Africa, almost inevitably trouble occurs. We have the experience of America in the 1930s to prove this. There is no doubt that the position of the black in South Africa has changed considerably over the past 10 years. There are now trade unions, which there were not before. The wage gap between the blacks and whites is now much narrower than before. That hope, and the fact that some of the frustrations that existed 10 years ago are being diluted, has given a hostage to fortune for those who are intent on wrecking South African society, and have used for their own evil political means among the black community. That is why we have had the terrible black on black problems within South Africa, and it is part of the whole frustration of the system. The changes that are taking place are being encouraged by the Government.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that when people live in extreme poverty, some suffer severe pressure to be paid informers?

Therefore, it is not surprising that in such instability, some of those informers will be murdered? What is different from the situation in the north of Ireland, for instance, where people are killed because they are paid informers? How does one achieve the change that will prevent that? We must not simply say that we must apply more pressure from the top to try to repress the people still further. Someone must turn the light out from underneath, and I have heard nothing that convinces me that the hon. Gentleman is going to do something about that.

Mr. Carlisle: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has tried to broaden the argument. I shall not follow him into the subject of Northern Ireland.

I reiterate the view of Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, who is, as the hon. Gentleman will know, a persistent opponent of the South African Government. It is that the hope that now exists among the black South Africans is much greater than it was 10 years ago and the frustrations that were there then have now been alleviated. Such a situation is fertile ground for those intent on wrecking the system. That is why there are now problems in South Africa.

That is why the South African Government were inevitably forced to declare a state of emergency within those sections where the troubles have occurred. Innocent blacks — the majority of black South Africans — were finding that they could not go about their daily business as they wished. It was somewhat regrettable that the EC reacted as it did, but at least this afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary half-disassociated himself from the statement by the EC. The constitutional changes in South Africa should be applauded by the House, however inadequate Labour Members might find them.

My second point is about trade. It was heartening to hear this afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary reiterate that the Government would not engage in trade sanctions against South Africa. This argument is raging throughout the world, and a little more fuel was added to it this afternoon with the news from France. At least our Government understand that trade sanctions do not work; here I reiterate what the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) said. Secondly, they harm those whom they are intended to benefit. I recall the words of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who is not in the Chamber at present, when I intervened on a debate on Barclays bank some months ago to ask about the loss of jobs which would occur in South Africa. He said — and I paraphrase — "Some sacrifice has to be made."

I am not willing to sacrifice black jobs in South Africa on the sanctimonious basis of trade sanctions, in the same way that I am not going to sacrifice jobs in this country. I remind Opposition Members, and particularly the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who is without a tie, that some of them represent constituencies with far higher unemployment than I have in my constituency, and that some 250,000 jobs would be lost in this country if full sanctions were applied to South Africa. Those jobs would be on their heads, and if they believe that would help black South Africans, then I am somewhat saddened by their view.

There is a political bandwagon in the United States and political shenanigans are going on about sanctions, which would lead one to believe that the people involved do not understand the full implications of sanctions upon the blacks in South Africa. If sanctions happen, the implications will be on the heads of Opposition Members and not on the head of this Government, who have stood firm and I trust will continue to stand firm, on trade sanctions.

My last point of the three that I mentioned is the farce of continuing sporting sanctions against South Africa. If my hon. Friend the Minister has a chance to advise the Prime Minister before she goes to the Commonwealth conference in the Bahamas in the autumn, he should tell her that if there is any way in which the innocuous Gleneagles agreement—[HON. MEMBERS: "Innocuous?"] —can be abandoned, she should take the opportunity to do so. If there is one place in South Africa where apartheid has been broken down and where integration now takes place, it is on the sports field.

It is a tragedy that we in this country, with our sense of fair play and with British sport so highly respected throughout the world, should continue non-co-operation with those in South Africa who are seeking within the laws of that country to bring sport into a fully integrated system. The courage of their sports administrators and of their sportsmen and women who are fully integrated within their own rules and associations and within the rules of society in South Africa, is admirable. The argument that we will help those so-called oppressed majorities in South Africa by staying away, is an argument I cannot accept.

The Gleneagles agreement is now beginning to bite and is doing real harm to the prospects of the blacks in South Africa. I admit that the sanctions in sport applied by the Gleneagles agreement, and sanctions taken by sporting authorities, have pushed the sports authorities in South Africa towards a fully integrated system. I have always admitted that. But there comes a time when the carrot must replace the stick, but now the goalposts have been moved, and for political reasons we are not engaging in sport with South Africa.

The conditions of the Gleneagles agreement about organised sport on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin no longer exist. It is highly immoral of the British Government to continue such a policy when those

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conditions no longer prevail in South Africa. I hope my right hon. Friend will take that message to the Prime Minister and to those in authority.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlisle: No, I will certainly not give way to that hon. Gentleman.

We should offer South Africa and the black, the coloured, the Indian and the white South African some sort of understanding and encouragement. I regret to say that the weasel words of Opposition Members will strike terror into the hearts of many black South Africans. If we are to make a positive contribution, and if we believe in the dismantling of apartheid and that one day everyone in South Africa should enjoy an equal franchise, we should take encouragement from the changes that have taken place. That is why the argument of Conservative Members is that we should offer encouragement and co-operation.

12.15 am

Mr. Dennis Healey (Leeds, East): Like other hon. Members, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for giving us the opportunity to discuss a matter which clearly arouses strong feelings on both sides of the House and for his excellent speech.

Like the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), I regret that the speeches of Conservative Members have so far represented only a single strain in the attitudes of their party. They regard the Government's policy as being too liberal in many respects and do not reflect the much more far-sighted strain that was represented by, for example, Mr. Iain Macleod, the Earl of Stockton and Lord Carrington.

To save Conservative Members the trouble of intervening, I should say that I have visited South Africa and most parts of Africa, north, east and west. When I was in South Africa I met Ministers in the then Government, representatives of all communities, Gatsha Buthelezi and Nelson Mandela in prison on Robben island. I also had what I regard as the great privilege of spending a day with Steve Biko, a young man of exceptional political and human qualities who, a few years later, was beaten to a pulp in a South African gaol, thrown naked like a dog into the back of a truck and driven 200 miles over bumpy roads to a hospital where he died.

If Conservative Members had more feeling for those who have opposed apartheid, their speeches would be different from those that we have heard tonight.

We are witnessing in South Africa an historic tragedy which is in not its final but its penultimate stages. Just over a year ago, the South African Prime Minister left Britain after a visit that was described in *The Times* as a diplomatic triumph for him, and an unmitigated disaster for the blacks in South Africa.

The British press told us that our Prime Minister had taken Mr. Botha to task, but his Foreign Secretary, Mr. Pik Botha, said:

"If that is what she is like when she is taking you to task, then I would like to see her when she is friendly."

That is not the Maggie we know. My impression from talking to Conservative Members is that when the right hon. Lady disapproves of someone she makes her views crystal clear. But there is no doubt that Mr. Botha left these shores with a different impression from that which the Prime Minister tried to convey to the House about his visit.

The right hon. Lady told us that we should expect significant improvements in South African behaviour following the visit, if not as a result of it. Let us look at how Prime Minister Botha rewarded her. Almost his first act was a slap in the face. He broke a solemn commitment to send four South African agents to stand trial for breaking the law in Britain, even though his embassy in London had put up bail of £400,000. The only reaction of the British Government was some verbal whingeing from a junior Minister at the Foreign Office.

Meanwhile, in Mr. Botha's own part of the world, he sent his troops to invade a friendly Commonwealth country and to carry out a massacre in Gabarone, he sent troops to invade Angola after saying that he was withdrawing all his troops from that country, he sent special forces to blow up an American installation in northern Angola and he sabotaged the United Nations resolution on Namibia by setting up a puppet Government there in straight violation of the policy that he had promised to pursue.

Inside South Africa's own borders, what have we seen in the last 12 months? Mr. Botha has presided over the killing of 500 blacks, often shot in the back or beaten up by police in balaclava helmets. All hon. Members deplore some of the atrocities which have been referred to, but the fact is that this whole terrible cycle started with the massacre at Uitenhage, in which a young officer was allowed to fire at people who were offering no provocation whatever, as was later demonstrated in an inquiry. We have also seen the death squads murdering the political opponents of the regime, and finally we have seen the declaration of emergency which has established a storm-trooper state in which the agents of the Government are licensed to kill without fear of legal retribution.

These are very serious developments, and it is not surprising that they have produced reactions in South Africa and in the rest of the world. Indeed, the wind of change, to which an earlier Conservative Prime Minister referred in a famous speech in South Africa, has now become a hurricane.

One of the most disturbing things I have read recently is the findings of the survey by an institute sponsored by the South African Government themselves. It reported that a majority of the South African people now react positively to using violence as a means of political change. That majority includes 63 per cent., nearly two thirds, of the blacks in South Africa and, surprisingly, I expect, to all hon. Members, 30 per cent. of the whites and somewhere between 30 and 50 per cent. of the Asians and coloureds.

These are facts which we cannot shut out of our minds. Much as I appreciated, if I may say so, the thoughtful speech of the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), who made a classical case for a Conservative approach to the problem with moderation and some insight, the plain fact is that the situation which I have just described is one to which this type of Conservativism has become totally irrelevant.

As has been pointed out, we in this House have a long historic connection with South Africa, and we have a moral responsibility, though no political responsibility, for the welfare of the people there; and the real question we must face is this. Is there anything which we can do which

may slow down or divert this accelerating race to catastrophe in South Africa, or must we, as the Foreign Secretary implied in his speech last night, rely wholly on Mr. Botha's good will? I do not think, in the light of what has happened in the last 12 months, that anybody can honestly expect the situation to improve without external intervention in some form.

I want to suggest, without total confidence that this will be effective, some measures which I believe must be tried, and which the Security Council, in a resolution which the British Government did not oppose, has already asked all countries to consider immediately. Indeed, as I understand it, the British Goverment had a hand in drafting the resolution, although at the last moment they would not vote for it.

The Security Council asked all countries to consider immediate voluntary measures to try to shift the policy of the South African Government. In my opinion, what we in Britain should immediately do would include the following five steps. The first would be to withdraw our ambassador from South Africa. That does not mean withdrawing the embassy or ceasing all contact with the South African Government. Withdrawing our ambassador is a sign of displeasure, as President Reagan has already done, and as France announced today that it is doing.

Secondly, we should ban all new loans and investment, as France has now decided to do and as the American Congress—both Houses—has decided should be done by the United States. I believe that President Reagan will find it impossible to avoid doing so in the coming weeks.

Thirdly, we should make compulsory the Community code of conduct for European—including British—firms in South Africa. A voluntary code of conduct will not be effective. We have seen that already in the behaviour of the British BTR company, which has been found guilty by the International Confederaton of Free Trade Unions and the TUC of paying starvation wages to its employees in South Africa.

Fourthly, we must tighten the arms embargo to shut off the scope for the supply of licences for spare parts and components for a whole range of aircraft that could be used for military purposes—a loophole that has been opened by the new Export of Goods (Control) Order that comes into force tomorrow.

Finally, the Government must begin to establish informal contact with the African National Congress, as they have already done with the PLO. The case is similar. It is inconsistent of the Government to ask the South African Government to release Nelson Mandela, who has refused to forswear the use of force, and at the same time to use the ANC's commitment to force when necessary as an argument for having no contact with it.

Against that background of unilateral measures—many of which I freely admit will be symbolic rather than practical—we must begin seriously discussing what sort of United Nations mandatory sanctions it would be sensible to introduce if and when that proves to be necessary.

Mr. John Carlisle: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the Government have always insisted that they have contact with the UDF, who have close contact with the ANC, much to the dismay of some of my hon. Friends. Does he agree that if such contact were to be continued, it would be better with the UDF rather than with the ANC, which has declared publicly within the past 48 hours on British radio that it intends by violent means to attack what it calls soft targets and is committed to revolutionary change in South Africa? Will he not give the Government some credit for at least having a line to the UDF, if not to the ANC?

Mr. Healey: Of course I give the Government some credit. They are steadily forced back by events and public opinion in what I regard as the right direction. I am glad that they are establishing contact with the UDF. However, they should also establish contact with the ANC. The Minister is well aware of the distinction in Israel between PLO representatives and people close to the PLO who are not members of it and with whom we have always maintained contact, such as the mayors of some of the villages on the west bank.

I do not think that contact with the UDF is an adequate substitute for contact with the key people in the ANC. I do not ask the Prime Minister to invite Oliver Tambo to Chequers next week—perhaps next year—but contact at an official level with these people would be desirable. We had such contact in the final stages of many colonial episodes, as Conservative Members will know, such as Rhodesia, Kenya, Cyprus and many other parts of the world.

The Foreign Secretary addressed himself to these problems in a notable speech last night and he repeated some of the points he then made in answering questions in the House this afternoon. His basic argument—it has been made by some Conservative Members in this debate—is that all economic sanctions are counter-productive and are bound to fail in their purpose.

To the amazement of many of us, the right hon. and learned Gentleman quoted the failure of sanctions against Rhodesia. Of course they failed. Because the South African Government acted as a free conduit for supplies from all over the world to Rhodesia, sanctions in that case never had a chance.

The Government are selective in their approach to sanctions. They imposed sanctions against Poland to influence the internal situation there. To do so in the case of South Africa, it is said, would be contary to international law. The Government are at this momemt applying sanctions against Nicaragua by instructing their officials in Washington and elsewhere to block economic assistance to Nicaragua from international institutions such as the IMF and the various ancillaries of the International Bank by confecting false reasons for refusing assistance. The House knows that because of the honesty of a junior official in the Overseas Development Administration who has since been sacked for his honesty.

Let us not forget that we imposed sanctions against Iran following the taking of American hostages. Those sanctions were certainly effective because the freeze on Iranian financial assets was a key issue in the release of the hostages. The final negotiations about the unfreezing of those assets clinched the deal and led to their release. The Government's arguments against sanctions against South Africa are contradicted by their own behaviour now and in recent years.

If we do not start by taking at least the minimal measures that I have listed, we shall not only be failing in our political and human duty, but we shall be isolating ourselves from our friends all over the world.

Mr. Robert Hughes: My right hon. Friend said that sanctions against Rhodesia had failed. Although I agree

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

that sanctions by themselves did not bring an end to UDI, does he accept that if there had been full diplomatic recognition of Rhodesia, with totally free access of arms, finance and so on, the war would have been prolonged significantly?

Mr. Healey: I agree with my hon. Friend .

I come to the problem of Britain's isolation on this issue. The Prime Minister will meet her fellow Commonwealth Prime Ministers at a conference in the Bahamas in October. Every other Commonwealth country supports economic sanctions against South Africa. The white Commonwealth countries—Australia, Canada and New Zealand — have already announced types of sanctions, including many of the measures that I have suggested. The Third-world members of the Commonwealth pressed for that at a meeting in London, at which the British Government were the only dissenter from a communiqué published only last week. There is growing support for sanctions in Europe. The Scandinavian countries already impose them; France announced today that it is imposing them; and there is not the slightest doubt that other European countries, particularly the Netherlands, and probably Germany, will follow.

In the United States, too, sanctions are already being applied, although not yet by the Government. Most of the big banks have already decided to stop new loans to South Africa and are trying to disengage from their activities there, as are a couple of British banks; Standard Chartered bank has already got rid of its majority holding in its subsidiary in South Africa. A growing number of businesses in the United States and large multinationals are trying to disengage from South Africa, as are many public authorities, including New York. Both Houses of Congress have recently voted resolutions urging the imposition of economic sanctions. A conference will be held between them in the next few weeks to try to compose their differences. It would be remarkable if President Reagan chose to veto their agreed resolution.

The Government do not have a leg to stand on with their present policy. I respect the hopes that the Government entertained — although I never agreed with them — of constructive engagement with South Africa. However, the South African Government have already made a mockery of those hopes. The policy of constructive engagement lies in shambles. The Government have a clear duty to play an active role in shaping events in southern Africa, so far as that is possible for outsiders, as that is the only hope of avoiding a catastrophe which I believe hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to avoid.

12.36 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I shall endeavour to be brief. I do not have a prepared speech and I hope to speak from my experience of visiting South Africa and Namibia on a number of occasions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Who paid?"] My entry in the Register of Members' Interests will provide Labour Members with all the information that they require.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winterton: I shall not give way.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Winterton: I found the speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to be extremely negative. I shall comment on the constructive and useful speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). His contribution was thoughtful and positive and I believe that it will be heeded by the media and the press in the Republic of South Africa and elsewhere. I am interested that he and the leader of his party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), have advanced the proposition that the present chaos, riots and disorder in South Africa, which have necessitated emergency powers, might be defused if the South African Government released Nelson Mandela unconditionally. I hold reservations about that and I am not sure what dangerous precedent it might set.

However, if the South African Government believed that Nelson Mandela's release could be a useful initiative, I should not discourage them from taking it. There is no doubt that Nelson Mandela holds an important place in the eyes of many of the South African blacks. If he were released from prison, he might feature as one of the major black leaders with whom the South African Government could enter into negotiations and discussions to seek a way for the black majority people of South Africa to have a meaningful input into the Government of that country.

My message in this important debate—I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for initiating it — is that the Government of South Africa should consider seriously the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela. It is a possible initiative which could be acceptable to the black people and enable them, as it were, to enter into meaningful discussions.

I am sad that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East with his considerable experience of many areas of the world, including South Africa and Africa as a continent did not mention the plea of Bishop Tutu, the Anglican bishop of Johannesburg. He has spoken to his people in a loud and clear voice. He has said, "Please stop the violence. Please stop the killing. This no way to make progress in our country." I have been an outspoken critic of the bishop, but having sought to read everything that he has said, it seems that he has said to the Government of South Africa, "I am not at this time in support of disinvestment in my country. I believe that our Government deserve a breathing space of about two years to follow through even faster the reforms that they are introducing. If no meaningful progress has been made at the end of that period, I may support sanctions and boycotts which will bring great suffering to the majority of the black people."

Mr. Healey: I made it clear that I opposed the sort of atrocities that were recently carried out in South Africa. Of course, I endorse the appeal by Bishop Tutu. I think that thousands of people would be more interested if Conservative Members were less selective in quoting Bishop Tutu's words. They have not quoted his appeal to the South African Government to end the state of emergency, his blistering attack on apartheid and his appeal to the Government to end the pass laws and the most serious elements of apartheid and to give the blacks the political freedoms to which human beings all over the

world are entitled. When the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is prepared to endorse all that Bishop Tutu says, I will be more impressed by his choise of quotations.

Mr. Winterton: I do not think that Bishop Tutu would expect me to agree with everything that he says; likewise, I am sure that he would not agree with everything that I say. Bishop Tutu has made a plea for an end to the killing. I hope that his people in the black townships of the eastern Cape and eastern Rand heed him and that the restoration of peace will lead to the rapid return to the reforms that Mr. P. W. Botha, the President, was introducing.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Winterton: I shall not give way now, but I shall be happy to give way in a moment when I have developed my arguments.

It is sad that the House, the United States and the European Community Foreign Ministers seek to impose a European system of democracy on an African country. I want the system of apartheid to end. I say that unreservedly, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). I must say as well—hon. Members will not like me for this—that I do not believe that, in my lifetime or, indeed, in the history of the Republic of South Africa, there will be a system of one man, one vote in a unitary state. I do not believe that it will work. Africa's history shows that it will not.

We need look just north of South Africa to see Zimbabwe rapidly moving towards a one-party state. It is based on a tribal system. Mr. Mugabe and the majority Mashona people are determined that their way will be that country's way. The 20 per cent. who are represented by the Ndebele people will not have any meaningful say in the Government.

That is the history of government in north, east, west, central and southern Africa. I want an end to the abhorrent system of separate development, but I do not believe that the system that will replace it will be a one man, one vote system in a unitary state. I believe that South Africa will move towards a democracy under a constellation of states with common purposes in foreign affairs, defence and economics. Within meaningful state areas however, there will be a one man, one vote system.

I regret the fact that the recommendations of the Buthelezi commission have not been taken on board by the Government of the Republic. When I was there earlier this year I think that many of the white South Africans in Durban felt that Durban would form a major part of a Zulu state in South Africa under the dynamic and inspired leadership of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. He is one of the many leaders of the black people of South Africa who have been to many countries speaking on behalf of their people.

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi speaks on behalf of the largest black group in South Africa. He is perhaps the most important political figure there. I speak of him in his capacity as president of Inkata which is a political movement that crosses the ethnic groups of Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Sotho and Tswana. He is the president of the largest black political group in South Africa, and is strongly opposed to disinvestment in his country. Should we not listen to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi? Surely he has a part to play as he is expressing a view representative of many people in South Africa.

If one does not accept what Chief Gatsha Buthelezi says, what about the most fervent Liberals there, some of whom have already been mentioned? Mr. Harry Oppenheimer for example, has for decades opposed the Afrikaans Boer Administration in Pretoria and Cape Town, and given tremendous support to the move to end apartheid and separate development. Alan Paton and Mrs. Helen Suzman have also been mentioned. Those people, who are widely respected throughout the world, have stated that in their experience of their country and Africa, disinvestment will not be of benefit to South Africa or bring about the changes that we all wish to see.

Do not the right hon. Member for Leeds, East and others who are critical of the stance of some of my colleagues and me, accept that, despite the fact that the Portuguese have left Angola, there is no democracy there? When was an election held in Angola? Yet is Angola recognised by the United Nations? Of course it is. When was an election held in Mozambique? None has ever been held there. Where is the democratic system about which the right hon. Gentleman boasts, and which he seeks to force on South Africa? The right hon. Gentleman should look at Africa through the eyes of Africans, not Europeans. The only reason why Dos Santos and the MPLA are in control of Angola is that they happened to be in Luanda on a particular date in November some years ago. If Jonas Savimbi had been there that day, he would probably be in power in Angola.

I ask the House to look at the true position realistically, not from a view tainted by international politics, which in the end does not solve the problems facing the world. I referred to Zimbabwe, and to South Africa as an African country. Please let us deal with that country from an African standpoint, not a European one.

The United Kingdom Government are taking an extremely constructive stance over South Africa. We may be one of only a few countries who are standing out against the trendy popular view at present, but that does not make us wrong. Nor did it make Winston Churchill wrong when, in the House, he stood out against disarmament, which was a popular policy at the time with both the Labour party and some Conservative Members. He was almost a lone voice in the wilderness, but none the less he stood by his belief. With hindsight was he not proved right?

Mr. Rogers: Is the hon. Gentleman attempting to equate his position on South Africa with that of Winston Churchill on Nazi Germany? When he asks my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to listen to the views of Bishop Tutu and to speak to him about development of South Africa, is he prepared to ask the same of the South African Government, who have paid for his many trips to South Africa?

Mr. Winterton: That is cheap.

Mr. Rogers: It is not cheap. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would come clean with the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a very long intervention.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point, and he must resume his seat.

Mr. Winterton: Because of the hon. Gentleman's provocative intervention, I am tempted to be immodest and to say that I leave history to judge that. But, as I said

[Mr. Winterton]

at the beginning of my speech, my involvement in, and the visits that I have paid to, Namibia and South Africa are properly registered in the Register of Members' Interests in accordance with the resolution of this House. I do not need to go into any further detail this evening.

I ask Opposition Members to consider and comment upon the reforms that have taken place in South Africa under the initiatives taken by the state President — previously the Prime Minister of the Republic—and his Government.

There are now coloured trade unions, mixed trade unions and black trade unions. They are recognised and are part of the industrial scene of the Republic of South Africa. I wonder whether in all the countries of Eastern Europe there is the freedom of labour that there now in the Republic of South Africa.

We should also appreciate the housing reforms that have taken place. Freehold rights will shortly be granted to blacks living in such major cities as Alexandria, Soweto and elsewhere. That is a major change. I am sure that the leader of the Liberal party would agree that inevitably that must ultimately lead to the complete destruction of the whole system of apartheid.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The point is—and I discussed this with Mrs. Suzman during her visit last week—that the advances that the hon. Gentleman accurately describes are confined to certain restricted areas. That is not true of other countries.

Mr. Winterton: I think the right hon. Gentleman means other parts of South Africa. But I believe that the reforms that are now taking place will inevitably lead to free movement within South Africa, just as I believe that the industrial needs and economic growth of that country are also contributing to a very marked extent to the breaking up of the system of separate development. Industry in that country needs skilled labour, and that cannot be provided by white South Africans. It is therefore inevitable that the other population groups will play an increasing part in the industrial and commercial life of that country.

There are many other areas where reforms have taken place. Forced removals have been suspended. In fact, they were suspended about the time that I visited South Africa earlier this year. That should be welcomed in this country.

The improved powers granted to black local government should also be welcomed. The additional money now being spent on the education of blacks in South Africa should be welcomed. The increased training of blacks, coloureds and Asians within South African industry clearly indicates that the system of apartheid will shortly end, and I am delighted at that.

Powers have been assumed by the South African Government because of the riots and disorder that have taken place in 36 of the 300 magisterial areas. The sooner those powers are ended, the better. But they cannot be ended until order has been restored. These powers are as much for the benefit of the law-abiding black, coloured and Indian citizens of the Republic of South Africa as they are in the interests of the Government. The Government have a duty to try to ensure law and order so that all people in that country can go about their work and other activities in the way that they would wish.

I also point out that South Africa is of considerable importance to the Western world. It is the only country on the African continent with deep-sea port facilities for Western shipping. All the other ports are used by the growing Soviet navy which operates in the Atlantic and the Pacific.

We should also not forget that, irrespective of the views of a minority in the Union of South Africa, as it then was, that country was a great supporter of the United Kingdom and the free world in the Second World War.

Before I finish, I wish to correct something that was said by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East relating to the inauguration of the transitional Government of National Liberty in Namibia. I find it extraordinary that this initiative mounted by the internal political parties of every political persuasion in Namibia should be condemned by the right hon. Gentleman. Mr. Shipanga of the SWAPO Democrats, is a leading Minister in this new transitional Government, which in no way impedes the implementation in due course of United Nations Security Council resolution 435. The politicians who are party to the internal Government of Namibia have made clear that they do not want total power because they do not wish in any way to go against resolution 435. They want that resolution implemented in due course and internationally supervised elections.

Is the right hon. Gentleman fair when he condemns this grouping of independent internal parties under such people as Andreas Shipanga? He was a founder member of SWAPO with Sam Nujoma. His only crime was that he suggested to Mr. Nujoma the Mr. Nujoma might care to stand for election as Leader of SWAPO, as a result of which he was imprisoned, and only after two and a half years did he win his release. He was then returned to his country to set up, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, the SWAPO Democrats and participate in the internal affairs of that country. Mr. Moses Katjiuongua, the president of the South-West African National Union, a party which existed before SWAPO was even formed, has himself been in prison and has opposed South Africa from the year dot. These men are part of the new Government, which I hope will be an interim internal Government of national unity seeking to bring a country — which is four times in geographical terms the size of the United Kingdom and which has a population of 1 million people—towards evolutionary independence ultimately, with internationally supervised elections. I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether that is something that he really can deplore.

Mr. Healey: I think this is one issue on which I happen to agree with the present British Government and the American Administration, both of whom have condemned the setting up of this puppet Government.

Mr. Winterton: I am not sure the word "condemned" has come from the mouth of the British Minister. I believe that the British Government have said that in their view the Government in question are null and void. *[Interruption.]* Well, politicians use language that is often considered one way by one group and another way by others. I do not consider that that is a robust condemnation by the British Government. Certainly it does not amount to recognition, but I do not believe that it is a condemnation, either. I say to the right hon. Gentleman that I believe that the example set in Namibia, if it is successful, could when order has been restored in the

Republic of South Africa, be an example to follow, and set a faster rate of progress in South Africa. I say publicly that I wish every success to the new transitional Government of national unity that is operating from Windhoek in Namibia. I hope that what goes on in that country will be an example to the rest of the African continent.

South Africa is a country important to the prosperity and stability of the whole of southern Africa. The African continent is vital to the free world. Let us try to encourage South Africa to make the necessary progress so that the abhorent system of separate development—apartheid—can be brought to an end as soon as possible. But let us not bring about a system whereby all the peoples of southern Africa are plunged into chaos, and the country into disorder. If we do, we shall be criticised in the years that lie ahead. We have a heavy responsibility at this time.

I am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I hope that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will not think that I am treating him too harshly when I say that when he appeared to be comparing himself with Winston Churchill, he reminded me more of the period when Winston Churchill was opposing the inevitable in India than when he was dealing with Nazi Germany. The inevitable cannot be avoided in South Africa. If Harold Macmillan did not succeed almost a quarter of a century ago in persuading Conservative Members that the wind of change was making an impression, the events of the past few weeks in particular make it clear that South Africa is heading in a different direction from the one that appears to appeal to Conservative Members.

I was particularly pleased that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) intervened to say that the quotations from Bishop Tutu were selective. That was especially right in view of the fact that his enthronment address when he was installed as the Bishop of Johannesburg was word by word and line by line, an utter condemnation of almost every expression of opinion that we have heard from Conservative Members in the debate.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was successful in obtaining the debate. As usual he made an excellent speech. It was lucid and appealed to the House. When Conservative Members were asking him whether he had been to South Africa, I thought that my hon. Friend showed particular tolerance. I look forward to the time when he speaks in his normal role as Front Bench spokesman on housing matters, and when he in turn asks Conservative Members when they last saw a council house or visited a council estate.

Nevertheless, my hon. Friend spoke with great authority. I was particularly pleased when he referred to the article in *The Times* about Nelson Mandela. It told us a great deal about Mandela and South Africa, the man and his aspirations, and his love for South Africa, when he talked about the beauty of the city of Johannesburg and even about the role of the whites in the future of South Africa. That is a man who loves his country and who should not be in prison. He should be given the opportunity to express his ideas, which are much more representative of the future than those reflected in the British Government's policies.

In the article there was a most moving message from Mandela in prison, when he said to his fellow citizens:

"Your freedom and mine cannot be separated."

That is true of South Africa in the context of the rest of the world.

We cannot be complacent about human rights, human dignity and progress for mankind if we have the blot of South Africa on the international landscape. In spite of the examples of America, France and the EC which have been given today, we have had a tepid response from the Government. That is especially astonishing in view of South Africa's record in respect of Commonwealth countries. What about Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana? Did the British Government offer solidarity with those countries when faced with provocation from South Africa? No. We urged them to sign treaties to comply with South African demands. The invasion of Botswana is outrageous and has not been condemned sufficiently by the Prime Minister or any other Ministers.

We have been asked to judge the record of the South African regime this evening. The hon. Member for Macclesfield asked us especially eloquently to do so. I should like to refer to a compelling letter that appeared in the *Glasgow Herald* of 9 July, signed by the high commissioner for Botswana. Of South Africa he said:

"Their recent activities in the region and their pressures on Botswana indicate that they now want from Botswana more than a commitment to our well-known policy of good neighbourliness. They now want Botswana, through the use of their overwhelming military force, if necessary, to commit itself, by treaty, to be co-opted in the enforcement of apartheid in South Africa and the perpetuation of colonialism in Namibia."

The letter described the invasion thus:

"The so-called 'ANC operators' killed in the raid were: a 60-year-old man who had emigrated from South Africa in the early 1950s and was a temporary resident; a 71-year-old South African man who came to Botswana in 1981 to spend the remaining days of his life in peace and freedom in exile; a 47-year-old refugee businessman and his social worker wife who worked for our Ministry of Local Government and Lands; a refugee student at the University of Botswana who had fled the country to avoid the military draft; a musician; and a secondary school teacher who had just graduated from university in Nigeria and a South African student visiting relatives in Botswana. The rest were a six-year-old child from Lesotho, two Botswana housekeepers and a Dutch citizen of Somali origin working for a computer company, all of whom may never have heard about the ANC."

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is in order for Conservative Members to use the Government's facilities to obtain statistics and information from the civil servants? My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) raised this matter recently with Mr. Speaker. If there is to be a connection between the British Government and the Government of South Africa through that Box, it is a travesty of democracy——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter was indeed raised. Mr. Speaker gave his ruling and I ask the hon. Gentleman to refresh his memory of it. The civil servants in the Box are there to advise Ministers.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate will end at 1.48. The Minister who is to reply to the debate would like to begin his speech at 1.30. These interruptions mean that hon. Members who have been sitting throughout the debate will not be called.

Mr. Clarke: I realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that time is not on my side.

[Mr. Clarke]

The state of emergency in South Africa means that violence and injustice prevail. More and more power has been given to the police and army chiefs. To those hon. Members who argue that this was inevitable I put this question: why has Mr. Botha gone out of his way to brief the press and ask them to take the view that the state of emergency was forced upon him by the police and the military? Powers which are absolutely disgraceful and indefensible have been taken: the power of arrest and detention, the power to supervise free journalists, and the power to police

"including the right to use force resulting in death."

People do not even have the right to disclose the name of a detainee without official permission. If they do, they have to accept that it is a crime.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East was right to remind the House that Britain is in grave danger of becoming isolated. We have ignored the United Nations, the Commonwealth and those countries whose commitment to democracy is at least as great as ours. They have taken action to bring to South Africa's attention the repugnance that is felt by all.

Notwithstanding the atrocious record of the South African Government and the determination of all civilised people to put an end to apartheid, there are hon. Members who offer apologies and excuses and who make speeches in an effort to defend the indefensible. But it will be impossible to defeat the progress of the human spirit. Injustice in South Africa will be defeated. Ultimately justice will prevail.

1.13 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) made a speech, as did other Opposition Members, which, if one were a stranger from another planet listening to this debate from the Strangers Gallery, would lead him to believe that the whole world is like this country and that all the debates that take place throughout the world are like ours. Anybody who knows anything about the world realises that in many respects this country is unique. The way in which we can debate issues in this Chamber is unique.

Equally, this stranger would look at the world and realise that South Africa, like many other parts of the world, faces tribal problems. The difference between South Africa and many other parts of the world is that one can tell the difference between the tribes by the colour of their skins. But is that not true of other parts of the world? It is true of the Indian subcontinent, of the south American continent and of large parts of south-east Asia. One can tell the difference because of their different appearance and because of the religions that they practise. We have to ask ourselves whether we are pretending to ourselves or whether we are prepared to look at the world as it really is. Only a tiny minority of the world's population enjoys democracy. More than four fifths of the member states of the United Nations are not democracies.

If we are to make any attempt to understand the problems of southern Africa—problems which, like so many others, began as accidents of history—we must show tolerance and accept that regimes exist which are unpalatable by our standards and values. Regardless of our political positions, all hon. Members support democracy, freedom and free speech.

We know that the world at large is not like that. most of us abhor the administration in southern Africa. Few of us would compliment it or wish to have any association with it. I am sorry that the right hon. Member from the borders is not here. Since I am advised that he would not recognise me, I shall refrain from remembering his constituency. It was interesting to note that the right hon. Gentleman entered the Chamber during our debate for only a few minutes. Since he has recently spent some time in that part of the world, one would have hoped that he would have spent more time in this Chamber of democracy and made a positive attempt to do something about the matter, but he did not. *[Interruption.]* He has such a poor memory that he has probably forgotten what he saw there. He cannot even remember hon. Members who come to the Chamber every day.

If Opposition Members genuinely believe, as they claim, that it is right for the Scottish tribe to have its own homeland and its elected assembly in Edinburgh, why is it wrong for the Benda tribe to have its homeland? I make no apology for being a member of the Scottish tribe. I do not understand these double standards. Apparently for good political reasons north of the border, it is right to have a Scottish tribal conclave and a Scottish Assembly. However, they do not believe that it is right for the Benda nation.

Hon. Members delude themselves and the rest of the world if they believe that the House can provide a solution to the problems of southern Africa, because they are complicated and difficult problems that were created by accidents of history. However, we cannot escape the fact tht Britain is a manufacturing nation. We must purchase vital minerals for the manufacture of essential goods. Whether we like it or not, 98 per cent. of those essential minerals are in southern Africa or south-west Africa or under the control of the USSR. Those minerals are necessary for the manufacture of high-grade steel and alloys. If, as Opposition Members suggest, we did not buy those minerals, the effect on Britain would be far greater than the effects of the problems with OPEC.

The OPEC problems would shrink into insignificance in comparison. One cannot manufacture all the modern appliances that we manufacture and sell abroad without these essential minerals, and we could not have the avionics, aviation and shipping industries or most of the equipment used by our armed forces if these essential minerals were not available to us.

Instability in southern Africa cannot be in the best interests of the manufacturing nations of the West. The problems in South Africa now should remind us that it is one of the few countries in Africa that has not had a coup in the past 50 years. Nearly every other country has had a change of administration that did not take place under the normal process that one would expect.

That being so, we have to ask ourselves whether the speeches that we make inflame a difficult situation or help it. If it is the former, one should be careful about the speeches that one makes. We feel that way about the speeches that some politicians from other countries make about Northern Ireland, which we know inflame the situation there unnecessarily. Is it not also possible that if we take the licence that our freedom allows us — *[Interruption.]* I am not telling individuals that they should not make such speeches. I am saying that they should think

carefully before doing so. There is a difference between saying that one should not do something, and saying that one should think carefully before doing so.

With democracy come certain conditions that should be recognised. One is that one is required to apply oneself sensibly in a way that will not unnecessarily damage others. *[Interruption.]* I do not find that funny.

I make no apology for the situation in southern Africa, because history shows that these things evolve slowly. The white tribe is in control. It has control that allows freedoms, and greater freedoms than I found in other parts of Africa. I am not talking about military control. We should think carefully before we do things that inflame the difficult situation, and we should apply tolerance.

1.23 am

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I have only seven minutes tonight; at least I had 10 when I moved my South Africa (Sanctions) Bill a couple of weeks ago. Some of the things that have been said tonight are appalling. They have not taken account of what has been happening in southern Africa. I have not been to South Africa, and I shall tonight be quoting not only from people who have been there but from people who live there and are representatives of the people there.

The way that Bishop Tutu's words have been taken out of context is appalling. I shall quote what he said in St. Paul's cathedral, when he gave a lecture. He said:

"Ensure that your country exerts political, diplomatic, but, above all, economic pressure on the South African Government to persuade it to go to the conference table at a National Convention with the authentic leaders of all sections of our community, and for us blacks, it would mean the real leaders now in jail or in exile."

That speech has been published.

The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) said that I had a three-line Whip for the Bill, which I had the pleasure to introduce in the House a couple of weeks ago. The contrary is the position. I was heartened to speak to many Conservatives, some of whom wrote to the anti-apartheid movement saying they would be supporting the Bill, and quite a number said that they would not be prepared to go through the Lobby with certain elements on the Conservative side who were opposed to that.

Those elements have formed the voice of the Conservative party in this debate, and one could say it is a hard, Right-wing voice. It is a pity that a distortion of the Conservative party has come through in the debate. A number of people in the United Kingdom in all political parties would agree on the rejection of apartheid. The Government have adopted a platitudinous attitude and are taking no positive action. At Question Time today, the Foreign Secretary clearly underlined the position of the Government on the matter of constructive engagement.

The matter of Nelson Mandela and the ANC has been raised forcefully in the debate. For many years, Nelson Mandela and the ANC took exactly the course of trying to start a dialogue with the South African authorities. The abrupt end came in the 1960 massacre in Sharpeville. That was then the ANC and Nelson Mandela, together with his colleagues, said, "Enough is enough. We cannot tolerate the situation any longer." The ANC tried desperately for years to engage in a dialogue with the authorities, and it was the massacre of 69 people which drove Mandela and the ANC to take the decisions they did.

Some 25 years ago, a state of emergency was imposed in South Africa after the actions of the security forces in Sharpeville. The ANC was banned in 1961. Comments on constructive engagement have been made in the last 12 months by the *Financial Times*. They were made just after President Botha embarked on a tour of European capitals. In April, the *Financial Times* said:

"Barely one year ago President P. W. Botha embarked on a tour of European capitals to explain changes in South Africa's domestic policies, against a background of apparent accommodation with the black states in the region.

Mr. Botha would not be welcome in European capitals today. Such credibility as he may have enjoyed has been undermined by a series of events, including last weekend's incursion by South African troops into southern Angola. At the same time, the credibility of the western powers, which have often been prepared to give Mr. Botha the benefit of the doubt, has been eroded too. Washington's policy of constructive engagement with South Africa, adopted by Mrs. Thatcher, is looking increasingly threadbare. In the United States the growing strength of the disinvestment and sanctions lobby is pushing President Reagan closer to selective action."

In conclusion, it said:

"Washington's patience has already been strained by events in Angola, where again diplomacy has taken second place to military ambitions.

Throughout this period there is scant evidence that the west's cautious diplomacy has had a deterrent or constructive effect."

I want to go briefly through the last 12 months of involvement or lack of it on the part of the British authorities and actions that have been taken in South Africa. As I said in my speech two weeks ago, the role of the British authorities in South Africa is greater than that of any other western nation. In August 1984 there occurred the detention without trial of United Democratic Front leaders prior to the coloured and Indian elections. In September 1984, the British Government refused to condemn the new constitution and was represented at the inaugural ceremony of the new state president. Also in September 1984, six leaders of the UDF sought sanctuary from detention orders in the British consulate in Durban, and British Ministers refused to meet with their representatives. In October 1984, the South African cabinet decided that four senior members who were convicted should not be returned to Britain to stand trial on arms smuggling charges in Coventry. Also in October 1984, all visits to those still in the Durban consulate were banned by the British authorities. In December 1984 the sit-in ended and those arrested were charged with high treason. They were the main UDF leaders.

In February this year, there were further arrests of UDF leaders. In March, there was the massacre in Langa on the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville killings. In April, the South African president announced that a transitional Government would be established in Namibia in defiance of United Nations resolution 485. In May, there were South African commando raids on Gulf Oil installations in Cabinda. So it goes on.

Unfortunately, time is short, but I wish to quote two important statements. We have been told about developments in the trade union movement in South Africa. A Statement issued by the South African Congress of Trade Unions said:

"The Botha-Malan Regime has imposed a naked military dictatorship on our people. The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) together with other democratic and fighting forces of our country, views this as a desperate but futile attempt to crush the democratic movement.

In the light of this situation, SACTU calls on the international Trade Union Movement to take immediate action to cut off Apartheid South Africa by:

1. Refusing to handle all maritime, air or land traffic to or from South Africa

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

2. Refusing to handle any goods to and from South Africa
3. Refusing to handle all telecommunications to or from South Africa
4. Refusing to handle all postal and telegraphic traffic to or from South Africa, and
5. Mounting massive demonstrations at all diplomatic missions representing the white minority regime abroad.

The South African Congress of Trade Unions call upon all Trade Unionists to urge the governments of their respective countries to impose immediate comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the Pretoria Regime."

We have quoted Bishop Tutu and others, and on 28 April a conference of the South African Council of Churches passed a resolution calling for disinvestment. It was drawn up not by visitors to South Africa, but by people who are there all the time. They have to live with apartheid; they do not flit off to South Africa for three or four weeks. They echo Bishop Tutu's call. The statement says:

"This conference therefore resolves:

(a) to express our belief that disinvestment and similar economic pressures are now called for as a peaceful and effective means of putting pressure on the South African government to bring about those fundamental changes this country needs.

(b) to ask our partner churches in other countries to continue with their efforts to identify and promote effective economic pressures to influence the situation in South Africa, towards achieving justice and peace in this country and minimizing the violence of the conflict;

(c) to promote fuller consideration of the issues by placing the case for the imposition of economic sanctions and disinvestment before the Executive Committee of the SACC and the Regional Councils, and the Councils of our member churches and organisations with the request that they encourage congregations to study and debate them;

(d) to ask the Executive to appoint in consultation with the Director of Justice and Reconciliation a task force to examine the whole question of economic justice as well as issues of disinvestment and economic sanctions, to review and co-ordinate the responses from the churches, and to assist the church leaders by making available to them information and analyses;

(e) to call member churches and individual christians to withdraw from participation in the economic system that oppresses the poor, by re-investing money and energy in alternative economic systems in existence in our region."

Conservative Members referred to the trade union movement, but when the movement gives its considered opinions on the crisis in South Africa, Tory Members reject those opinions. They want to have their cake and eat it. I hope that the Minister will be a little more conciliatory than some of his hon. Friends have been.

1.33 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Richard Luce): It is the end of July, the middle of the night and the middle of the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. In normal circumstances, many of us would be dropping off to sleep. However, not once in the last three hours have I felt like dropping off to sleep and, when I have looked round the Chamber, to my amazement, every hon. Member has been awake.

It has been a stimulating debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on raising an issue which is of profound importance not only to the people of South Africa and southern Africa, but to this country as well. It is, of course, an issue which raises great passions and feelings in the House, and they were expressed sincerely and strongly this evening. I believe that it has been a valuable and lively debate.

Like the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), I have travelled around the African continent a great deal and, indeed, many times to South Africa. My first job was in east Africa. I think that it is a wonderful continent, a colourful continent and a continent of great extremes—the extremes of harshness, but the extremes also of kindness and good humour. When I look back on my experience of being the Minister of State responsible for African affairs for three years, which was a great privilege, I remember in particular the Lancaster house conference on Rhodesia. I sometimes think, when I look back on that occasion, that the only basis on which we got through was the good humour of the British and of the Africans. It is a simple humour that permeates the African continent.

Apartheid casts a long shadow over Britain's relations with South Africa. Let there be no doubt about our detestation of apartheid, and all the repressive measures used to enforce it. It is contrary to all civilised values. The existence side by side of two communities—a ruling minority and a majority excluded from participation in the Government—is made doubly repugnant by the fact that the glaring inequalities between the two are founded on institutionalised racial discrimination. Such a system is basically unstable and dangerous. It makes economic nonsense. Apartheid is wasteful of resources. By putting barriers in the way of movement and opportunity, it inhibits economic growth. The South African Government know, because we have repeatedly made the point, and shall continue to do so, that the policy of apartheid is an affront to our most cherished values.

The Government have followed closely, and with deep concern, the mounting unrest in South Africa and the tragic death toll that has resulted. We have continued to condemn repression and human rights violations, and have repeatedly impressed on the South African Government the deep concern with which we view such things as forced removals and detention without trial.

What has been happening in South Africa is not simply a law and order issue. The continuing violence reflects the deep-seated frustrations of the majority of the people. We condemn violence, from whatever quarter, and we welcome the clear call from Bishop Tutu for an end to it. The declaration of a state of emergency last weekend will add to the growing numbers who languish in detention without trial or any legal recourse.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Luce: I must say to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), who had some very strong views, went over his time, and I must proceed rapidly if I am to answer the debate.

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Luce: I must answer the debate.

Such action will solve nothing. It underlines the urgency of fundamental reform.

I believe that it is not for us to prescribe solutions. This point came out in a remarkable speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), to whom I listened with the greatest care. He takes a very close

interest in that part of the world. The point came out also in a speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

We have made it clear to the South African Government that urgent progress must be made towards a system of government which commands the support of the people of South Africa as a whole. We do not dismiss the reforms introduced earlier this year. They are only a very small beginning, but they are not insignificant. I thought that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East was far too dismissive of — indeed he paid no attention to — some of the changes, however modest they may be, which are taking place. Indeed, I recall that, in the debate of 25 April, the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said very much the same thing in welcoming some of the changes.

The fundamental reforms which we all seek are still not in prospect, and such changes as have taken place have been overshadowed by repression in its ugliest form. It is, indeed, difficult to reconcile the South African Government's call at the beginning of the year for a wider dialogue with their subsequent action in arresting many of those whom black South Africans regard as their leaders.

We and our partners in Europe have issued an urgent call for the Government of South Africa to begin a dialogue with the genuine representatives of the non-white community, which will deal with the fundamental question of black political aspirations. We have called on them to take certain steps that we believe would create an atmosphere of confidence for such a dialogue. Those steps should be, first, the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other acknowledged political leaders. I noted with interest that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) advocated that. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield said that that could be helpful to the climate in South Africa. There was some disagreement from my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle).

Secondly, there should be an end to forced removals. Then there should be an end to detention without trial, then an early end to the state of emergency, then the progressive abolition of discriminatory legislation such as the pass laws and the Group Areas Acts and then a commitment to some form of common citizenship for all South Africans. Only by building on such a dialogue can the future security and prosperity of all South Africans be guaranteed.

I wish to come now to the heart of the debate—the question of engagement or disengagement with South Africa. Many hon. Members disagree with the Government's policy of developing and maintaining contacts, but we firmly believe that without contact there can be no influence on events. The disagreement is about means, rather than about ends. To turn our backs on South Africa would be irresponsible. Our conviction is that we should remain involved and use the means at our disposal to work for peaceful change. That reflects our belief that economic growth in South Africa, and especially the benefits it brings to the black community, can act as a catalyst for peaceful political change and will hasten the collapse of apartheid. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield referred to that.

Black skills are needed on a greatly increasing scale and at all levels, especially in the urban areas. Already that has led to the virtual ending of job reservation and a commitment to accept blacks as permanent residents in the urban areas. Moreover, in the longer term South Africa will face the problem of how to feed its growing population. Without economic development it will be unable to do so. Africa is suffering enough without our seeking to make it suffer more. Improvements in the education and training of non-whites in South Africa are vital elements in the strategy. Our aid programme is devoted almost entirely to improving the standard of black education. The European Community code of conduct can play a useful role in encouraging representational rights for black workers through organisations of their choice and by urging companies to open up career opportunities through better training.

The European Community is now urgently to consider strengthening the code so that it will contribute more effectively to the abolition of apartheid. We believe that British companies have made an important contribution to that process and that there is room for further initiatives by the private sector—community work, social welfare of employees, equal opportunities and so on.

We understand why many now press for the alternative strategy — sanctions and disengagement, but we do not believe that such policies would produce the changes we all wish to see in South Africa. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East was a member of a Government who for many years followed the policy of dialogue between this country and South Africa. I was interested to hear him say that his package of five measures, which I noted carefully, would be only symbolic——

Mr. Healey: No.

Mr. Luce: I thought that the right hon. Gentleman used that word.

The Government remain opposed to economic sanctions, and I make that absolutely clear in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North. We oppose them because they simply will not work. They have virtually never worked when they have been tried. In Rhodesia they served to strengthen parts of the white business sector at the expense of the blacks. The South African economy is much stronger than was Rhodesia's and would undoubtedly adapt to sanctions.

Listening to the "End of Empire" series on the BBC the other day, I was interested to note that on the programme on Zimbabwe Mr. Smith himself said:

"We were worried for I suppose a month or so, uncertain, but nothing terrible happened. In fact, it was a little better than we had expected, and then gradually got better not worse"—

[Interruption.] I hope that hon. Members will listen to me; it is better to listen.

"We became industrially self-sufficient. We developed a much broader base to our whole economy and industry. It was a shot in the arm."

That was Mr. Smith speaking of his experience of the imposition of sanctions. I say, to be honest, that had I been in the House in the 1960s, I believe that I would have voted in favour of the imposition of sanctions against Rhodesia. Like the majority of my hon. Friends, I continued to vote in favour of them throughout the 1970s.

Despite that, the evidence is that they would not work. Sanctions would merely stiffen the resistence of the white South Africans to external pressure. Far from being persuaded to introduce more reforms, the Government in Pretoria would be more like to abandon their attempts at further advancement for the blacks. White South Africans are already an isolated society. Sanctions would merely reinforce the laager mentality. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir. J. Biggs-Davison) referred to that.

[Mr. Luce]

The brunt of economic measures would be borne by the black South Africans, and that would be bound to increase the bitterness and violence that already exists. The House cannot ignore the views of remarkable people such as Mrs. Suzman, Alan Paton, Chief Buthelezi and, in certain circumstances, Bishop Tutu, all of whom have spoken about the grave consequences of cutting off economic contact with the people of South Africa.

Sanctions would affect the economies of South Africa's neighbours, even if the latter did not formally participate in the sanctions policy. There is no doubt that the economic survival of the majority of South Africa's neighbours depends on their ability to continue trading with each other and with the republic.

There would, of course, be adverse effects for our economy, too. We have much at stake in South Africa, including jobs in this country — jobs about which Opposition Members as well as my hon. Friends and I care. There would be no point in sacrificing jobs and prosperity in Britain for the sake of measures which would not only be ineffective but which would do most harm to those whom we are seeking to help.

We are under no illusions about the difficulties of working for peaceful change in South Africa, but we believe that there is no constructive — I emphasise "constructive" — alternative to remaining closely and continously involved and to working for positive and peaceful change.

1.47 am

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Only a few seconds remain for the debate. It is difficult to obtain information from South Africa. However, I have been advised today that the number of people detained is now well over 1,000, that at least one detainee has died and that there is great anxiety about the condition of many others.

For that reason, I have today sent a telegram to the International Red Cross asking it to intervene and to seek access to the people concerned. Will the Minister back that demand and call for access to be given so that the detainees may be seen and steps taken to look after their welfare?

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's Ruling—(*Official Report*, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19)—*the debate was concluded.*

Civil Defence

1.48 am

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): The Prime Minister has stated on many occasions, with some justification, that she has transformed the political agenda in Britain. One policy area that has been put back on the political agenda is civil defence.

In the five years up to 1978-79, Government spending on civil defence halved in real terms, and that was the culmination of a period in which the subject had been almost entirely ignored. Indeed, in the eight years to 1976, only one debate took place on that subject in the House.

That situation has changed radically in recent times and the Government must be credited with having made the necessary commitment in terms of resources and having established new standards of preparedness. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) has made a vital contribution in keeping the issue before Parliament. As chairman of the National Council for Civil Defence, he has helped to stimulate a wider debate throughout the country.

Unilateral disarmers and those who have encouraged local authorities to declare their areas non-nuclear zones, thus perpetrating almighty hoaxes on the ratepayers, have resisted any commitment to civil defence, linking it exclusively with the issue of nuclear deterrence. Refusing to take part in civil defence exercises such as exercise Hard Rock, and ignoring the duties which central Government require local councils to undertake, does nothing to mitigate the dangers of nuclear warfare. On the contrary, such irresponsibility has extremely damaging effects.

It would be unwise to assume that the United Kingdom could never again be involved in hostilities which fall short of a nuclear conflict. During this century, nearly all the wars have been fought in ways that the experts failed to foretell. If preparations are based only on official expectations, a country will be ill-armed to deal with a crisis. Even a small chance that Britain may be sucked into a conventional war surely justifies the spending of a relatively small sum on civil defence. Many have suggested that conventional war might be much more likely a scenario, given the appalling consequences that are known to all nations of nuclear war and the devastation that would ensue. Lord Hill-Norton has said that in many ways nuclear war is the least likely option open to the Soviets.

We can all agree that the possibility, if not the probability, of a period of rising tension and the outbreak of conventional war before the use of any nuclear weapons might provide an opportunity for world leaders to pause and to step back from the brink. That presupposes that we shall have a nation, continent or world that is worth saving.

We tend to think only of the horrors of nuclear war. If they could rise from their graves, millions of victims of conventional war could tell us how terrible that is. More died in the fires of Dresden than at Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Time and time again in the second world war, and in other wars known by our contemporaries and predecessors, those who survived were those who were prepared, whether they called their preparedness civil defence or used another term.

There have been many wars since 1945, although the policy of deterrence has ensured that Europe has been

spared them. None of these wars has been nuclear. We cannot afford to neglect the possibility that the pattern could continue and that such a war could touch us too.

The policy of deterrence has averted a world war involving the major powers for 40 years, and as long as we remain a part of NATO and continue to maintain and modernise our defences, the possibility of nuclear war remains extremely low.

If we are to believe the results of attitude surveys, a high proportion of young people expect a nuclear war in their lifetime. I remain an optimist, but even an outside chance cannot be ignored. If we spend £50 billion annually on social security and the Health Service in protecting our people against sickness and unemployment and in making their old age tolerable and, we hope, productive and rewarding, should we not spend one thousandth of that sum in protecting them against obliteration?

Defence must surely be the first responsibility of any Government, for without defence there is nothing else. Our defence is rightly based on the thesis that any potential aggressor must believe that the price of his aggression will be too high to contemplate. However, a small part of the equation is the need to provide some protection if all our calculations are confounded. That is the belief of my hon. Friends and myself.

There used to be a consensus across party lines on this issue, but judging by the statements of many Opposition Members, and the absence of many other Opposition Members tonight, that seems, regrettably, no longer to be the position, although I know that, whatever their party, individuals such as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) support the National Council for Civil Defence.

It is our responsibility and duty to think the unthinkable. No one who cannot imagine a fire or a burglary in his or her home takes out insurance. If one never has a fire or burglary, it does not mean that that insurance has been wasted. Those who vote to ban the bomb, whether or not potential enemies ban it, are not necessarily opposed to our democratic way of life. Many are extremely sincere and honest in their beliefs, but they tend to regard the prospect of nuclear war as so horrific that their reaction is to ask why we should contemplate what would follow. Hence, there is an over-eagerness to show that nuclear winter — an as yet unproven hypothesis — must preclude any planning for the aftermath. Hence also, we have films that predicate only despair and death.

We should be ready to assert that, even in the remote event of all-out nuclear assault, as many as half our population could survive. Without civil defence, that proportion could be much lower; with civil defence, it could be higher. Whatever the scenario, there would almost certainly be some survivors. Self-preservation dictates that we should salvage as much as we can after the event.

Even Hiroshima was survived by many. Hiroshima was in a non-nuclear zone—if we need reminding of that—and, if its population had been prepared, many more people could have survived or escaped the appalling injuries from which they suffered then and from which many continue to suffer now.

More modern weapons would produce more catastrophic effects but, even then, many of those living some distance from a blast would undoubtedly survive, if sufficient protection were provided. The proportion who survived could be increased at a relatively small cost if they knew what action to take. Education is a relatively inexpensive but vital part of civil defence planning.

Civil defence represents a small but vital element in the theory of deterrence. The threat to use nuclear weapons in self-defence could hardly be credible to a potential adversary if it were obvious that the Government could not contemplate such a decision because its effects would be utterly calamitous and were not even prepared to take the minimum action necessary to fulfil their responsibilities of protecting their people. That was the signal that the previous Government were sending out before the Conservatives were elected in 1979. I am glad that that signal has now altered.

Britain spends less than £1 a year per head on civil defence; the Swiss spend more than £10, showing not only that neutrality does not make one immune from nuclear fallout but that civil defence is vital whether one believes in unilateral or multilateral disarmament. Nuclear-free, as has been pointed out, is not nuclear safe. It is estimated that in Switzerland 85 per cent. of the population might survive a nuclear strike. Our geological and geographical situation is different. I would not suggest that we should go to the same lengths as the Swiss, but we can certainly learn from them, just as we can learn from the Swedes. In the Soviet Union nuclear survival is taught in the schools and public buildings are designed with nuclear wars in view. If civil defence is right for the Soviets, why do so many people think that it is wrong for us?

New factors must be considered. Trident and other weapon systems developed by NATO and the Warsaw pact are more accurate than their predecessors. By providing pinpoint accuracy aimed at military targets, they provide the option of a response short of total annihilation. The ability to shelter one's population must be seen as a vital part of a credible deterrent. I have severe reservations about the strategic defence initiative, but if one day it comes to fruition, it must increase the possibility of conventional war, even if it provides a defence against nuclear weapons. In that case, the priority to be accorded civil defence would be immeasurably increased.

It is important to appreciate that civil defence should not exist only to deal with total war. I hope that the Government will expand its role to help deal with any civil emergency—for example, a land slip, a flood, a plane crash in a heavily populated area or any comparable disaster. Such a development would also help to unite people who vary greatly is their conception of a proper defence posture, but who could agree on the life saving role of volunteers in peace and war. The possible need to amend the Civil Defence Act 1948 to take account of such a change should be urgently considered.

Last month the Home Office issued its updated emergency planning guidance to local authorities. It still seems that a high proportion of local authorities will fail to complete their emergency plans by the end of this year. My local authority of Bradford, which at one time sheltered under the nonsensical self-deception of being a nuclear-free zone, has, I am glad to say, given up that dubious status. But I doubt whether civil defence has adequate authority there, let alone in counties and districts which are controlled by more Left-wing regimes. I think of the authority in which my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office has his constituency.

A properly manned inspectorate should be established to ensure that all local authorities fulfil their legal

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commitments, especially with regard to the 1983 regulations. It is not up to local authorities to decide unilaterally that they will not make proper preparations for people's protection. For some limited civil defence purposes, central Government provides councils with 100 per cent. grants, but for other purposes only 75 per cent. grants exist. Civil defence is too important to be threatened by rate capping and penalties on overspending, even if such overspending is in reality brought about by less vital projects. If there is any danger that councils may justify their neglect of civil defence by reference to such factors, surely 100 per cent. grants should in all cases be made available by Whitehall. The progess made by local authorities should be monitored and reported on annually to Parliament.

Unfortunately, public education is still inadequate. Much more should be done, not to alarm people but to reassure them. We need to exercise as much sensitivity in getting our message across about civil defence as we do on the drugs menace, where the message can easily be distorted and misunderstood.

We all like to switch off when the stewardess on our aircraft demonstrates the use of life-saving equipment, but in our heart of hearts we are glad that it is there. We must be prepared for any eventuality, although we know that it is unlikely. The price of civil defence is a small price to pay for greater security, but it is a price we cannot afford not to pay.

2.3 am

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I am most interested in this subject. As my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said, we rarely get the opportunity to discuss one of the most important aspects of life. Only once in the past two years has the subject been raised in the House.

I was interested in what my hon. Friend said about reporting to Parliament, because it is important that my hon. Friend the Minister should keep a close watch on and monitor what local authorities are doing. It would be interesting every year to have a report of what they had achieved, how much of their quota they had spent, and what further funds were required to make a comprehensive safety net. We have already been told that some authorities are reluctant to do this, and some compulsion may be necessary. It is up to my hon. Friend the Minister of State to ensure that happens. I know that he is doing all he can by means of persuasion, but compulsion may be necessary in spite of all his persuasive powers.

It is quite wrong that civil defence should be under civilian control. In war, all our defences, be they protective or military should be under military control. It is quite wrong that civil defence should be under the control of an unelected area representative—it should be either a civil servant or an elected person, but preferably it should come under the control of the military.

There are two aspects to civil defence—protecting our citizens against nuclear or conventional attack, and protecting them against an attack that is becoming more and more apparent. The Warsaw pact has small teams of people who are capable of disrupting our vital installations. That perhaps poses an even greater danger than the first aspect of civil defence, because if our vital installations, such as electricity and water, are tampered with, all the other precautions that are taken to defend our citizens against nuclear attack will be quite useless.

The home defence force consists of only 5,000 men. I believe that we need 100,000. We are told that in the event of war, either conventional or nuclear, we shall be left with only 100,000 people here to protect our citizens. That is not sufficient. The additional 5,000-strong home defence force is important, but a much greater number of people should be capable of coming to the fore to be mobilised and trained for both defence and military aid to the civil power.

Small units of 30 or 40 people would be extremely valuable, provided they were properly trained and equipped and came under military control. We know that the Warsaw pact has small teams of people who speak very good English, are highly trained and know the country. In many cases, they have been living here for some time and know the area.

Hon. Members will be aware that schemes exist such as Lord Hill-Norton's under which volunteers can be trained quite cheaply. A comparative table shows that 100,000 volunteers cost £17 million and that 700,000 cost £120 million. Such volunteers would not be paid but would have arm bands and equipment and could render military and other services to the community, including civil defence. They would be ready at the drop of a hat to come to the aid of the military forces and the civilian power. We shall require such people in the event of hostilities, when very few people will be left to man the country.

The Regular Army costs about £11,000 a soldier, the Territorial Army about £2,500 and the home defence force only about £574.

We need to do three things. First, my right hon. Friend the Minister has to force local authorities to carry out their statutory duties. Secondly, at the end of the year, I should like to see him produce a table showing those who have defaulted and those who are up to standard. Thirdly, we need to provide the additional money required to bring the whole of our civil defence up to strength.

We must look at the whole of our home defence forces. I believe that, under the Warsaw pact, if we were engaged in either nuclear or conventional war, we would be left at home with too few to protect our citizens. That is the danger. The additional numbers we provide for that purpose can also be used in civilian occupations to help perform numerous tasks. These home forces need to be considerably increased—5,000 is not enough. I should like to see many more people properly trained and armed, and capable of carrying out not only military but also many civilian tasks that they are called on to perform. A wealth of voluntary effort in all skills is waiting to be mobilised.

2.12 am

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I welcome the opportunity for this debate on a general theme which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) has just said, perhaps too often has received too little attention.

At the outset I wish to endorse all the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), although I may put a different emphasis on one or two of his points. Of all the many aspects and assets that make up what we may loosely term civil defence, I choose to deal with three cases. I shall therefore be selective and, I hope, brief.

As so often with so many debates on civil defence, this debate will suffer from what I label a double defect. With no personal malice whatever towards the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), I believe his party must take the blame for this. By a double defect, I mean, first, the failure of some many members of Opposition parties to grasp the totality and the importance of civil defence. Secondly, following from the first defect, there is a total absence of positive and constructive input into the debate by so many members of Opposition parties.

On that point, I make one half-concession. The term "civil defence" is misleading. It concentrates the mind excessively, and sometimes exclusively, on wartime emergency. Perhaps it would be better if we scrubbed "civil defence" out of our vocabulary entirely, and spoke of "civil emergency planning".

Surely the essential point is that we are concerned to protect the civilian population from the effects of all disasters, whatever their cause, in which the regular services of fire brigade, police, ambulance and so on, either would be severely strained by the size of the particular disaster, or unable to operate effectively in time.

Of course, nuclear, biological and chemical warfare constitute potentially the worst forms of disaster we can suffer, but man-made disasters of a different sort and natural disasters are the equal concerns of civil emergency planning. All too often Opposition parties do not seem to have realised that. To be fair—I like to try to be fair—neither did the Conservative party in its 1983 election manifesto. In it, we concentrated exclusively on wartime emergency planning. To be even fairer, as my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley said—I hope that the Minister will take note of this—the Government have tarried too long in amending the Civil Defence Act 1948.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The hon. Gentleman is being so incredibly fair that I want to help him be a little fairer and go that little step further. I ask him to recognise that if, like the Minister and myself, he had served on the Committee on the Bill to abolish the metropolitan counties, he would know that we said that lack of effective civil emergency planning would be made infinitely worse by the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the Greater London council.

Mr. Hunter: I do not wish to be drawn into all those details. Continuing the amicable theme of being fair, I welcome the opportunity of having learnt a little more.

I wish to explore three points. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will take my comments as the positive, constructive and friendly criticisms that I intend them to be. First, it can be argued that since 1979, the Government's attitude and actions on civil defence have shown signs of a lack of interdepartmental co-operation. The laudable exhortations and actions of the Home Office have not been matched by other Departments. For example, "Civil Defence and the Farmer" was too long in appearing and is too light in content. Moreover, there has been inadequate research into providing effective guidance for preparing a viable policy for food and agriculture in times of emergency. Farmers need more guidance on civil defence measures. There is also a strong case to be made for identifying a nucleus of farmer wardens from among current civil defence volunteers and training them in conjunction with local authorities.

In the Department of Health and Social Security, all is far from acceptable in the provision of emergency health and medical services. In 1983, the British Medical Association reported on the medical demands that a nuclear war might create. It found the present Department of Health and Social Security war plans quite ineffective. Interestingly, by a vote of 248 to 78, the BMA voted to be actively involved in the governmental war planning process. There are grounds for concern about emergency supplies of insulin, as I know from my dealings with a pharmaceutical company in my constituency. There should be greater emphasis on planning peacetime emergency provision sufficient to deal with the Bhopal category of emergency, when some 25,000 people were in sudden and dire need of medical treatment.

Similar concern can be expressed about emergency planning for industry. There is need for improved civil emergency advice to industry through the reintroduction of guidance circulars and liaison between industry and local civil defence authorities. The Department of Trade and Industry line hitherto has been that responsibility for civil defence lies with industry itself. However, that attitude is not good enough. I understand that last January the Department announced the setting up of a study to assess the essential civil defence requirements that industry can be called upon to supply and its capability to meet those requirements. That is to be welcomed. The essential point is that there are grounds for concern about interdepartmental co-operation and motivation.

My second major point is that the 1983 civil defence regulations required local authorities to undertake certain duties that incurred capital and current expenditure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley said, the response from local authorities has not been impressive. The requirements in themselves were and are laudable. The charge against them, arguably, is that they do not go far enough, but what is needed is more detailed guidance by Government to local authorities on the raising and training of civil defence volunteers. Defined and timed objectives must be stated.

We need a civil defence inspectorate with powers and resources to monitor performance and to enforce compliance with the 1983 regulations. We need Government guidance on the required levels of emergency planning staffs employed by local authorities. At the end of last year, about 50 per cent. of the emergency planning staffs were undermanned even by 1972 standards, and scarcely a handful of the 54 local authorities had completed emergency plans in accordance with the 1983 regulations. All this is far from satisfactory.

The greatest defect, however, is financing. All civil defence and emergency expenditure must be taken outside the rate support grant framework and be completely reimbursed. Nor should capital expenditure on civil defence be counted against normal local authority allocations. There is still much work to be done with the implementation of the 1983 regulations.

Thirdly, there is a dire need for a clearer and more succinct overall civil emergency planning strategy. The most adverse comment that can be made about the Government's actions is that they are making well-intentioned but ineffective noises and paying lip service to the need more than they are delivering the goods. It must be acknowledged, however, that the Government are doing infinitely more than a Government of any other political party would be doing.

Within the overall civil emergency planning strategy, priority must be given to restoring public confidence in

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emergency planning. A long-term strategy must be adopted, and it must have defined and timed objectives just as the Swiss and Swedes have had for many years. Planning and preparation by all agencies must be co-ordinated and monitored at all levels. There must be provision to ensure compliance with the law. It can be argued that insufficient thought has been given to how civil emergency planning can be most effectively and economically organised and delivered. There is certainly scope for academic research. Above all, the public will have no faith in civil emergency planning which fails to protect the individual. That can only mean shelters and relocation schemes. Local authorities must prepare—and keep updated—effective evacuation and reception plans. The absence of such plans is a major defect in existing regulations. There should be research into the viability of a long-term public and domestic shelter programme, now notable by its absence. All of those things should appear in a civil emergency planning strategy.

Good intentions and considerable advance characterise civil emergency planning during the past few years, but there is still much work to be done. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give us assurances that the work will be done.

2.23 am

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): Many people do not want to talk about civil defence. It frightens some, and others belittle it as irrelevant to modern war machines. It is rather like people not wanting to talk about a serious illness because not much can be done about it. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on raising this subject, although I should have congratulated him even more if he had secured an earlier debate.

None of us expect to have to call upon an emergency service. The more we can do to prevent our having recourse to emergency services, the better we like it. But we know that it will sometimes be needed. The quality of the trained personnel is then critical. That is how one must consider civil defence. We hope that it will be in much less demand than the fire service, but unless we make sure that in our local communities there are those who can help in emergencies we shall suffer an even greater catastrophe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley referred to what could happen in the event of a nuclear war. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) referred to civil emergencies. The sooner the Government change the 1948 regulations to include civil emergencies the better.

The emergency services come very much into their own on the fringe of a catastrophe. It often takes time before the professional services can arrive on the scene in strength, and before they arrive the emergency services perform a very useful role. When the professionals arrive the emergency services can help with evacuation. Emergencies do not normally last only for a few minutes; they can last for days or even weeks. During that period a volunteer force that is trained in certain specialties and that has communication facilities available to it can greatly relieve the pressure on the professional services.

Furthermore, this is very much a community activity. The service will know the locality well. It will also know what communication facilities are available. Although the main emergency services were quickly sent to the disaster area when a dam burst its banks in Italy last week, a great deal had to be done initially by the local volunteer force.

We adopt a very low-key approach to civil defence. It is not very well publicised. We shall have to do a public relations job and sell the idea of joining the civil defence force because it is a worthwhile community service, not only in the remote event of warfare but in the event of civil emergencies. We must also sell the idea of a credible civil defence strategy. The Government must put forward a meaningful strategy and sell the idea that if war should break out it is important to have people in certain key positions. It will need a great deal of selling. After two world wars people feel tremendously relieved that it is all over. It will be difficult, after such a long gap, to get people thinking again about civil defence. But we must do so, because there are so many different types of weapon about. The Government must try to do as good a PR job as they can.

Local authorities will play a key role in civil defence. It is disappointing that, so far, few authorities have approached the task with enthusiasm, or even with a commitment to do it at some time in the future. More than half of the emergency centre programme has not been completed. Some authorities have ignored civil defence completely. Other authorities and organisations have expressed outright hostility to the idea that civil defence is important. My hon. Friend mentioned nuclear-free zones. I live in a nuclear-free zone, but I feel no more safe than do my constituents who do not live in such a zone. We must overcome those delusions.

Our communications systems for civil defence must be appropriate for wartime as well as for civil emergencies. The implementation of the recommendations in the report of the Home Office working party on communications will be a key factor in setting up a network that can be co-ordinated nationally. In an emergency, communications are critical. If we had an emergency in one of our cities, two great problems would be communicating with people to tell them what to do, and moving people around the area. In some cities, a small stretch of roadworks is enough to cause traffic jams. We are talking about bigger problems than that.

The best way to encourage local authorities to undertake civil defence programmes would be for the Government to reimburse their capital expenditure and their expenditure on emergency planning personnel. They will not respond unless the Government offer a carrot as well as a stick. It is only right that the Government take responsibility for civil defence and pay for it through the Exchequer. They should not expect local authorities to bear the entire cost. I realise that the benefits will be seen in local communities as well as in the national Parliament, but with the present restraints on local government expenditure, we cannot expect authorities to co-operate willingly on the current terms.

We should also consider chemical and biological warfare. The public seem to know very little about that. I am sure that our colleagues in the Ministry of Defence know much about it. If there is a deterrent balance in nuclear weapons, I am sure that the alternatives of chemical and biological weapons will be considered. We must provide information about such weapons to the volunteer force, and we should publicise the precautions that can be taken to cope with chemical and biological

warfare. Such provision will be essential if we are to create a civil defence force that will be effective, should the need arise.

We must remember that major emergencies come out of the blue. If they did not, we would not need so many preventive measures. Major civil emergencies especially are completely unexpected. It is then that the local volunteer force can do so much to avoid the worst results of such a catastrophy.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who does so much to publicise the need for civil defence, and the importance of the volunteers to the community, to continue to put across the message that civil defence has an important part to play in a modern society, despite the terrible weapons that are available to major countries.

2.35 am

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Even at this early hour of the morning, I am glad to add my words to this well-initiated debate on civil defence. I suspect that the numbers in the House represent the feeling of our respective parties towards civil defence. My party and Government have a strong feeling for civil defence, but all the Opposition parties have little of it. That is adequately represented this evening—I was going to say to the tune of 10:1, but the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has just entered the Chamber, so the odds have shortened slightly to 10:2. We are glad that the hon. Lady has joined us, because I am sure that she will hear something to her benefit from the Government Benches.

There are many definitions of what civil defence is and should be. I draw the attention of the House to the definition that it is the means to protect the civilian population from the effects of all natural disasters, in which the regular services would be severely strained by the size of the disaster, or unable to act in time. We should concern ourselves with it whether it is in wartime or peacetime, because there are disasters at both times for which we should make provision. Thankfully, we live in a time of peace, but that time has come about because of the defence policies followed by this country and others since the last world war—a policy of deterrence in the main. We have had that peace for 40 years.

However, even in peacetime, many horrific disasters have occurred, such as that at Bhopal and those in Canada and Italy. At such times, we need civil defence provisions. Just because we live in peace does not mean that disasters will not happen. It does not mean that we should not make provision. We hope that we shall never see such disasters, or that they will never happen to us or our friends, but inevitably, things do happen. We should take proper precautions against such an eventuality. I am speaking of major disasters that affect countries or cities.

In our lives, we all make insurance arrangements against things that we hope will never happen. We now wear seat belts as a precaution against an accident in our car that we hope will never happen. In a minor way, that is a civil defence arrangement. We take out insurance for many other things. We insure our homes against contingencies and make provisions of that kind.

Those are precautions in a small way, but we can multiply them into the need for a local authority, an area or a country to make civil defence arrangements for local populations. There is general recognition by the public of the need for civil defence, but the public at large need to be wakened up to the eventualities that could occur and to the need to guard against them. The public accept and understand the need for civil defence, and the Government and we as Members of Parliament have a responsibility to bring that home to our constituents and to people at large.

As many of my hon. Friends may remember, I was on a local authority and we tried to accept our responsibilities. I refreshed my mind about those responsibilities before coming to the House, and as I understand it, county councils should have the following obligations:

"To make and keep under review plans for the continuation of a number of essential services in war

To arrange for the training in civil defence of their own staff and those of districts and London Boroughs

To participate in training or training exercises organised by the designated ministers

To make arrangements for the organisation of civil defence volunteers

To provide emergency centres for civil defence direction

To implement plans as directed by the designated minister"

Those are the responsibilities of the county councils throughout this country, and one would like to see them taking those responsibilities a bit more seriously than they do. Many are conscientious in that respect, but some are not as good as others. The lower tier, the district councils, have an obligation to assist the county councils wherever that is possible, although, of course, the counties have overall responsibility.

Ours is not the only country to have civil defence, but to hear some Opposition Members one would think we were. Of course, as my hon. Friends said earlier, Russia and China have active civil defence organisations and many countries in Europe also accept their responsibilities for civil defence. We are doing nothing more than keeping pace with other countries. It is easy to talk of wartime precautions and one understands them more readily, but we should look more seriously at the prospect of local disasters.

One of my hon. Friends referred to nuclear-free zones. I live in a nuclear-free zone, but I do not feel any more secure there than I felt when I was the leader of Cambridge city council and did not live in a nuclear-free zone. In fact, I felt more secure in my previous city in terms of civil defence than in the city in which I now live. That is because we observed civil defence precautions whereas my present local authority, the district council, makes no provision for civil defence.

It seems that we have a nuclear-free zone, which includes a civil defence-free zone, or a civil defence zone. I should prefer to live in the civil defence zone. I should feel safer if my local authority took the issue seriously. The authority takes its support for CND seriously, but that will get my constituents nowehere and will mean that they are less secure. I wish that the council would pay as much attention to its civl defence responsibilities, becaue my constituents would then feel more secure.

Heaven forbid that it should happen, but there could be a civil disaster in Norwich. We have a modest airport and there could be a plane disaster over the city or a plane could hit a multi-storey block of flats. There should be proper civil defence arrangements for such a contingency. The local authority does not make such arrangements.

I regret the attitude of many other Labour-controlled authorities. I understand that South Yorkshire county

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council has condemned the Government's "irresponsibility" in suggesting that it is anything but futile to plan for a nuclear emergency. A spokesman for Labour-controlled Hackney borough council has said:

"We should not be doing civil defence at all. It is an absolute waste of time."

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has gone so far as to say:

"Civil defence plans now being developed are a thinly veiled cover for a policy of military repression always available to deal with any opposition to Government policy."

I cannot imagine a more ludicrous attitude.

The Government have an honourable attitude to civil defence, but I hope that they will be firmer. We are too often wise after the event. With peacetime or wartime planning in civil defence, it is better to be wise before the event than to have regrets afterwards. The Government must take civil defence more seriously—commendable though their attitude is already—and impress on local authorities the need for better arrangements. Better publicity must be given to the arrangements. Then we shall all feel safer in our beds. I hope that the Minister who is to reply will give us that reassurance.

2.48 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): The problem that civil defence has in projecting a proper image has emerged directly or indirectly from the speeches of all my hon. Friends. The concept of civil defence in the public mind seems to be one of an outdated procedure which is irrelevant to the needs of modern disasters and warfare and is an inadequate response to the ultimate threat. As such, this rather weary impression has provided a perfect target, a focus for the anti-nuclear lobby.

Some part of our job, I think, must be to redefine the role of civil defence, to change the emphasis that we attach to it. To this extent, the National Council for Civil Defence and the Trebah Trust have done a great deal to give it a new orientation by emphasising the all-hazards approach as opposed to the single response to the nuclear threat.

The all-hazards approach accepts the fact that, in the most extreme circumstances, there must be a response to the nuclear threat. However, this is perhaps the most unlikely scenario to occur. While we maintain the strategy of deterrence, it is unlikely that we will be attacked with nuclear weapons. But there is a much more likely hazard in natural or industrial disaster. It is in this area that the all-hazards approach can be best developed.

This raises the question not only of redefinition but of presentation. My hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) alluded to this by saying that we should perhaps have a better PR presentation of the approach of civil defence to hazards. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) suggested that the phraseology "civil emergency planning" might more accurately describe what civil defence, in our view, is attempting to do.

This more positive response should alert the Government and local authorities to their responsibilities. The Government's role is clearly, if broadly, defined in that they have the responsibility for long-term planning, which means that there must be some co-ordination between the different Departments of state. It is apparent, from the Questions that we have tabled to different Departments in the last year or so, that there are different degrees of priority within different Departments, a different emphasis and sometimes, it would seem, a different sense of direction. There is a need for a comprehensive civil defence strategy, and for that to be co-ordinated in the first instance.

Secondly, central Government have a duty to provide the finance. It is an unfair and unrealistic burden on local authorities to imagine that, through their ratepayers, and in the difficult circumstances in which some of them have been placed recently, they can make provision for the finance to do what is necessary to meet the risks.

Having said generally what central Government should do, I think that it is in local authorities that the operations can be most effectively deployed. Local government must seek to adopt a realistic approach to its responsibilities, to co-ordinate local needs and to recognise how local services can be brought into operation in conjunction with civil defence services so that they meet the needs of the locality. This is particularly important when dealing with the sort of localised industrial disaster in which the efforts and energies of those outside the local community have to be harnessed to bring help and support.

It is sad that many local authorities have been indifferent or downright obstructive to suggestions that they should carry out civil defence planning. My hon. Friends have alluded to experiences in their local authorities. Mine is perhaps, regrettably, typical. The London borough of Southwark, in one of its committees, discussed the Government's 1983 civil defence regulations, and took a positive decision that it would ignore or not implement them. It has not even taken this decision to the full council for further discussion. It compounds what I feel to be contemptuous irresponsibility by making positive and substantial contributions to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. I am conscious that a number of the members of council belong to the CND, and I am surprised that they have not declared their interests in the members' declaration of interests, which all members of Southwark council are required to make.

A further cynical posturing by that council is to declare itself a nuclear-free zone. Such cynicism, such a contemptuous attitude to the needs of those whom it is there to serve, suggest that the Government must play a positive role in leading and directing councils in the way in which they should go. Only by so doing can the public at large be protected from and reassured about the threats and hazards.

There is a need for public relations presentation, not in any superficial way, but to reassure the public and to restore public confidence that the emergency and planning services exist to meet any hazard that might arise. In restoring confidence, there is the need to recruit and harness public participation. There is a willingness by many to volunteer to help in extreme cases. If that can be seen to be professionally organised and the training to be professionally directed and relevant to the need, I am sure that recruits of the right calibre and quality will come forward.

We need a positive response to the likely and less likely threats that might arise. That is what civil defence is about. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister is here this evening because I hope that he will be able to give a sure-footed lead in the direction in which we must go in future.

2.56 am

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on the admirable way in which he introduced this debate. Fourteen hon. Members sought to table a motion on civil defence for debate this evening, and he was fortunate to come out at the top of the list. I regret that the lateness of the hour means that there is a smaller attendance than I had hoped. Indeed, there is only one hon. Member on the Opposition Benches. Distinguished as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) may be, it shows how his party regards civil defence. I very much regret that.

Until relatively recently, civil defence had all-party support. The humanitarian and other advantages of a civil defence policy were considered to be above politics. For some strange reason the campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament has adopted the view that civil defence is not a good thing. It claims that it encourages the thought that war is survivable, while at the same time it advances a strange and quaint theory that the Soviet bloc would feel threatened by an effective civil defence service.

Clearly no sensible person could possibly believe that. The Russian civil defence system in Moscow is comprehensive, and we do not feel threatened by that. We feel much more threatened by their very effective arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons that are pointing in this direction.

We know positively that there were about 150,000 casualties in the war in Vietnam. We also know that 3 million civilians died. That is a significant factor in this sphere. It shows that the civilian population in any conflict is extremely vulnerable. Unless it is given proper protection and facilities for looking after itself, together with proper leadership, the chances of it surviving are much less than they would otherwise be. That is an unfortunate state of affairs.

Apart from preparing for war, civil defence has much to do in preparing for civil emergencies, and I commend the admirable decision that the Minister has taken to follow an all-hazards approach, for only by adopting such an approach can we hope to generate the commitment and enthusiasm of the man in the street.

We in this country have been fortunate in having had 40 years of peace. During that time, people's memories of war have dimmed. Nevertheless, we have often seen the advantages of proper civil emergency planning, which has enabled necessary services to be provided in emergencies.

I have in mind the blizzards that occurred a few years ago in the west country, when the civilian population became acutely aware of what civil defence could contribute to their general welfare. That experience encouraged large numbers of people to volunteer for civil defence service. They realised that it was necessary to be equipped to look after not only oneself and one's family, but one's friends and neighbours. A proper course in civil defence is of great advantage to people.

At Flixborough in Lincolnshire, an incident involving a chemical works a few years ago caused devastation. That, too, demonstrated how the civil defence services play a leading role. Many other examples in other countries remind us of the need for emergency planning. For example, at Three Mile Island in the United States there was an escape of nuclear radiation and the emergency planning services played a major role.

In Seveso, dioxin gas escaping from a chemical plant caused many casualties. Had the civil emergency caring services been better equipped, the casualty rate would have been much lower. The same applies to the Bhopal tragedy in India. Had the emergency planning services been as well equipped as those in Pakistan, the casualty rate of 2,000 deaths and 100,000 severely ill would have been much smaller. In Canada, a chloride gas discharge occurred as the result of a rail crash. The most recent example of such emergencies was the Stava dam breaking in Italy.

Nearer home, there were the events on the M25 when fog descended on a short stretch. Yesterday the coroner declared that it was an act of God. Fourteen were killed on a bright sunny morning. It was the gathering of fog in one area that caused that devastation. Again, the emergency services came into play. It might have been possible to save more lives if some of those involved in the accidents had had experience and knowledge of emergency service work. We must pay a great compliment to the fire service, the ambulance service, the St. John Ambulance Brigade, the Red Cross, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and many other voluntary services that we are so fortunate to have. They do so very well on occasions such as the M25 tragedy. There is still a major role for the private individual to play if he is given the opportunity to become an emergency or civil defence volunteer.

It is unfortunate that we still have local authorities which maintain that they are nuclear-free zones. It seems entirely inappropriate that in 1985 there are those who are so short-sighted that they cannot see the need for nuclear systems in medical treatment and other areas. These systems make nonsense of the claim that the areas that they represent include no nuclear capability. It is an essential aspect of medical treatment that such facilities are available and it is nonsense to claim that an area that includes a hospital with a unit dealing with cancer, for example, does not have a nuclear facility. To pretend that it does not exist is ridiculous.

There have been some excellent contributions to the debate. Apart from the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley, I was intrigued by the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), who spoke of voluntary service in defence of the home in a more general context. There is a major role for those who are involved in the Territorial Army and the general services in leading the civilian population in protecting itself when the occasion demands. As we experience such a low-key civil defence provision, we should take advantage of the knowledge of those who have received training in raising the standard of preparedness and knowledge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) was helpful in mentioning various other aspects of civil defence and highlighting the nonsense that is talked by local authorities which claim to be nuclear-free. He spoke of the need for a comprehensive system and to provide adequately for a service throughout the country.

I sympathise greatly with my hon. Friends the Members for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens), for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) and for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who have to suffer under nuclear-free local authorities. These authorities are neglecting their duties and responsibilities to those who they represent. We have to make up a lot of lost ground. Since 1968 we have not made adequate

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provision for civil defence. This Government are doing their best to catch up, but the major investment in terms of shelter and other materials that is needed cannot possibly be provided within a short period.

The Swiss, Swedes, Germans, French and people of other civilised countries have got on with the job over the past 20 or 30 years and have built up a nucleus of civil defence capability. It is sad that we have not made that provision. Immediately after the last war, all the buildings that were constructed in the City of London and, I imagine, in most of the other major cities specifically provided for a civil defence capability. The majority of underground car parks were built with that point in mind. I am sorry that that process has not been continued. In many other countries, especially Sweden, allowances are made for the additional cost of providing this type of accommodation.

For a long time I have advocated giving special rate relief to those buildings that are capable of being used for alternative purposes—storage or underground parking—and of being converted quickly and satisfactorily into shelters.

We must press the Government on a number of matters, especially the need to provide 100 per cent. funding for civil defence. Treasury Ministers shy away whenever it is suggested that more money should be spent. However, it is not necessary to spend more money. It is necessary only to readjust our present finances. It is possible for the Government to withhold funds from rate support grant to ensure that 100 per cent. funding for civil defence can be provided. This is essential because, in an emergency, the population would tend to move towards those parts of the country that had provided a civil defence capability, and would leave their own areas. It would be unfair if the areas that had provided adequately for their population faced a massive influx of people from other areas.

We must provide for civil defence in the same way that we provide out of central funds for the Territorial Army and a number of other essential national forces. It is wrong to ask local authorities to make a 25 per cent. commitment, especially when such expenditure would mean that they were liable to pay a penalty in terms of Government grants. The Government must take this message on board. They must deal with this problem properly and sensibly and say, "We shall provide 100 per cent. funding because this is such an important issue."

The same conditions should apply to the Manpower Watch figures. Local authorities are being told that, if they recruit more than their previous manpower numbers, the extra recruitment will be excluded. Nevertheless, I believe that total expenditure—not just extra expenditure—and total manpower devoted to civil defence should be taken out of the limitations that have been imposed in recent years by central Government on local authorities. This measure is far too important to be treated in any other way.

The other important issue that I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to support is the amendment of the Civil Defence Act 1948 at the earliest possible opportunity. We are endeavouring to obtain support for such an amendment through a private Member's Bill, but if that support is not available, the Government must deal with the matter; clearly we can properly exercise the all-hazards approach only if the Act is amended. That all-hazards approach is the best and safest way of ensuring all-party support.

I compliment the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) on leading his party towards the need for civil defence, and I hope some of its members will soon follow his lead, just as I hope that Opposition Members will follow the rather more statesmanlike lead of their colleagues in the other place. Labour Members in the other place who may not be so hidebound by the reselection process, undoubtedly made some valuable speeches in the debate in February. They do not have those worries and problems, or the fear of a reaction from the local Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, so they could make a more positive contribution.

Mr. Soley: Much like the Top Salaries Review Body.

Mr. Thorne: The analogy is not quite right. Members in the other place looked at the matter realistically and came up with sensible arguments and solutions. They made it clear that people in all parties viewed the matter most seriously, and believed that something must be done about it sooner rather than later.

I cannot understand why Opposition Members are not pressing harder than we are for money to be spent on civil defence, on the basis that that might leave less money for general defence expenditure. I would not wish that, but I would have thought that that argument might have appealed to them.

Finally, terrorism is a much greater problem now than ever before because the range of equipment available to a potential terrorist has grown considerably. We are undoubtedly entering an era in which a terrorist is likely to be able to use sophisticated equipment and certainly to cause a chemical, biological or nuclear explosion. We are inadequately prepared to meet that.

Some Governments support terrorism, as President Reagan and others have made clear in recent weeks. Terrorists are supported by a blind eye being turned to their activities, often by countries actively supplying them with equipment to export elsewhere. That is worrying. Until relatively recently, only five countries could build a nuclear weapon. That number will soon approach 19. Inevitably, before the end of this century — possibly even before the end of this decade — a country with terrorism at heart could be in possession of this information. That causes considerable anxiety.

Moreover, those countries with chemical works capable of producing fertiliser are able to produce nerve gas that could be discharged into an area, thereby causing enormous casualties. The Government must turn their attention to that. They would be severely criticised indeed if an explosion or discharge occured in a densely populated area, be it an airport or the centre of a major city, as a result of terrorist attack. The Government must ensure that adequate medical supplies and other equipment are on hand to deal with such a situation. Clothing, blood plasma and many other things would be required very quickly.

The medical profession has made it clear that at present in adequate resources have been made available. It is incumbent on the politicians to ensure that that state of affairs does not exist for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

The case for civil defence had been made by my hon. Friends. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us extremely promising news about a major boost in this area and that he will ensure that no stones are left unturned in giving adequate protection to the population as a whole.

3.22 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): If I were an optimist I would be encouraged by the number of Conservative Members who so willingly support increased public expenditure. We have even had calls for this area to be excluded from rate capping. I have recently made calls for excluding victim support schemes from rate capping but the Government do not seem to be too keen on doing that. I therefore suspect that they will not be too keen on excluding civil defence.

The myth is that the Government are always willing to put money galore into defence, civil defence and law and order, despite the fact that they know that without other social, economic and political policies all one gets is more instability. In fact, one is throwing good money after bad and creating the very instability that one does not wish to see. That applies to defence systems and to law and order.

Another theme running through the debate has been the request for a co-ordinated response in civil defence, or civil emergency planning, as I, along with the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) would prefer to call it. That is a very good idea. This is where my heart goes out to the Minister. He is not a bad chap. He is really quite nice. Along with myself and the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) he sat for long hours discussing the Local Government Bill, which abolishes the metropolitan counties. That Bill devastated the civil emergency systems, and the Minister knew it. He admitted it, and Lord Whitelaw said it as well. In fact, they all said it.

The hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) is right to talk of the way in which the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries have highly trained people who speak good English ready to be strategically placed in the United Kingdom to disrupt this country. Few Conservative Members realised it, but the hon. Gentleman was talking about the Secretary of State for the Environment, because when he decimated the major conurbations and their local government, he also decimated a co-ordinated response towards civil emergency planning between the fire, ambulance and police services. Those are three of the most crucial services. The Minister knows that that is the case, and it is on the *Hansard* record of the Committee stage. The hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead had better speak to the Prime Minister and decide just who these well-spoken, highly paid agents of this alien power really are, and what they are up to.

I am afraid that the speech of the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) was full of fallacies. He came out with the fine old assumption that we hear repeated by Tory Members—that the deterrent factor has kept the peace for the past 40 years. It would be wrong of me to involve myself in a long debate about that, but I will respond in this way: at best, all we can say about that assumption, to use the good old Scottish phrase, is that it is not proven. At worst—and this is the point to which Tory Members always fail to address themselves—such an assumption can lead to a dangerous self-deception, whereby a country thinks it can continue to deter war by producing more and more sophisticated weapons, when in fact the history of warfare shows that the more a country plans to use its weaponry against another power, the more likely is war to occur. I cannot expand further on that point, now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or you would rule me out of order, but if any hon. Member wants to develop it he should listen to the lectures of A. J. P. Taylor on how wars begin. They are most instructive.

The second fallacy of the hon. Member for Keighley was his claim that defence is and must be a first priority. At a superficial level that is true. However, what happens is that the more a country makes defence its first priority and pours money into it, the more is caused in political systems the very instability that causes war. Deterrents do not prevent war, as most people who, over many years, have thought about the causes of war will agree. Instability in power relationships is the cause of war.

When it comes to talking about what should be done if a major war occurs, Conservative Members start talking about civil defence, and get confused, as the hon. Member for Basingstoke became confused. He said that we should talk not about civil defence but about major disasters, and I go along with that. But like other of his hon. Friends, the hon. Member then fell into the trap of talking about civil defence in relation to nuclear war.

The problem is that to create a major programme of civil defence to deal with nuclear war a Government would have to raise the level of fear of nuclear war. The programme would have to ensure that virtually every citizen in the country knew how to cope with the early and later stages of radiation. People would have to know how to avoid radiation—how to avoid ingesting air, food or water that had been irradiated. They would have to know how long they had to stay out of certain areas and how long not to drink water in those areas.

Hon. Members must know that to conduct such a programme would raise the level of fear amongst the population. It is a fallacy to believe that a Government could run a sensible civil defence programme in preparation for nuclear war without raising the level of fear.

When the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) dismissed rather simplistically the arguments presented against civil defence, he fell into the trap of assuming that if we simply increase our civil defence aid a little we will in some way frighten the Russians. If the whole Western world raised expenditure and intensity of effort in relation to civil defence to a level that made the Soviets think we were planning to fight and survive a nuclear war, the deterrent theory becomes even less meaningful. One of my criticisms of the Soviet and Chinese policies, is that they did, and do in the case of the Soviet Union, plan to fight and survive a nuclear war. That shows the absurdity of the argument that Conservative Members get themselves into.

The hon. Member for Keighley did not have a stable, consistent definition of what he meant by deterrence. Later in his argument he said that one can show that one can survive a nuclear war. If one can do that, the nuclear weapon is no greater a deterrent than the conventional weapon. The nuclear weapon is only a big deterrent if its use is so dramatically effective that war will not be considered by any rational, sane person. The problem for both the western and eastern world is that that system worked tolerably well in the 1950s and 1960s, but the new war-fighting technology of the 1970s and 1980s has undermined that deterrent theory. Whether it is in the House, the Soviet Union, the United States or anywhere else, if the hon. Gentleman creates the impression that one can fight and win a nuclear war, the theory of deterrence in its original sense, or in terms of nuclear weapons, is meaningless. It becomes similar to the conventional

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deterrent theory only when the effect of war is so overwhelming and devastating as to make the act of warfare irrational.

The other problem about that theory is that most wars do not break out in a rational way. As I have already said, the situation develops when political systems get out of control. In many ways I would feel much safer if I thought that President Reagan or Mr. Gorbachev were in control of the system. We kid ourselves about that—we really do. The history of great powers throughout the centuries, for example Britain, Rome classical Greece or Egypt, shows that there is an assumption that people are in control. In fact wars break out without the intention of a war. The classic example is the first world war. A great Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, said in the House that when war came, it would not be wanted by any of the major powers, but it came. Lord Grey could have taught Conservative Members far more about the nature of deterrence, the concept of defence and how wars break out than I can tonight.

There is a strong case for well co-ordinated, well-resourced civil emergency planning. The Government have already undermined that by their abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties and their replacement by boards, which, taking the words of Lord Whitelaw, will be difficult to make work effectively. They have further undermined that planning by having no coherent policy towards civil defence, but one that is confused between civil defence designed to deal with nuclear war, civil defence designed to cope with conventional war and civil defence designed to cope with emergency planning. Obviously one can overlap those three to some extent, but it is limited. That is a dangerous illusion. I share the view of several people inside and outside the House who think that if one leads people to believe that one can fight, win and survive a nuclear war, one increases the risks of such a war happening. Similarly, if one goes about it in such a way as to make one's opponent think that one is planning to win and survive a nuclear war, again, one increases the chances of it happening. The Government do not address themselves to that view.

There is another area that the Government do not address. It was interesting that only about two Conservative Members mentioned the nuclear winter. When they did, they mentioned it in such a way as to say that it is unproven. It came across to me that they do not want to believe that it is possible. I believe that it is probable. I certainly think that, once a nuclear war has broken out, it will be almost impossible to contain and that if we managed to contain it, that would be by luck rather than by an act of judgment. That is what makes it so profoundly dangerous and what has led so many people in the professions to say, having thought about the matter carefully, that it is not realistic to plan civil defence for the type of nuclear war that Conservative Members have talked about.

The British Medical Association is not a bunch of CND supporters. It is not known to comprise strong, card-carrying members of the Labour party. It might be among the group of whom the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead talked — well-spoken placemen of the Soviet Union—but I doubt it. It is a group of people which believes that it is not possible to plan effectively to deal with the consequences of nuclear war. It has said so clearly. Many scientists have said the same. Conservative Members, however, persist in talking about civil defence in the confused way that I have described, which suggests that they are clinging to concepts of the past. Another of the dangers of wars is that they tend to be fought on the assumptions of the previous war. Conservative Members are guilty of that serious misjudgment.

The hon. Member for Ilford, South rightly mentioned terrorists. The more weapons are available and the more they can be made and used, the greater is the likelihood of their being used. That is almost a mathematical fact, not just a statement on human behaviour. The hon. Gentleman is rightly worried about the terrorist threat and the threat of a minor Government having and using weapons of enormous potential. He must recognise that, as long as we continue to run the world on present assumptions, we are heading for every nation state having its own nuclear weapon to deter and every group in a state asking for a nuclear weapon to deter the other side. The greater the instability, the greater is the danger of that, and we need look no further than Lebanon to see it. There can be no civil defence in those circumstances.

I am not pretending that there is any simple solution. I do not believe that there is. Human beings have been too good at bashing each others' brains out for many thousands of years for me to give a simple solution from the Dispatch Box. The one lesson that comes over strongly from human history is that when we plan to fight wars, we tend to end up fighting them, and with the people we plan to fight. The more weapons are available, and the more that is spent on them, the greater the political instability and hence the greater the need for the authoritarian approach to national and international problems.

The hon. Member for Ilford, South would do well to dwell on what I have said in regard to what President Reagan has done with, I am sorry to say, the support of some Conservative Members, in Nicaragua. It is unacceptable to use terrorist methods. The mining of Nicaraguan harbours was an example of unacceptable behaviour and gave some Governments precisely the type of example that they are only too willing to follow. When the hon. Gentleman picks up clear statements by President Reagan against terrorism, he should put them in perspective and recognise that, when Western leaders such as President Reagan do such things, they feed the problem that they claim to oppose.

Mr. Neil Thorne: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that if we give up nuclear weapons or any other kind of weapons this will disinvent them from a terrorist point of view? Is he saying that they will discard any knowledge that they have acquired? That is not my understanding of the argument. If terrorists have this knowledge they will use it.

Mr. Soley: It is not, and it never has been, part of my argument that terrorists would automatically give up such weapons. My argument is that as the political system gets out of control, the more we spend on arms, the more unstable the political system becomes. Consequently, the more the spread of arms, and information about them, the more they are likely to be used. History is on my side. We have to reverse that process without further destabilising a system that is already dangerously unstable. I could refer the hon. Member for Ilford, South to many other examples of the case I am putting forward. If he believes that he can

solve this problem by spending more money on arms and civil defence, he is not only under a dangerous illusion but he is feeding fires that he would not wish to burn.

It has been an interesting debate. It has told us a great deal about the attitude of the Conservative party. It is out of touch with the political changes that have taken place in the world. What is even more important, it is dangerously out of touch with technological change. This Government have quite cheerfully disrupted and undermined the civil emergency planning that is available to this country, not least by their abolition of the metropolitan counties, rate capping, targeting and other public expenditure cuts.

3.42 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The House will have listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), but it will have heard the same siren voice calling from the other side as it has heard on other occasions. That voice says that if we seek to make ourselves strong we encourage conflict and that therefore we should seek to get rid of defence and lie down in the unilateralist path. I hope that all Conservative Members reject that argument. However, I understand the hon. Gentleman's difficulties in arriving at a theologically satisfactory position. He has managed to shelter behind the claim that the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the Greater London council is the biggest disincentive to civil defence that this country has yet seen.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on introducing this debate. As he rightly said, this is a rare occasion. It is possibly even more rare that we should be debating civil defence issues in the early hours of the morning. I congratulate also my hon. Friends who have taken part in the debate on their individual contributions.

My hon. Friend raised a number of issues. I shall deal with two of them at once. He asked the Government to confirm that they will amend the Civil Defence Act 1948. My hon. Friend knows that this was a manifesto commitment. Although the Government have not yet succeeded in finding a vehicle for it, the objective must be to achieve that during the next Session of Parliament. By means of a private Member's Bill a very important contribution could be made towards securing a major Government policy objective. We would prefer to consider that route, and to review our position should we fail to achieve our aim during next Session. However, that remains our commitment.

All my hon. Friends who spoke in the debate mentioned the grant aid to local authorities to ensure that civil defence planning is taken seriously. I understand that the 75 per cent. grant, which is considerable in terms of local authority expenditure, is not regarded as sufficient. A 100 per cent. grant is available for amongst other items the purchase of capital equipment for communications networks and centres. The grant aids available have not been in position for long, and we have not yet decided to review the 100 per cent. grant. But the pressure has been consistent, and was continued in the campaign recently launched by the National Council on Civil Defence, so I am bound to take it seriously. We should not close our minds to reviewing this matter in the light of the progress that we wish to make. I hope that I can convince my hon. Friends that, such is the extent of progress that we wish to make, if it should be shown that grant aid is a serious impediment to the pursuit of that progress, we shall consider the position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) asked about monitoring and reporting on local authority performance. I agree that we should do that, and I shall make arrangements to provide regular reports to the House on how local authorities proceed. My hon. Friend may recall that some answers have already been given on this matter, and I undertake to provide such information as we proceed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) urged full central funding, with which I have already dealt, and also introduced the concept of civil defence or civil emergency planning. I agree with my hon. Friend that that is not simply a change in nomenclature, but a change in policy. To start widening the concept of civil defence to include civil emergencies or emergency planning is a genuine attempt to recognise that, in today's world, that is probably a more effective way of describing the protection of the population, which is a duty of Government. I welcome my hon. Friend's suggestion, and I hope that we can offer—in our all-hazards approach—a reasonable answer to his point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) argued for a volunteer force. This is always an important factor in any major movement, and it is an aspect of preparation that makes Britain the envy of the world. My hon. Friend will be aware that about 13,000 people are involved as community volunteers, which is not a bad figure. In addition, we must remember the 11,000 people involved in the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation, which is probably the most effective organisation of its sort anywhere in Europe. This is a large cadre of people who give their time to preparing Britain for times of potential difficulty and conflict. However, I accept that we must find a way of ensuring that we have a corps of trained volunteers, and the local authority provision in the civil defence regulations will encourage this. I take on board my hon. Friend's commitment to the volunteer component of our civil defence plan.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) mentioned the civil disasters that have occurred, despite the fact that, for a considerable time, the western world has been at peace. He is right. The disasters in Bhopal, Seveso and Flixborough have reminded us, if we needed reminding, of the vulnerability of civil populations to major industrial or natural disasters. Again, this adds weight to his view that it is time to broaden the preparation for civil defence to include preparation for such civil emergencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) said that there should be better co-ordination with other Departments, and I accept that. The Home Office is the prime sponsor for civil defence, but almost every other Department is involved in emergency planning. Arrangements need to be made for matters such as fuel and emergency supplies, housing, environmental issues, health, food and so on. In the past, I agree that these things have tended to develop piecemeal, with emergency planning representing just one of the vast multitude of activities undertaken by each Department. Recently, we have taken two important initiatives. Centrally, we are developing a fully co-ordinated plan

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embracing all Departments, which will improve the effectiveness of our planning and enable us to pursue a balanced plan across Government as a whole.

Secondly, at regional level, we have started a pilot study that, over the next 18 months or so, will explore the scope for improving regional co-ordination of civil defence by all the agencies and services of Government and local government that have a part to play. I hope that my hon. Friend will take the assurance that not only do I accept what he says, but I have acted upon it, and will ensure better co-ordination of our policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) gave us, as he is always wont to do, a robust, full, tour d'horizon of the civil defence scene. He asked that we should commit ourselves to an all-hazards approach, and I accept that we should do so. He also referred to the 100 per cent. funding and the amendment of the 1948 Act. He spoke about Manpower Watch and extracting civil defence figures from that. In our examination of local authorities' performance, and in our monitoring, we shall be looking closely at the manpower figures as well as at the fulfilment of the regulations laid upon the authorities. I shall then bear in mind what he wished us to do.

My hon. Friend also spoke about terrorism. I understand the anxiety that he and the National Council for Civil Defence have about the terrorist threat. We are well aware of that threat in this country, and as my hon. Friend will recognise, we have an important role to play in counter-terrorism. I accept that in any civil emergency on any scale, the civil defence services will have a part to play, but if he is suggesting that civil defence has a role to play in counter-terrorism, I beg to differ. He must recognise that the Government's anti-terrorism policies are essentially covert and skilful and are not determined by large groups of people who are trained, albeit in a relatively small number of activities, to a reasonably high extent. We are dealing with a highly-skilled international threat, and something that requires a highly sensitive and sophisticated response. In that aspect of terrorism, I would not expect a civil defence body to play much part although I understand his point of view.

The threat of war and our foreign and defence policies are our starting point. Those policies and our membership of defensive alliances such as NATO, our participation in its policy of deterrence, and our determined effort with our allies to reach agreement on arms reduction and multilateral disarmament have been instrumental in giving us 40 years of peace in Europe. We have every reason to believe that this will continue. That is the fundamental background that allows us to review civil defence planning and to discuss it in a different context.

I should make it quite plain that we do not consider that war in Europe is at all probable, let alone inevitable. But I should also make it plain that it would be quite irresponsible to neglect entirely the remote possibility that war might come and that we might suffer attack. Civil defence must be seen in that light. It is a humanitarian and commonsense effort to reduce suffering and loss of life, and to enable the recovery of our country if such an attack should occur, whatever the twists and turns of contrary arguments offered. My hon. Friends have urged upon me the view that we should redefine our objectives in terms of civil emergencies, but we must keep in mind the need to prepare for certain emergencies, which may be military in character. Many detractors seek to cloud the issue, but the simple fact remains that if there is a threat and the realisation of that threat would bring disaster, it is our clear duty to take all reasonable steps to mitigate the likely effects.

When we took office in 1979, civil defence was still on a care and maintenance basis. Despite the difficult economic circumstance we inherited then, and the constraints on our economy now, we are today spending twice as much in real terms on civil defence as was being spent in 1980. Moreover, despite the continuing need to maintain control over public expenditure, we intend to pursue the planned provisions for civil defence over the next three years.

Let me turn to how this Government's commitment to civil defence has been realised. If this country was ever to come under attack, a warning of that attack, even if it was very short, could make a considerable difference to the number of survivors. Hence the importance of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation. That organisation is near to the completion of a substantial programme of improvement. It stands ready to warn of an attack and to monitor and disseminate information on the effects of hostilities. Its state of readiness is probably better than any other such organisation in any other country in the world. Even now we are giving consideration to how this efficient organisation could be adapted to deal with the needs of detection, warning and monitoring against the possibility of the chemical threat, which figures in our present planning assumptions.

Dr. Glyn: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if emergencies do arise in the form of a war, it is vital for the civilian and military sides to work in close co-operation? I have always said that the military should be in charge. If it is in charge, close co-operation, especially in communications, must take place.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend will recognise that in a war, there will be a high military component to civil defence. But in the planning we seek to establish now, what we are concerned with, and what on reflection perhaps my hon. Friend will agree we should be concerned with, is to supply a civil organisation based upon the local regions of this country and essentially through a regional authority structure. That is the basis of the present planning and the present commitment. Even now we are considering how this organisation could be adapted to deal with other threats.

Just when we needed the most effective direction of co-ordination of effort, communications would be at their weakest. For a time it would therefore be either difficult or impossible to sustain central control of essential functions. Plans for wartime decentralisation of Government are therefore a necessary part of our policy and we have recently overhauled and improved them.

We have an emergency communications network whose purpose is to support arrangements for decentralising Government so as to ensure that those in need could be helped as quickly as possible, and that the effort available is co-ordinated and directed in the most effective way. That network, vital to our emergency arrangements, is well into a substantial programme of modernisation which will further help to pull together all our plans and resources in time of need.

I have already stressed co-ordination within Whitehall in commenting upon the contribution by my hon. Friend

the Member for Dulwich. Co-ordination of planning, a feature of our central and regional initiatives in civil defence, is also a crucial factor at local authority level.

In that context, I come to the remarks of the hon. Member for Hammersmith. When the abolition Bill was proceeding, we took the view that the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties should result in civil defence functions being placed with the new joint fire boards. That is another illustration of how they should be working alongside a civil emergency procedure, which the fire services clearly are. We agreed to amend the Bill to ensure the same provision was made for the metropolitan counties.

Over the last few years, we have gradually extended our base for research and development into civil defence and we have developed an effective R and D programme.

A number of my hon. Friends mentioned public relations activity. I should mention our preparations for a new information booklet for the public and for a civil defence film—all material which we hope will set the record straight and do much to counter the misleading propaganda so beloved of Opposition hon. Gentlemen.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): What about the hon. Ladies?

Mr. Shaw: Indeed, there are hon. Gentlemen and hon. Ladies who prefer misleading information.

The Government are not confused by spurious and misguided arguments against the straightforward humanitarian case for protection of the public in time of emergency; we are getting on with the job. If the time should ever come when the plans needed to be put into operation, the case for civil defence will be crystal clear to all—even to those who now profess to doubt.

Let me outline the progress in civil defence preparedness by our local authorities. Last month we issued comprehensive emergency planning guidance to local authorities. It was a consolidation and revision of existing guidance and is designed to help local authorities to fulfil their humanitarian duty to prepare for the protection and survival of people in their area. It sets out the expanded planning assumptions, first issued in 1984, which in particular emphasise the possibility of conventional attack.

The former prominence of a nuclear attack in our planning assumptions has receded, and the guidance makes it clear that planning against conventional attack and planning flexibly are essential. That is an important part of the anxieties expressed by a number of my hon. Friends about how local authorities will get on with the job.

I accept that we need not only to monitor activity and to lay information before the House but to persuade local authorities to take their statutory obligations seriously. If they do not do so, the Government have powers to act and will use them if it is found that local authorities are failing to implement the 1983 regulations. The Government introduced the regulations, which lay statutory obligations on local authorities. They are required to make and to keep up to date plans for the protection of the people in time of war, to make plans for the use of buildings as public shelters, to plan for the accommodation of the homeless, to make arrangements for emergency feeding, to make plans for the recruitment and training of the many people who wish to volunteer their services in time of need—in short, they have to provide and maintain the services essential to the life of the community in time of tension and in war. The emergency planning guidance has been restructured to reflect those statutory responsibilities and to assist local authorities in their implementation.

Civil defence is a partnership between central and local government. That is what we must build on, by working together to improve our preparedness. The majority of local authorities recognise both their humanitarian and their statutory duties in civil defence.

We are determined that all local authorities shall meet their obligations. They have been asked to complete their plans by the end of the year and we intend to take stock of the situation at that point. We have made it clear that while we intend to proceed by reason and persuasion we shall hold in reserve the use of formal directions and the default powers available to us, and we shall not hesitate to use them if necessary.

We do not expect local authorities to go it alone. We have made available guidance and plans for them to do their job and we shall continue the existing rates of grant aid for civil defence expenditure. I have already said that we may wish to review that matter if we are unable to persuade local authorities to proceed on the present basis.

We have heard much about the need to plan for peacetime emergencies. Indeed, I accepted at the outset the importance of the all-hazards approach. We have long recognised that many of the problems faced locally in planning to alleviate the effects of war are the same in kind, if not in scale, as those in peacetime emergencies. The recent debate in another place called attention to the duty of the Government and local authorities to deal with peacetime emergencies and to provide civil defence in case of conventional, chemical or nuclear attack. There was widespread support on all sides of the House for planning against war and peacetime emergencies. No one argued that there were not similarities in the planning required, that they were not required, or that one should be undertaken without the other.

It was in recognition of this argument that our election manifesto committed us to legislate to allow civil defence resources to be used by local authorities to meet peacetime emergencies. Hence the importance of the amendment to the 1948 legislation, which will be a statutory expression of the Government's recognition that we should be prepared for any kind of disaster, be it military or civil.

As we see civil defence now, I recognise that the time is right to bring the all-hazards aspect of emergency planning to the fore. There is much that can be achieved by this approach. We need, as a matter of Government policy, to be committed to the premise that an all-hazards broadly based approach to civil defence is now the way to go forward.

The Government have raised the level of civil defence preparedness, and it is our firm intention that the performance will be maintained. We have done much in recent years to develop the co-ordination and planning of central Government. We have done much to encourage and guide the local authorities to play their vital part. We have made available the guidance and resources that they need to do their job. We have done much to modernise our civil defence facilities, when this has seemed necessary, and we are giving consideration to extending them where this might be of benefit. That, as I trust my hon. Friends will recognise, is a very good record of achievement, but there is much to be done centrally and locally. We intend

[Mr. Shaw]

to take what measures are necessary to ensure that the momentum which we have generated on civil defence is not lost. We are committed to civil defence in peace or war as a policy to provide a humanitarian response to all emergencies, military and civil, which may threaten our people. That is a prime duty of Government, and only a Conservative Government will deliver it.

Wages Councils

4.6 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Later today, Thursday 25 July, the Tory Government will communicate to the International Labour Organisation the instrument of denunciation of ILO convention No. 26. Hidden in that coded medieval language, which characterises much of the workings of this place, is an insolent attack, a malevolent and spiteful class attack, on some of the poorest paid workers in Britain today. In particular, by 25 July 1986, one year from today, the Tory Government intend to remove from the inadequate legal protection of the wages councils 500,000 young workers under the age of 21, as well as making cuts in other legal minimum employment protection for adult workers. The political attitudes and intentions behind that announcement, and the effect which it would have, if brought about, I shall deal with later.

The debate, although it takes place at 4 o'clock in the morning, could not begin without a mention of how and when that announcement was made. On Monday 15 July, Tory Members of Parliament were falling over themselves, as were Cabinet Ministers, to bask in the reflected glory of the generosity of people following the Live Aid concert the previous Saturday, when a reported £50 million was raised for famine relief in Africa. Let us leave aside the hypocrisy of a Government who have cut aid in real terms, run down industries such as the bus and truck plants at Bathgate and elsewhere which, in a sane society, could have provided crucial transport, and who have co-operated in the stockpiling of massive food mountains in Coventry and throughout the country when a quarter of the world's population is hungry. Even leaving that aside, for the Government to laud the efforts of young people one weekend and, three days later, on Wednesday 17 July, to attack many of those same young people would be breathtaking if we had not understood the real nature of this capitalist Government by their actions in the previous six years.

Twenty-four hours later, on Thursday, after saying that young workers on wages as low as £29·70 per week were pricing themselves out of jobs, the Government offered the generals, the judges and the top civil servants, whose wages were already 20 or 25 times that received by young workers, an increase of 30, 40 and 50 per cent. to give them an incentive—rises which, in the words of the Prime Minister,

"can be regarded not only by themselves but also by Parliament and the public as fair but not generous".—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 219.]

Although £500 a week for Sir Robert Armstrong may not be generous in his terms or those of the Government, fair is not the word that young people have used for such a rise.

The announcement on 17 July stated that the Government intended to remove all under-21s from the legal protection of minimum wages. The Government often quote in this House examples from abroad. It is worth pointing out that if that denunciation takes place later today, Britain will be the only industrialised country in the world without legal minimum wages for young workers.

During previous debates and at Question Time Labour Members have been told, "Look to Europe." I asked the Secretary of State this week to cite examples. He referred me to a document in the Library, the most recent version

of which was 1983. I picked the nearest and most comparable European countries to see whether young workers in Europe are so much more badly paid than young workers in Britain that the Government's need to drive down their wages had any validity. The figures were for December 1983. In France, the minimum wage for a 16-year old was £60 per week, for a 17-year old it was £66·40 and for an 18-year old and over £74. In Luxembourg, at 16 it was £52; at 17, £60; at 18 and over £74·40. Skilled workers receive 20 per cent. higher rates. In Holland it started a little lower at 16—£36·57. At 17 it was £41·87; at 18 £48; at 21, £76.

It is interesting to note the enforcement of those minimum wage rates for young people in European countries. In France it stretches from fines on employers of £100 to £250 per worker found underpaid to a point where if that is repeated within a year of the infringement the fines rise to £500 per worker and 10 days' imprisonment for the employer. Those are the examples the Secretary of State told me to look at in the Library to prove his point that young workers in Europe were getting far less than young workers in Britain. The truth is the opposite.

The Government's claim that removing the protection of young workers' wages would reduce unemployment was never the intention. For the past six years the Government have used mass unemployment to cow the trade union movement into some form of submission, to drive down the wages, both directly and indirectly, of working people, purely to raise the rates of profit for the employers and industrialists that the Tory party represents in Parliament. In particular, they have sought to put into the bank balances of a few tens of thousands of the super-rich shareholers the wealth that has and will be stolen from workers, especially young workers.

Unemployment in this country has nothing to do with the wage rates paid to workers. It is certainly not, as Tory Members and Ministers try to portray, the fault of workers on £30 or £50 a week. It is worth noting the wage rates for under-21s. The lowest rate paid to a 16-year-old under the wages councils is £29·71. It would not pay for a "decent" meal for one or two Tory Members of Parliament. The lowest wage for a 17-year-old is £34·11. That would not cover a week's gin and tonics for some hon. Members. For 18-year-olds it is £37·50, and the lowest adult rate is £47·50.

I have in front of me the rates for the largest industries covered by wages councils. For clothing, it is £59 for under 18-year olds—£41 at 16. For hairdressing it is £31·75 for first-year apprentices. The highest minimum wage is £68·50 for a worker after two years of training. For hotels, the wage is £55, or £69 for those over 18. For licensed premises which are residential, the wage is £44·16 for a 17-year-old, going up to £52, with £72 being the highest minimum rate of pay. For shops, the rate is £47 a week, £45 for non-food shops. The lowest rate, in the toy manufacturing industry, is £29·71 a week. Yet the Tories are trying to tell working people that those rates must be driven even lower if youth unemployment is to be reduced.

Why has employment not gone up in Britain, particularly in the last six years? The one most important reason is that there has been a deliberate refusal by employers and industrialists to invest, particularly in manufacturing industry. According to leading British banks, there is now an estimated gap, which needs to be bridged by new investment, between Britain and the major countries of the Common Market, Japan and America of £200 billion. That must be applied to manufacturing investment if we are to catch up with the productivity levels and competitiveness of those advanced capitalist countries.

That is 35 or 40 times as much as is invested in manufacturing industry in any one year in Britain. That is why British industry does not produce goods as quickly and as cheaply as its competitors. It has nothing to do with wages in hairdressing, hotels, shops, clothing or catering. The fault lies in the fact that under the Tories manufacturing investment has fallen. We have even reached the stage when for every £1 of a machine that wears out, only 84p of a new machine is put in its place.

The action of those who take the profits and run rather than reinvest in manufacturing industry has meant that for the first time in 400 years, Britain is importing more factory-made goods than it exports. From being the workshop of the world, this country is becoming the warehouse of the world as cookers, fridges, washing machines, TVs, cars—the products of whole sections of industry—are imported. The rate of those imports is at or over 50 per cent. of sales in Britain.

That lack of investment has nothing to do with a lack of money in Britain. Since the Tories lifted exchange controls, employers and industrialists have sent their money abroad. About £50 billion has gone to South Africa, Brazil, Argentina and other countries where, in the main, wage rates are kept low, often by military dictatorships through the barrel of a gun.

Perhaps the yardstick that Cabinet Ministers have for working people in this country is to reduce wage rates to what they determine Third world countries such as Bangladesh have already established. That is the impression that anyone would have from reading the reports of the Government's advisers. For example, when Sir John Hoskins, who now runs the Institute of Directors, was adviser to the Prime Minister, he wrote four years ago a paper that led to the establishment of the youth training scheme.

His aim for the scheme has been to increase the differential between the wages of young people and adults, and we know what has happened as a result of that aim. If the allowances for youngsters on YTS courses had gone up since April 1978 by the rate of inflation or in line with wage rates generally, they should be receiving £40 a week. Instead, they are getting £26·25. That is the bench mark that the Government have in mind for the abolition of wage protection. Their aim is to drive down wages to supplementary benefit and YTS levels.

Their argument is that that will create jobs. Where is the evidence to substantiate that claim? In the last five years, according to information supplied to me by the Department of Employment, young people's wages relative to adult wages have fallen by 12 per cent. for boys and 13 per cent. for girls, and during the same period youth unemployment has trebled. It is clear that driving down young people's wages has not increased their employment prospects.

Wages councils cover almost 3 million workers and about 90 per cent. of them work in the councils' major industries, such as hairdressing, catering, shops, clothing and hotels. They are part of an army of 9 million low-paid workers. Wages council industries offer average adult wages of £60-£70 and £40-£50 to most young workers.

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

The councils were established at the turn of the century in New Zealand, and in Britain in 1909, and their influence was extended during the 1920s. They were seen then, as they are seen by many employers now, as a tool to prevent or settle industrial disputes and to head off trade union organisation. Two or three months ago, the CBI—this was reflected in an editorial in the *Financial Times*—advanced that reason in explaining why it was not in favour of the abolition of the councils. It fears that the next Labour Government will institute a national minimum wage and that trade unions will move into the old wages council areas and recruit.

In the next 12 months before the wages councils are subject to changes, I hope that working people, through the trade unions, the Labour party and organisations such as the youth trade union rights campaign, will turn the CBI's nightmare into a reality.

I do not intend to spend the summer during the parliamentary recess on holiday, on lecture tours or writing books. Instead, I shall endeavour to identify each and every young worker in Coventry who will lose the minimum legal protection of the wages councils if they are abolished in a year's time. I shall make sure that the appropriate trade unions recruit them, such as USDAW, the TGWU and GMBATU. The youth trade union rights campaign can play a similar role nationally. In the past four years we know that thousands on the YOP and YTS schemes have joined trade unions because of our campaigns and those of trade unions.

Ministers say that although it was all right to set up wages councils in the 1920s to deal with "sweating"—the payment of extremely low wages—they are not appropriate in the 1980s. We are moving towards "sweating", but there are 8,000 millionaires in Britain, twice the number that existed when the Government took office. Over 1 million people earn more than £20,000 a year, but there are 9 million who are low-paid. Members of Parliament are on a minimum of £300 a week and many Tories have a few other jobs—some have 10 or 15 other jobs. Cabinet Ministers are on £400 or £500. How can they understand what it is like trying to eke out £40 or £50 a week?

Workers deserve decent minimum rates of pay. That is what I have tried in this Session to introduce a couple of Private Members Bills on minimum wages and conditions. In one Bill I sought to set a national minimum wage, in line with TUC and Labour party policy, of £115 for a 35-hour week with a guaranteed minimum rate of 75 per cent. for 16 year-olds and 85 per cent. for 17 year-olds. It sought minima in other areas—for example, five weeks' holiday and an hourly rate of £3·28 to protect part-timers. I sought to introduce a private Member's Bill on working conditions for Government trainees. Its purpose was to introduce trade union rates of pay and organisation rights to Government training schemes, with a minimum payment of £55 a week. Of course, Tory Members argue that such a measure would price young workers out of jobs.

I heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer say that if only we could have a 1 per cent. fall in wage rates, 150,000 new jobs could be created. Where is the evidence for that? Over the past 10 years, wages council rates as a percentage of average wages have fallen from 73 per cent. to 65 per cent., yet unemployment has rocketed. If it is true that high wages cause unemployment, why is there no condemnation from the Treasury Bench of the wages of Riachard Giordano, the highest paid director in Britain, who is on £13,000 a week as the managing director of British Oxygen? Why is there no condemnation of the pay rises of generals, judges and high-ranking civil servants over the past week? Why is there no condemnation of the bank chiefs? The head of Barclays is on £132,000 a year while the heads of Lloyds, the Midland and the Nat-West are on £113,000, £84,000 and £105,000 respectively. Why is there no condemnation of the top 100 directors who, between 1981 and 1983, took pay rises of 61 per cent.? Why is there no condemnation of the average chief executives who, according to *The Guardian* yesterday, have average wages of £55,000 a year—an 11·5 per cent. increase on last year? We are told that 95 per cent. of board members get company cars, that the company bears the maintenance costs of those cars for 98 per cent. of board members, that 73 per cent. of board members receive loans at preferential interest rates for house purchases, that three quarters receive free medical insurance and that 61 per cent. get free or subsidised lunches. There is no condemnation of those people that their high wages cause unemployment.

Why do not Tory Members of Parliament explain what it is like to be at the bottom of the pile in regions like the west midlands? According to a report published four or five weeks ago by the West Midlands Low Pay Unit,

> "Sexual harassment, verbal abuse, unpaid overtime, dirty conditions and wages as low as 48p an hour have been uncovered by an investigation into the plight of working teenagers in the Midlands.
>
> A girl machinist, aged 16, complained that female staff were left in no doubt how they could find an extra £10 in their pay packet by an employer who regularly tried to touch her breast; a clerk typist, aged 19, received £25 for a 49-hour week; an employee, aged 18, with 11 O levels, earned just £32·25 a week, while a young roofer was paid £6 for 12½ hours' overtime.
>
> Other youngsters spoke of spider-infested lavatories, no meal breaks, and getting annual holiday entitlements of 10 days after two years' service."

I appreciate the fact that many of the examples in the report do not concern industries that were covered by wages council legislation. Unfortunately, for hundreds of thousands of young workers, that is the reality of the low-wage, ice cream economy which the Tory Government are attempting to introduce.

The abolition of wages council protection for the under 21-year-olds will do nothing to increase the number of jobs. The Under-Secretary of State may trawl up the favourite quote of Ministers in these debates from a pamphlet written by Henry Neuberger for the Low Pay Unit. He said that the Treasury computer estimated that the total abolition of the wages councils could create 8,000 jobs in five years. What does that mean? It means 16 jobs per constituency when the average level of official unemployment is 5,000 per constituency. That is 64 jobs in Coventry. In the last week of June 1985, there were 1,000 redundancies in Coventry. We know that 17,000 people have not had a job for more than a year and that 10,000 of them have not worked for between two and five years. According to the Chancellor, we are supposed to be in the fifth successive year of economic growth. Half a million of the 1·5 million young people out of work have not had a job since leaving school.

The last "great scheme" that the Tory Government introduced to reduce unemployment was the young workers scheme, which gave a direct subsidy to employers

to reduce wages. An analysis of that scheme by a House Committee showed that three quarters of the jobs covered by that scheme were already there and that 80 per cent. of the additional jobs were jobs taken from adults to be given to young people.

That is what the abolition of the wages councils will be like. It will be about fiddling the figures, because that is the only solution that the Government come up with to reduce unemployment. They say, "Switch the unemployment among the age groups. Forget about the over-55s; they will not get a job anyway. They do not matter. Forget about most young people when they are leaving school. Just alter the statistics, either on a geographical or an age basis." That is the redefinition of unemployment that the Government come up with.

Just because I oppose the abolition of the protection of the wages councils for the under 21-year-olds, that does not mean that I am merely in favour of the retention of existing powers. I favour a campaign by the trade unions to which I referred — including the TGWU, USDAW and GMBATU — to recruit workers to the movement. Wages councils are by no means perfect. What minimal protection they have provided has been consciously obstructed over the past five or six years by the Tory Government.

Wages councils' inspections have decreased since 1979 from about 50,000 to fewer than 40,000. A quarter of inspections showed underpayment. Are there many prosecutions? Starting in 1981, the prosecutions for the past four years were eight, seven, two and two. Although there were about 9,000 illegal underpayers in 1984, there were only two prosecutions. The average fines for infringement of the wages councils' orders decreased from £466 in 1981 to £107 for the two prosecutions in 1984.

The Conservative party is supposed to stand for law and order. When it finds 9,000 employers evading the law, does it sharpen the law, increase inspectors' powers, or ensure that the law is obeyed? No, because its business friends are involved. It alters the law to let them off the hook. During the past five years the Government have cut the wages councils' budgets by £2·5 milion in real terms, that is a 36 per cent. cut. They have cut the number of ors inspectors from 158 in 1979 to 115 in 1984. Whereas in 1979 every establishment covered by a wages council order expected to be visited on average once in seven years five months, now it is once in nine years three months. In the west midlands it is once in 12 years six months. The Government have cut the number of inspectors, and even the number of miles that they are allowed to travel. All that is to let the Government's business friends off the hook.

At the beginning of the week I asked the Secretary of State some questions to provide information for the debate. I have already used some of the facts. I sought information on his statement last week to clarify some of his points. I asked how many young workers would be affected by the announcement. If the Department of Employment thought that there would be more jobs, it could at least have identified through wages councils the number of youngsters that would be affected. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), replied,

"This information is not available."

I asked him to estimate the costs to businesses of complying with the wages council's orders. It is said to be expensive for them to comply. He answered

"It is not possible to make such an estimate."

I asked him to give the average level of wages of young people by region, the level of unemployment of young people by region, and whether the Department could prove that where young people received higher wages there was also higher unemployment, but that information was not available. I suggest that it is available. All the Minister must do, as I found out today, is to look in the Central Statistical Office's regional trends document, where he will find that the lowest wage areas, such as the north of England, the west midlands, northern Ireland and Wales, have the highest level of youth unemployment.

I asked the Minister how many jobs he expected to be created by the proposal, and he replied

"We expect the reforms to create employment opportunities, but there are obvious difficulties in forecasting the number which will eventually be created."

The obvious difficulty is that the number cannot be forecast because the measure will not create new jobs.

On 17 July the Secretary of State specifically said that in a number of cases he could name the individual young people who had had to be sacked when their employers discovered what the minimum legal wages were. I asked the Minister to give examples of those cases, and he replied

"A number of such cases have been referred to in responses to the consultative paper, letters to Ministers and reports from wages inspectors."

He ducked the question and did not provide the examples that the Secretary of State promised.

Abolition of the wages councils for the under-21s is a deliberate, calculated attack on young workers who see no future under this Tory Government in a capitalist system. This summer, just over 500,000 youngsters left school — 517,000 to be precise — and they chase 12,355 vacancies at the careers offices. In England, the odds against getting a job at a careers office is 37 to 1; in Wales, 129 to 1; and in Scotland, 144 to 1. At the beginning of June, 46 per cent. of all careers offices had 10 or fewer vacancies in England. In Scotland the figure was 94 per cent., and in Wales it was 95 per cent.

A total of 51 careers offices did not have one vacancy on offer for young people in their areas, and another 36 had only one vacancy on offer. That is the reality of mass unemployment for young people in a Tory Britain. Abolition of the wages councils' legal provision of the maintenance of wages for the under-21s will not provide jobs for them. That will be done only by a Socialist Labour Government who take control of the economy and plan it in a rational way.

That can be done by sharing out what work is available; through shortening the working week to 35 hours, which could create 1·5 million jobs; through lowering the retirement age; and by bringing together the needs of working people with those whose skills are lying idle on the dole under this Tory Government.

By bringing together the needs of the 6 million people at present living in damp houses and the skills of 400,000 building workers who are denied the chance to build houses, and through the public ownership of construction and finance companies, it would be possible for a Labour Government to build 1 million houses a year. That would provide genuine training and apprenticeships for tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of young school leavers.

The Socialists and Marxists in the Labour party are often called the wreckers in society. But this Tory Government are the real Luddites of the 20th century. They have destroyed numerous steel and car plants and

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

engineering facilities; and they have denied the chance of decent jobs to school leavers and young people. Their type of society cannot use the production that those plants generate. Their type of society wastes 30 per cent. of industrial capacity in Britain today and condemns 20 per cent. of the working population to unemployment. Their type of society puts 9 million people on low pay and 9·7 million people in a position in which they cannot afford a week's holiday away from home without staying with relatives. Millions more rely on supplementary benefit.

Their type of Government and society has turned the city of Coventry from the richest working class city in Britain 15 years ago to a city where, this month, 50 per cent. of the population must rely on state benefits. Today they are saying to hundreds of young workers in Coventry and to 500,000 young workers throughout the country that their wages of £40 to £50 a week are too high in Maggie's Britain of 1985.

Despite this debate being held at 4 o'clock in the morning, I use this time to issue a warning to the Government. Their attacks on young people, their cuts in supplementary and housing benefits, their use of YTS as industrial conscription, and their attempts to create a cheap labour, ice cream economy in Britain in 1985 will produce a new generation of Socialist class fighters.

In April this year, 250,000 15 and 16-year-old school students went on a half-day strike against the plans for compulsory YTS. Out of their ranks will come not only the new Labour voters of the next general election but the new shop stewards and union organisers of the 1980s and 1990s. They have been steeled in the harshness of Tory economic reality, and understand that the only language which this Government and the employers who back them respect is the language of industrial muscle and struggle.

Young people can see the divisions in the Tory party which we have experienced in the last day or two. They realise the desperate nature of a Government prepared to spend £6,000 million to try to crush the NUM. They watch an insane Government spending billions of pounds on useless weapons of mass destruction, on tax cuts to the super rich, and on stockpiles of food while hundreds of millions go hungry in various parts of the world.

British society over the next 10 or 15 years is approaching a crossroads, where genuine democratic Socialism will be posed as a realistic alternative to this form of government. When that happens the attempts to abolish the protection — the minimal protection — of young workers under the age of 21 of the existing wages councils orders will be seen in retrospect as one of the nails not only in the coffin of this Government but also of Conservatism, monetarism, and capitalism.

4.41 am

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Despite the lateness of the hour, I very much welcome this opportunity to debate the Government's proposals announced recently seriously to undermine and weaken further the wages councils that provide some protection to some of the lowest paid workers in the country. The Government's announcement, on 17 July, on the future of wages councils was publicised in a rather limited way. The impression given in publicity around the country was that young workers were the only group to suffer as a consequence of this announcement.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has made clear, young workers will suffer significantly, but they will not be the only ones to suffer, as I shall show. The Minister and the Government must have been very pleased that, amongst others they sought to mislead about their intentions, can be included whoever writes the leader of *The Guardian*. There was an extraordinary leader on this matter suggesting that the Government's climb-down on the wages council issue showed a new outbreak of consensus politics by the Government and a new form of Thatcherism. Indeed, the leader suggested that all reasonable people agreed that young people should be exempted from the protection of the wages councils. That is an amazing assertion. Also it did not seem to recognise that the Government's intention is to weaken further the protection the wages councils afford to adult workers.

Of course, not only are the young people who are currently protected to be undermined, but the definition of young people is to be extended to 21 years from the 18 years that normally applies now. Thus, a larger group will be included in the definition.

Beyond that, there is a planned significant weakening in the protection of adults. For example, in future, there will be no protection for adult workers in wages council industries in relation to their holidays; there will be no protection for piece rate workers. In my old constituency of Ladywood—and this is typical of many areas in the West Midlands—we have had a very rapid growth in textile sweat-shops employing significant numbers of Asian women workers at extraordinarily low rates of pay, almost all of whom are paid at piece rates and work in real Victorian sweat-shop conditions. Of course, the Government's announcement means that all of those who are currently protected by the provisions of wages councils will lose that protection.

There will be no protection for shift workers and no guaranteed minimum rate, so that workers can be sent home on any day at any time without any guaranteed minimum income in the week. There will be no differentials for skilled workers.

Therefore, this attack announced by the Government on 17 July is not just an attack on young workers, serious as that is. It is an attack on all people in this country who are currently protected by wages councils. *The Guardian* leader writer should really look more seriously at what the Government actually announced. All of this is only part of a further unfolding of the strategy that has been operating since 1979. As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East made perfectly clear, the Government have adopted policies that have deliberately increased unemployment in order to restructure the labour market. They have also aimed to cut taxes for the rich and those on high levels of income, and to increase their income, the latest example of which we argued about only yesterday.

The Government tell us that somehow the well off will work harder only if they are paid more and taxed less, and those on low incomes will work harder only if they are taxed more and paid less. That is a paradox. The Government's philosophy since 1979 is that our economy will be more efficient if the rich are richer and the poor are poorer, we shall all work harder and have more incentives, so somehow greater wealth will be created. Here we are six years later and our economy is devastated, and those of us who represent constituencies in the west

midlands see it before our eyes every day of the week as the closure of factories spreads throughout our region. It is clear that apart from the unacceptable nature of the Government's policy in terms of social justice, it is not working economically either.

However, the Government have been successful in their aims in bringing about the restructuring of the labour market. For example, the proportion of male manual workers earning less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold has doubled since 1979 from one in 10 to one in five. The proportion of manual women workers earning less than poverty wages is up from two in three to four in five over the same period. The number of families forced to rely on family income suplement to top up their low wages has trebled since 1979. In total in Britain today some 8 million adult workers—one third of the entire adult work force—now earn low wages, but the figure excludes young people, homeworkers and many people working in small firms who do not show up in the official statistics.

The overall result—and this is the success of the Government's strategy so far—has been a dramatic widening in inequalities. According to recently published Treasury figures, the highest paid males have enjoyed increases in their real net pay 10 times as large as those enjoyed by the poorest. As the *Financial Times* commented on 31 May 1985,

"The Government has frequently given real wage increases as one of the causes for high unemployment, and argued that lower pay was needed to price people back into jobs. However, the figures show that real take home pay of the poorest single workers fell by nearly six per cent. in the three years to April 1982, the period during which unemployment was rising most rapidly."

Therefore, the Government have been enormously successful in their aim. Up to now they have managed massively to cut the income of the lowest paid and increase that of the highest paid. They now wish to go further down that road. They are currently using two instruments to attack low-paid workers. The first, privatisation, attacks low-paid workers in the public sector. The whole point of privatisation is to offer lower wages than those currently available to workers in the public sector by requiring them to reapply for their jobs at lower rates. That is proceeding quite effectively and cleverly around the land. The second instrument attacks workers in the private sector who are currently protected by wages councils. Those are the measures that the Government announced on 17 July.

In order to achieve that disreputable aim, the Government have been required to denounce the International Labour Organisation convention. They gave notice recently of their intention to do so. The original constitution of the ILO, of which the United Kingdom was a founder member, included

"the provision of an adequate living wage"

among its objectives, Member states agree to seek to ensure

"the payment to the employed of a wage adequate to maintain a reasonable standard of life as this is understood in their time and country."

ILO convention 26, which requires signatory Governments to maintain minimum wage machinery to protect the most vulnerable workers

"has become one of the most widely accepted instruments of the ILO."

As the Institute of Personnel Management recently noted:

"No country which has ratified Convention No. 26 has denounced it. The Government's denunciation of the Convention will, as the Confederation of British Industry commented last year, embarrass the UK internationally, particularly in the context of penalising competition from less developed countries on the grounds that they are sweatshop labour."

The Government have already faced some international embarrassment. The ILO has concluded that the United Kingdom is in breach of the agreement, at any rate for failing to provide adequate and properly enforced minimum wage protection. The Government have deliberately cut the number of wages inspectors, so the law is not being enforced. The ILO says that almost all countries now operate minimum wage systems. The Council of Europe has reported that the United Kingdom is in breach of the European social charter for failing to maintain a reasonable standard of remuneration for large numbers of wage earners.

The Government's intention to weaken wages councils and to exempt young people up to the age of 21 will affect—the Government will not give us the figures but those who study these matters have given us the approximate figure—about 500,000 young people. That is about one in three of all young people in their first job, or one in five of all young workers who will lose the protection of wages councils. The older workers, whose protection will be much diminished, are mostly low-paid women workers, and a significant number of them are black.

The Minister knows that all this is being done simply on the basis of dogma and ideology. There is no evidence to suggest that jobs will be produced. The Minister and others gave evidence to the Employment Select Committee which concluded that there was no evidence for the claim that the proposals which will reduce the protection and wages of some of the lowest paid workers will produce new jobs in significant numbers. Instead, we have an attack on the living conditions, rights and employment protection of some of the most vulnerable workers in the land.

We are to encourage bad employers who are unable to organise their workplaces efficiently and to invest at a significant level. The Government's inspiration is to make Britain the sweatshop of the developed world. Britain is a low-wage economy. Compared with any other developed countries, our wage levels are low and the Government want to reduce them even further.

The Labour party is utterly opposed to these proposals and we intend to make it as difficult as possible for the Government to implement them. When we are restored to power—we hope that that will be sooner rather than later—we shall reverse the thrust of this policy and go further than restoring the current level of wages council protection. It is our policy to introduce a national minimum wage because our inspiration is to have a high-wage, high skill, high tech economy in Britain rather than the sweatshop economy that the Government offer.

4.53 am

The Parliament Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The first time that the three hon. Members who will have spoken in this debate came together was in the debate on low pay on 15 February 1984 at column 325-26. I should like to tell the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) that his voice has lost nothing since then. His argument has, I suspect, gained nothing either, except that he has given nearly accurately descriptions of the answers that I have

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

done my best to provide him with for this debate so that he could inform his speech. He has put forward a robust and loud argument for his views.

I suggest to anyone who comes to this debate on paper that they would find greatest value in some of the hon. Gentleman's concluding remarks. They should pay attention to his threat to spend the summer going around his constituency talking to young people. Leaving aside the levity that might be tempting at this time of the morning, I seriously encourage the hon. Gentleman, when talking to young people, to ensure that they consider the opportunities that may be available to them to train, to improve skills and to take jobs that are available now.

There is common agreement that it will take time for legislation to be put before the House on wages councils. No significant changes will be made to young people's pay rates for about a year. As the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East pointed out, the ILO convention prevents this country from benefiting from de-ratification, so during the next 12 months it is important that each Member of Parliament should do everything possible to help young people to find the best opportunities that are available to them. Whatever hon. Members' views about the youth training scheme may be—and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) for not airing, as usual, her views on YTS in this debate——

Ms. Clare Short: It is a long time since I said anything about it.

Mr. Bottomley: I was acknowledging that fact. The hon. Lady is slipping back into her usual habit of answering not only other Members' questions but even my own. I hope that hon. Members will encourage young people to consider seriously the options that are now available to them.

At the heart of the debate about low pay and young people, or wages councils and young people, is the pay and jobs link. This is not a mechanistic link. There may be a mechanistic element to it, but the greatest change in the employment opportunities for young people comes about when people set out to make it possible for more young people to be employed—when they remember the needs of young people instead of forgetting them. I do not know whether the hon. Lady can tell me how many people under the age of 18 are employed by the Labour party. I doubt whether she can, and it is unfair to ask an off-the-cuff question like that.

There is one sector that has never been attached to a wages council but that has an industrial agreement very similar to a wages council agreement. It covers the same sort of detail but goes rather further on training. If somebody were to say, "If the starting rate for a 16-year-old were to be reduced from £42 a week to £28 a week, what do you think the job impact would be? How many more job opportunities would be created?" some people would reply, "I do not think that any more jobs would be created", while others would say, "How can one tell?" If somebody gave the second answer, it would be possible for people to make the obvious comment, as the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East did in his speech, that the Government have made no big claim about precisely how many jobs they think will be created and therefore we should not believe that any more jobs will be created.

The fact is that in the only example for which we have figures, which is integrated with YTS, 850 people were taken on when the starting rate was £42 a week. Within a year the number went up to 2,500, in the following year to over 3,000 and in the year after that to over 3,000 again. In one relatively small industrial sector the number of jobs for 16-year-olds went up from 850 to over 3,000.

Mr. Nellist: That was thanks to Frank Chapple.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman accurately says that that was thanks to Frank Chapple. But it is not only a question of thanks to the electricians' union and to the electrical contractors. This has been of great benefit to young people. Apart from having found a welcome rung on the ladder, there was quality training and an independent future for young people, working either for a firm or as independent electricians. Nobody regards the electrical contracting training scheme as inadequate. In fact, it ought to be a model for other industries.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister is talking about "jobs". They are not jobs; they are training places. It is easy to say that, because the YTS allowance has been reduced from what its real value should have been—£40—to £26·25, about 500,000 youngsters have gone through YTS. It does not alter the fact that most of those youngsters will not find jobs when they complete their training. His argument is that more jobs will be created by reducing wages, so the example does not support his argument.

Mr. Bottomley: The assertions that I have made and the facts that I have described are slightly more limited than the hon. Gentleman believes. I was making the point that, had we been asked in 1982—we were not, because Parliament had no standing in this—what would be the training places consequence of that agreed change in the starting rate of pay or allowance for 16-year-olds, none of us could have predicted it with accuracy.

Ms. Clare Short: I am sure that the Minister does not intend to mislead anyone who might read what he is saying. It will not do to talk about replacing real, permanent jobs with a salary by a scheme financed by the Government, or to argue that that tells us anything about the consequences of cutting wages. We could debate for ever the desirability of that agreement with the EETPU and the merits or demerits of the youth training scheme, but the Minister's example does not fit the point that he is trying to argue.

Mr. Bottomley: I have no doubt that if the hon. Lady and I were on the same Standing Committee we could explore these matters at a rather more sensible hour than this. The fact remains that if, in 1982, she had been asked how many more people would be taken on, she would not have got the answer right. Nor would I. That is one reason why I told the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East in a written reply that one could not estimate some of those figures.

It is worth challenging one point made by the hon. Lady. I am sure that, on reflection, she will realise that she could have phrased her remarks differently. She claimed that the Government were setting out, through tax policy, to make the low paid worse off. I do not claim to have quoted her directly. I do not know whether she has made an estimate of the gain from the Budget announcements

on tax, national insurance and family income supplement to a married man on low pay, with a non-earning wife and two children.

Ms. Clare Short: Yes.

Mr. Bottomley: Will the hon. Lady give us the figures?

Ms. Clare Short: I can tell the Minister about the effects, not only of the Budget, but of tax policy since 1979. A married couple earning about £95 a week, with two children, now pay 60 per cent. more tax than they did in 1978-79. A single person on a similar wage now pays 26·1 per cent. in income tax and national insurance—an increase of 10 per cent. on the proportion paid in 1978-79. Despite the small cuts in income tax for most people, the low paid have suffered from an increase in their overall tax burden due to greatly increased national insurance contributions and indirect taxes, such as VAT. That goes beyond the Budget, but that is the position. The Minister has nothing to boast about.

Mr. Bottomley: A great advantage of the Consolidated Fund debate is that we can have a debate. I asked the hon. Lady whether she has, or has asked for, any estimates of what the changes proposed in the 1985 Budget on tax, national insurance and FIS would mean to a married person on low pay, with a non-working wife and two children.

Mr. Nellist: The replacement of family income supplement by family credit will have a direct effect on the low paid, because it will encourage more low-paying employers to continue to pay low wages. They can be directly subsidised by the Government. It would also increase the stigma among the low paid, because that supplement will be paid through the employer. Perhaps most importantly, the provision removes money from the wife, who normally has responsibility for bringing up the family—who can claim family income supplement now —and pays it to the wage earner, who is usually the man. It removes a sizeable chunk of money from the control of the wife. There are changes in the Budget that, on that one item of family income credit, will be directly detrimental to the low-paid in Britain.

Mr. Bottomley: One of the troubles in almost any debate involving the hon. Members for Coventry, South-East and for Ladywood is that I spend my time listening carefully to what they are saying, and they spend very little time listening carefully to what I am saying. The hon. Gentlemen is talking about the social security reviews and not the Budget. The answer to the question that I put to both hon. Members is nearly £10 a week. The level of gross pay that would be needed to translate into nearly £10 a week is nearly £25 a week.

I recognise that I am talking about people with families rather than those without family responsibilities, but is one seriously going to argue for the minimum pay route along the lines suggested by the hon. Member for Coventry South-East, which will have the effect of driving many people out of work, and concentrating most of the extra funds on those who do not have family responsibilities? Both the Labour party and the Tory party will have to start thinking about that carefully.

One cannot go through life arguing, as people have, that the position of all those on low pay should be raised so that everyone at work can meet the needs of a full household with dependent children from their income. I know that the hon. Member for Ladywood would not suggest that, and perhaps in about a year's time we shall have the opportunity to debate these issues at greater length.

I prefer to stick to two or three essential points. There is a philosophical argument about legislation to forbid people to offer and take pay at anything up to two and a half times the amount of income that they could get if they were unemployed and getting unemployment pay. The Government have taken the view that it is right to keep wages councils and wages council orders on hourly rates for adults. There have been times when it was thought that we would abolish wages councils altogether. The hon. Member for Ladywood accused me of planting stories in the newspapers to that effect——

Ms. Clare Short: The hon. Gentleman did.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady did not listen to the answer that I gave her in employment questions, when the matter first came up, but perhaps we shall get used to each other in time.

My predecessor spelt out in the debate in February 1984 the fact that we had been looking seriously at those who are forced into greatest poverty by unemployment. Various things contribute to unemployment, one of which is being in a country where the unit costs rise when they are falling among our major competitors, many of whom have standards of living that are higher than ours. We are competing in international trade not with those whose pay rates are lower than ours, but with those whose pay rates are higher than ours, but whose unit costs are lower because of investment, working methods and the way that people work together. It is important that people recognise all the contributory factors to economic and industrial success, and that they give thought to sharing the greater benefits of prosperity more fairly.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East spoke about a shorter working week. That would clearly lead to work sharing, but I was not clear whether he was advocating pay sharing as well or whether, in a shorter working week, those already at work would be able to keep all the benefits and there would be extra costs on the employer, whether in the public or private sector, for the employment of other people.

I assume the hon. Gentleman is saying openly that he does not believe that one would have proper work sharing, because presumably if one is to maintain a proper standard of living, one would have to produce in 35 hours what people are now producing in, say, 39 hours. If the hon. Gentleman wants to keep unit labour costs roughly the same, that is the logical consequence.

The next point is about inadequate demand. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has calculated how much pay has gone up in this country in nominal terms in the last five or six years, but the answer is by about £50,000 million. But most of that has been eliminated by inflation and has not been a real increase. If one looks at TUC minimum pay targets over the decades, one will see they have gone up from £15 to almost £115 a week. Nearly all that increase has had a destabilising effect on the economy, helping unit labour costs in this country to rise much faster than they have risen in other countries, or to rise here when they are falling in other countries. The lower paid, and unemployed, and especially unemployed young people have not been helped at all.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give his definition of unit labour costs? If he means the rate per hour, there are plenty of countries such as Sweden and America where the rate of pay per hour in manufacturing industry is far higher than in Britain. If he is talking about the output divided by the number of workers, then one of the many reasons why that equation has failed in Britain is that manufacturing output is down 20 or 30 per cent. first because Britain is losing its share of world markets and, as I said in a speech some time ago, losing its share of the domestic market. Those two losses are due to lack of investment by manufacturing industry in new technology and in factories and new tooling and so on over the past 10 or 15 years. Which of those two definitions is the hon. Gentleman using?

Mr. Bottomley: Like the hon. Gentleman, the one which happens to suit my argument at a particular time. But to be more serious about it, if one takes unit labour costs on the hon. Gentleman's first definition, one will find in the Department of Employment *Gazette*, which comes out today, an article about movement in unit labour costs. I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman can get a copy now. It has yet to be released. It may come out later today. The plain fact is that there are comparative cases between this country and Germany which show that Germany produces 67 per cent. more than we do, because the Germans manage to work more effectively together.

Ms. Clare Short: What about investment?

Mr. Bottomley: They are plants with similar investment. The hon. Lady cannot say, "What about investment?" because the investment is similar and the output is very different. It is the way people work. I will move on, because this is not the only occasion on which we will be able to explore some of these issues.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the low-pay unit west midlands report. The director of the unit knows I have views on some of the things he puts out, in the same way that he has views on some of the things that we put out. I shall concentrate for a moment on the west midlands study. In the conclusion, the evidence on wages refers to under 18-year-olds, and then immediately goes on to a table illustrating the unemployment increases for 18 and 19-year-olds. That may be a mistake, or it may have been an attempt at deliberate confusion. The fact is, like was not being compared with like. It is page 22.

If the evidence were to be solely devoted to those under 18 it would show that unemployment in this group has fallen as a proportion of total unemployment over the period 1979 to 1984. The report infers on page 7—although it does not actually say—that young people on young worker schemes——

Mr. Nellist: The Minister says that unemployment among young people under 18 has fallen in the past six years, but if he adds the number of registered unemployed under 18 to those on various bogus schemes such as the jobs sector of the young workers scheme and the YTS he will find that unemployment in the group has not fallen as a percentage of total unemployment in the past six years.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman has views on the YTS which are not shared by the trainees. If he suggests that trainee electricians are in bogus jobs — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Ladywood objects to taxpayers' money being used for training young people, she had better say so clearly.

Ms. Clare Short: I am making a simple point and I am sure that even at 5.15 am the hon. Gentleman can understand it if he tries. Young people who are employed on a Government scheme and are paid an allowance made available by the taxpayer are not comparable to people who are paid wages by employers to keep them in employment.

Mr. Bottomley: Why not?

Ms. Short: Because the cost of one has to be met from the production of the company involved and on the other hand the taxpayer is paying an allowance to someone who is supposed to be a trainee. It is massively different.

Mr. Bottomley: It seems to me that the hon. Lady will be in difficulties with her party. I hope that she has been re-selected.

Ms. Short: I have.

Mr. Bottomley: In that case, I can go on to say that we appear to have reversed roles. The hon. Lady is saying that a job is a real one only if no public funding is involved. Is there any significant difference between the trainee electrician who started in 1982 and the trainees electrician who started this year, except the source of the funding for the allowance and whether earnings are taxed? There is surely no significant difference. If the hon. Lady wants to make a great distinction, she is not the person I thought she was.

The essential argument is that to deny the link between pay and jobs, Labour Members, and sometimes the low pay unit, implicitly assume that wages are the only determinant of employment and unemployment. I leave aside the common recognition that aggregate levels of demand matter a great deal. The question is how to get that aggregate increase in demand. I have already mentioned the £50,000 million nominal increases in pay during the past five or six years. Is that 50 per cent. increase—about 10 per cent. a year—not enough? If it is claimed that the way to increase demand is to have such massive nominal increase in real demand, Opposition Members should start finding a different way forward.

The reason why the low pay unit and Opposition Members need to assume that wages are the only determination of employment and unemployment is that that allows any increase in unemployment at a time of pay reductions to be cited as disproving the link between pay and jobs. The description of a deterioration in youth pay and unemployment over the years 1979 to 1984—the figures that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East kept using—is used to deny the pay and jobs link. The hon. Gentleman seems to ignore any other effects, such as the large demographic cohort passing through the age group during those years. If the hon. Gentleman were willing to split the figures from 1978 to 1982 and from 1982 onwards, which is where we see the impact of some of the Government involvement in new schemes, we should see a slight different pattern.

There is agreement on the need to ensure that there are more and better opportunities for young people. The Government approach is to say that we will not have statutory restrictions on what employers can offer. The hotel and catering trades believe that they will be able to create more opportunities for young people. When I ask trade unionists what they think will happen, their opinions vary. Some are in trades where they are rather more used

to trying to get a trade-off between pay and jobs. Others in the great Labour movement, of which I regard the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East as a member, would deny any link between pay and jobs, and obviously we are not going to get far together in trying to find one. However, there are other people who regard it as part of their responsibility to add to the opportunities available to young people. The Government are going to do the best that they can to encourage people to move forward and make arrangements with freedom and flexibility on setting pay and allowance levels so that the improvement can be seen. Too often people have walked by on the other side when there was a chance and a need to create greater opportunities.

Mr. Nellist: I am sitting in seeming amazement listening to the description of training opportunities for young people described as a laudable exercise by the Government, which will lead to real jobs. I do not regard *The Times* newspaper as a particularly Socialist organ, but a couple of weeks before the opening of the YTS scheme, in the early part of September 1983, its editorial described YTS as a crude anti-riot device designed to keep young people out of the unemployment figures and off the streets. That was why the Government planned to change from cutting their provision on youth training by £14 million in 1979 to spending £1,000 million by 1983. It had nothing to do with training, jobs or giving young people hope. It was a knee-jerk response to Toxteth, and a way of fiddling the figures.

The Minister ought to deal with the realities of 500,000 youngsters who have not worked under this Government, and with the proper provision of jobs rather than trying to masquerade by portraying YTS as some laudable training scheme. That is no criticism of the individual instructors who are trying to make the best of those schemes. The Government's reason for setting up the schemes was to reduce the unemployment figures from the real level of nearly 5 million down to the artificially low level of 3·25 million.

Mr. Bottomley: I am glad to note that the hon. Gentleman at last has remembered that many people involved in training young people are also likely to be members of trade unions, and he has made his statutory gesture towards their dedication to the needs of young people.

In addition to joining the hon. Gentleman in praising those involved in YTS in the various modes, and recognising that over 80 per cent. of young people on YTS think that it is useful to them, and many think that it is very useful to them. I want to make the point that having flexibility to set rates of pay which are more realistic is a way not of penalising people but of helping more people.

One thing that helps young people is being able to get work. The approach of the hon. Gentleman, while we have had the wages councils structure, has been to deny many young people the opportunity of getting on the bottom rung of the employment ladder and moving upwards.

This year in Germany, 600,000 young people will get recognised qualifications. In this country, the number is a relatively small percentage of that figure. That has happened not just in the last six years. It has been developing because we have taken our eye off the needs of 40 per cent. of school leavers, and we have created a system that has perhaps given some of them the idea that they can sit back and not take one of the options that is likely to be of greatest advantage as they grow up, that is, staying on at school, going on in further or higher education, taking a traineeship and getting a job. We have allowed many of them to do nothing and to feel that they are not needed and cannot move themselves forward. That has been changing. In this, YTS has played a major part. Having the freedom to set pay rates in the wages council sector is another part. Perhaps the most important part of all is in the 90 per cent. of the economy which has been governed—and restricted—not by wages councils, but by out of date attitudes, whereby people have turned their backs on the needs of young people.

I do not want to build too much on electrical contracting, but I think that it has shown the way forward. In 1982, we did not have even that. If other industries look to their responsibilities in the way that the electrical contractors and the EETPU have, we can have this debate in three or four years with many more examples—some from the wages council sectors and some from outside, some from the private sector and, I hope, many more from the public sector. Then we can discover what happened to the young people to whom the hon. Gentleman intends to devote his summer and we shall be able to test whether my approach or his is right.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving us the opportunity to debate this matter this evening. I thank the hon. Member for Ladywood for providing the meat in the sandwich between us.

Welsh Language

5.25 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am glad of this opportunity, even at an unusual hour, to raise in the House, before the recess, questions relating to the implications of the ruling by the industrial tribunal at Colwyn Bay last Friday on matters relating to the Welsh language and the social services in the county of Gwynedd.

There has been a massive reaction of outrage in my county at the decision reached at the tribunal hearing because of its possible implications for people in that whole area, namely, the clients of the social services department. I do not wish to dwell too long on the actual details of the case, although it is impossible to consider the effects of the decision without referring briefly to the complaint. To understand the strength of feeling against the tribunal decision, it is necessary to look at the manner in which the matter came to be considered by the Commission for Racial Equality, which sponsored the two-person case.

The case involved Mrs. Phyllis Jones of Amlwch and Mrs. Justine Doyle of Bangor, who were aggrieved that they had been turned down for a number of jobs by the social services department of Gwynedd county council. The jobs were in residential homes for the elderly and mentally handicapped in Ynys Môn. They alleged that they had been turned down because they did not speak Welsh. The county defended its position and insisted that to be able to speak Welsh was necessary to give the residents a full service in line with the county's longstanding bilingual policy.

A significant proportion of the residents of these homes have Welsh as their first language. The objective of the county's bilingual policy is to provide services in whichever language—Welsh or English—is preferred by the client. The county has always held that to provide linguistic freedom for those who receive a service from the authority, there is a need for those who provide that service to be bilingual. The county maintains that that is especially relevant to social services, which deal in direct personal services.

To the amazement of my constituents, which has been passed on to me in strident and impassioned terms, the tribunal decided against Gwynedd county council. In the words of its chairman, Mr. John Bellis:

"We take the view that the imposition of a condition of Welsh speaking has been a condition of employment, and can't be justified in a mixed language society in Gwynedd."

According to press reports, he went on to say

"To be Welsh speaking was not a genuine occupational qualification."

Several matters arise from that case. The first, which has aroused enormous comment in Gwynedd, is whether such a case should ever have been brought before the Commission for Racial Equality. The Race Relations Act 1976 was never intended for such purposes. That is quite clear from the White Paper which preceded it. Ministers who were involved with the Bill's passage at that time have confirmed this. The Act defined that a person discriminates against another if:

"on racial grounds he treats the other less favourably."

The Act defines "racial grounds" as:

"any of the following grounds, namely colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins."

It says nothing about language, yet I understand that language has been accepted by the commission as a basis of indirect discrimination.

I put it to the House that to require a person to speak Welsh, or English for that matter, to do a job in the way required by the employer has nothing to do with race. Plenty of Welsh people do not speak Welsh, and many English, Scots, Irish and, in my home town of Caernarfon, Chinese do speak Welsh. To assert that the question has anything to do with race is absolute nonsense, and the commission is abusing its responsibilities by allowing itself to be used in such a way.

The inappropriateness of considering matters relating to the Welsh language in Wales under the Act was recognised by the Government in Dyson v. Department of Health and Social Security in Shrewsbury a couple of years ago, when the Treasury Solicitor argued on behalf of the Government that a language requirement would not be discriminatory under the Act. Likewise, the Manela case in the House of Lords more recently established two essential ingredients for a case to fall within racial discrimination, and neither of them related to language.

In another case, Fawkes v. Dyfed health authority in 1979, it was found:

"The speech therapist who would have been appointed to work in Ceredigion would have been providing persons of a racial group, namely, Welsh-speaking Welshmen, with personal services promoting their welfare, and that service could most effectively be provided by a person who was Welsh-speaking."

That case is important, for it not only found against the proposition of racial discrimination in these circumstances, but related to matters covered by clause 35 of the 1976 Act, which states:

"Nothing in Parts II to IV shall render unlawful any act done in affording persons of a particular racial group access to facilities or services to meet the special needs of person of that group in regard to their education, training or welfare, or any ancillary benefits."

I stress the word "welfare".

Even if my contention that the language question should have nothing to do with race is refuted, there is a specific provision in the Act to cover the access to welfare services of the type involved in the Colwyn Bay case. The tribunal disregarded both the provisions of clause 35 and the finding in the Fawkes case in reaching its astounding decision. The chairman's explanation for his disregard of clause 35 was, in the words of one lawyer, "perverse and ludicrous", and I hope that the Government will look carefully at that part of the written decision when they study it.

There is a further case which casts even more doubt on the validity of the tribunal's decision, and that was Sweeting v. Amgueddfa Mor Porthmadog in 1983. In that case, it was found perfectly reasonable that the trustees of the museum should have insisted that the manager should be Welsh-speaking, and the case recognised that there is a general discretion on language issues in the sphere of appointments.

That tribunal was unanimous in its decision, according to its chairman, Mr. Day—I refer to paragraph 15 of the decision in case No. 23217/82—and it is fascinating to note that one member of that tribunal was apparently a Mr. D. L. Hawkins, who, I am told, was also a member of the recent Colwyn Bay tribunal. I trust that the House will want to know on what basis there should have been such a change of interpretation in the law in the last two years when the law has not changed.

It is interesting to note, however, that, apparently after the Sweeting case, a Mr. Calvert, who had conducted the Race Relations Commission case, said on a Granada television programme that the commission had its eye on Gwynedd and was particularly keeping its eye on local government. The whole case stinks of vindictiveness and a vendetta by the Race Relations Commission and by the tribunal to put the boot into the Welsh language.

The Minister should confirm whether it is true that the commission is only now, after that case, intending to set up a body to consider the implications for it, as a commission, of matters relating to the Welsh language. If that is true, where on earth has the commission been for the last nine years, and is it its normal policy to shoot first and only thereafter to find out the facts?

Perhaps the Minister will confirm that there was a division of opinion under the Race Relations Commission about whether the case should ever have been brought forward and whether Mr. German, the only Welsh member, I understand, opposed the commission's action in the matter but was overruled.

In any event, the Colwyn Bay case calls for a detailed review by the Government of the working both of the Commission for Racial Equality and the industrial tribunal structure to protect Welsh-speaking people from the type of ignorance and prejudice shown in the case. There is also a need to review the Act to clarify what it is meant to do and what is not appropriate under such legislation.

I contend that the actions of Gwynedd county council were not discriminatory in law, were within the exceptions provided by section 5 of the 1976 Act, were justified on social and linguistic grounds and, in any event, were valid under section 35 of the Act. I contend also that the tribunal's decision was perverse and malicious. The appropriateness of having a language requirement for a job in Gwynedd—this principle holds in the rest of Wales although its application may vary from area to area—must revolve around the right of the consumer to have the service in the language of his choice, be that Welsh or English. The Gwynedd county council has adopted, since its inception in 1974, a bilingual policy and has maintained the policy that to give its clients the freedom of choice of language, the council must operate in a bilingual manner.

There are some jobs in which employees have no interface with the public and there is no pressing requirement for them to speak Welsh. In jobs which involve dealing with the public, employees need to speak both languages. It is unacceptable in a largely Welsh-speaking area that the public should be expected to change from their first language to their second for the convenience of local government officers, who are there to serve the public.

We must remember that at the last census my constituency was 84 per cent. Welsh speaking. Ynys Môn, where the jobs which were the subject of the Colwyn Bay tribunal were located, was 62 per cent. Welsh speaking. About two out of every three letters that I receive from my constituents are written in the Welsh language. Welsh is the normal vehicle of everyday life. Many young children are virtually monoglot Welsh speakers and many of the elderly are markedly happier in the Welsh language. They can express themselves more fluently, can comprehend more clearly and are generally more relaxed and comfortable if they can relate to those around them through the Welsh language. These elderly people have probably spoken nothing but Welsh in their homes throughout their lives. It would be invidious if, having to enter a home for the elderly in their latter years, they were put in an alien atmosphere in which they were at least uncomfortable and at worst positively unhappy.

That is no imaginary fear, for I have received frequent complaints over the years. They come usually from the children of elderly people, who tell me of the need of their mothers or fathers to have staff looking after them who can speak their language. To be fair, the complaints have been much more oriented against the Gwynedd district health authority than the county council.

More recently there have been complaints about private residential homes. Only last week I received two separate complaints about a home near Caernarfon which had originally been run by Welsh speakers. When they sold out, an English-speaking family took over. I have nothing against them personally, but the occupants of the elderly persons' residence were distraught, according to two constituents who came to see me separately. For the first time in their lives, these elderly people have had to live through the medium of an English-speaking home. It may not be easy to do anything about the private homes, but I become increasingly uneasy when I hear complaints of the sort that I have outlined. However, in homes run by Gwynedd county council social services department, the linguistic needs of each individual resident should be catered for. English-speaking residents should be helped by staff who are able and willing to chat to them in English, and likewise Welsh-speaking residents should have the same facility in their own language.

Against this background, it is to fly in the face of reality to claim, as the tribunal did, that

"To be Welsh speaking was not a genuine occupational qualification".

If I quote the proportions of Welsh-speaking elderly people who are resident in the homes, it will give the House an idea of the pattern. At Plas Penlan, Llangefni, which is one of the homes in question before the tribunal, there are 30 residents and 29 of these are Welsh speaking. Over the whole of Anglesey, 77 per cent. of the residents of county council homes for the elderly are Welsh speaking and 23 per cent. are not. In the Arfon and Dwyfor areas, which include my constituency, 89 per cent. are Welsh speaking and only 11 per cent. are not. It is clear that the Welsh language needs of the residents must be taken into account for their welfare and happiness.

Some will argue that, as many of the Welsh speakers are almost as fluent in English, too much regard should not be given to this question. I contend that it is not only a matter of convenience and desirability for the elderly to live through the medium of the Welsh language if they wish, but a question of elementary human rights. If there is a clash between the rights of employees to speak English and the rights of the elderly to have their services through the medium of Welsh, I have no doubt that in a caring, compassionate society the rights of the elderly should take precedence.

As people get older and more frail, there is sometimes a tendency to live in the past — often, a monoglot Welsh-speaking past. As the chairman in the Fawkes *v.* Dyfed health authority case noted in 1979:

"Elderly patients . . . tended to revert to their first language."

In evidence during this case which ruled out racial discrimination when a Welsh requirement was stipulated for a job in Dyfed, Dr. Glyn Rees drew particular attention

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

to the strong possibility that a non-Welsh-speaking person could be unaware of his or her disadvantage when communicating with a Welsh-speaking person in English. This is an extremely important point, as many English speakers have little comprehension of speaking in any other language and have difficulty facing those who are using their second language.

The case that I have made in relation to homes for the elderly is obviously even more valid with regard to homes for those with mental handicaps. There has been an enormous reaction in my constituency against the tribunal's decision, and our office in Caernarfon has been flooded with callers and telephone calls protesting and demanding fair play for the Welsh language. More than 1,000 people have signed a pledge that they will not henceforth, because of this case, use the English language in talk or in writing to any government official, whether local or central. That shows the reaction of the people.

I shall quote some of the letters that I have received. I shall quote in Welsh a letter that I received from Mr. Lewis from Dyfed. I believe that it is in order for to do so and then translate. The letter stated:

"Nonsens pur yw cymysgu cymhwyster i swydd a rhagfarn hiliol. Mae'r gallu i gyfathrebu, a hynny yn iaith y bobl yn eich gofal, yn gymhwyster hanfodol i berson mewn galwedigaeth gofal. Ymddengys fod yna ormod o grancod unllygeidiog yn llechu o dan ambarel y Comisiwn Hiliol."

The letter translates as follows:

"It is utter nonsense to mix up qualifications for a job with racial prejudice. The ability to communicate, in the language of those people in your care, is an essential qualification in a caring profession. It appears that there are too many one-eyed cranks lurking under the umbrella of the Commission for Racial Equality."

I have received from Mrs. Margaret Moore and 20 people living in the Llandudno area—this will be of interest to the Minister—a copy of a letter sent to the Commission for Racial Equality. The letter states:

"We, the undersigned, are not all Welsh speaking, but this does not blind us to the rights of all people to speak their native language in certain circumstances and at certain times.

We should have thought that even rough justice would not deem it a privilege for people to speak their mother tongue in their own country. However, we are prepared to put aside that point at the moment and concentrate on another aspect of this matter.

Vulnerable people—e.g. minorities, must be protected; the sick, frail, mentally confused and children have a real need to be understood without having to resort to a foreign language. Physical caring is not enough; this is the caring of people for animals and it ignores the needs of the human spirit.

Your recent decision at Colwyn Bay puts the rights of two women to work in a particular employment above the rights of others to communicate in their own tongue. The two applicants have a remedy in their own hands—they can learn Welsh. What remedy is there for the old people whose rights have been so cruelly dismissed?"

Another letter recalls the words of a former inspector of taxes, Mr. Norman Price, who was non-Welsh speaking when he came to Porthmadog. He said:

"I could not do justice to the taxpayer or to the Government if I did not learn the Welsh language."

A trade union officer has also made a clear stand in support of the needs of the clients when appointments are made in bilingual areas. Mr. Robert Skillicorn, area officer of NUPE, said that he was appalled that the Commission for Racial Equality should have taken this case on and said that such action was

"an infamous racist slur on the community of Gwynedd."

Another NUPE officer has expressed misgivings about the effect of the decision on inner city areas in England, where there are minority communities with special linguistic needs.

A problem with the whole issue has been the commission's failure to differentiate between racial prejudice and linguistic needs. When I went to its offices in Victoria last year to discuss the matter I got the impression that it was wholly ignorant of circumstances in Wales, and surprisingly lacking in empathy or sympathy, given that it should have some feeling for communities with their own cultural dimensions. Given that the Commission for Racial Equality deals mainly with ethnic minorities of English cities, it is ironic to read the comments of the Swann report entitled "Education for All", which was published in March. Page 410 states

"We are convinced that a facility, or even a qualification, in a community language should be seen as providing any young person with a skill of direct relevance to work in areas of ethnic minority settlement in fields such as social services, nursing and education, where dealing with people is so important. We would therefore expect to see schools and the careers service emphasising the value of languages in such careers, and employers, particularly local authorities, seeing language skills as one of the criteria to be used when making appointments in these fields."

The commission which insists on using race discrimination law intended for ethnic minorities to prevent services from being provided in the Welsh language disregards one of the central themes of modern thinking in relation to linguistic minorities, that is that welfare services should be provided in their languages, as the Swann report advocated.

I cited those examples to show that the case, about which I feel so strongly, is based not on nationalistic reasoning or a cultural analysis alone, but on the sensible needs of people in a bilingual community, and the responsibility of both local and central government to respond to those needs. The Welsh Office recognises that, as was shown in a parliamentary answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) when the Secretary of State said

"The guiding principle with appointments to posts in all parts of the Civil Service is that the best available candidate should be selected. This is however in no way inconsistent with giving appropriate weight in the selection process to ability to speak Welsh in cases where this would be an advantage in undertaking the duties of the post concerned taking account of the linguistic situation in Wales."—[*Official Report*, 17 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 212.]

That answer introduces a further dimension to the argument. Sometimes it is claimed that jobs are given to people solely on their ability to speak Welsh, irrespective of any other qualification. Clearly that would be wrong. The ability to speak Welsh is one of many qualifications for various jobs. It would be as stupid to ignore the need for the other qualifications necessary to undertake a job, as it would be to deny the relevance of the Welsh language as a qualification for many jobs, for example in the social services or in health care.

On some occasions there are no suitable applicants for a job who can speak Welsh, although the job ideally needs a Welsh speaker, and it may be necessary to appoint someone who does not speak Welsh and to train him or her to speak the language, or to appoint someone who speaks Welsh and to give him or her training to learn the necessary skill. Which of the two alternatives is the more practical will vary from case to case. However, it is not acceptable to allow either a stipulation of "Welsh

essential" to lead to unsatisfactory appointments, or to make appointments of persons unwilling to accept a need for acquiring communication skills in Welsh. As the Secretary of State said, there need be no incompatibility between those two different alternatives.

Regarding the problems of those seeking employment in Gwynedd, if such a person does not speak Welsh he will find that some jobs are not open to him. Clearly, for the foreseeable future Welsh will always be a prerequisite for some jobs. At the clearest level, a person will be unable to be a Welsh teacher or Welsh newscaster if he or she does not speak the language. In those circumstances it is even more important that the bilingual education policy pursued by Gwynedd county council is allowed to succeed. It should ensure that every young person leaving school in Gwynedd is fairly fluent in both languages, and certainly sufficiently fluent to a enable him or her to meet the requirements of jobs where conversational Welsh is required, such as any jobs in residential homes run by the social services.

It is worth remembering that those who in the past have stood against a bilingual education policy have now caused problems for some non-Welsh speakers in Gwynedd. There is another problem facing people who move into Gwynedd to live and who are not Welsh speakers. My message to such people is, "Please will you realise that you are moving into a bilingual society, and be willing to adapt accordingly."

Many persons have done so successfully and have learnt Welsh, or at least made a fair effort. I salute them. One who has tried hard is the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), and I hope that his other constituents in Anglesey who have moved in will make an equal effort.

If they do, their welcome will be that much warmer and they will find it easier to integrate into the community. They too can achieve for themselves, with a little effort, enough Welsh to overcome the language criteria for many jobs. This year, for example, Gwynedd county council has appointed both a chief officer and a deputy chief officer who have learnt Welsh in the council's service. In both cases Welsh was essential for the post.

What, therefore, now needs to be done to reverse the damage done to community relations in Gwynedd by this appalling tribunal decision? First, there must clearly be a review of the role of the Commission for Racial Equality in such cases, and possibly new people to serve on it who have a better understanding of areas such as Gwynedd and who will concentrate on their proper role of minimising race difficulties instead of causing them. There should also be an amendment to the Race Relations Act 1976, so that making the Welsh language a qualification for jobs in Wales does not constitute racial discrimination.

Secondly, the Welsh Office must give a positive lead by spelling out to local authorities, perhaps by circular, that they must have due regard to the linguistic needs of Welsh and non-Welsh speakers in the provision of personal social services, and that the requirement of the client should dictate the language in which the service is provided, not vice versa.

Thirdly, Gwynedd county council should put more effort into ensuring that everyone who leaves school in Gwynedd is free from a linguistic handicap that will limit his or her job prospects in the county. It should also make greater efforts to ensure that young school leavers have the other technical skills needed to fill the jobs that are available within the community in Gwynedd.

Fourthly, there is a need for a new Welsh language Act to enshrine in law the fundamental rights of Welsh speakers to use their own language in their own country, and that in order to give each citizen the equal right to use either language in dealing with authority, there needs to be a policy of official bilingualism in Wales.

To make this practical, additional resources will be needed to help people to learn the language, whether to open up a broader range of job opportunities or for whatever other reason. There must also be a powerful and dynamic body to co-ordinate Welsh language education.

There should be an abundance of courses for people to learn the language quickly and effectively. Perhaps a good, symbolic start for a new era of this sort would be for the Secretary of State for Wales himself to undertake to learn the language.

There is a need to review the performance of industrial tribunals, such as that at Colwyn Bay last Friday, to ensure that the members have a full grasp of the community dimensions of the area in which they operate and to ensure that we have no repeat of the disastrous performance that we saw last week.

If these steps could be secured, some good may yet come out of this unfortunate saga. If no such progress is made, there will be a simmering resentment among the Welsh-speaking community in Gwynedd which the Government will ignore at their peril, and the Commission for Racial Equality will have the doubtful honour of knowing that it has been contributory to creating a bitter community conflict that could take years to dispel.

5.54 am

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am delighted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have caught your eye so early in the morning on this very important issue of the use of the Welsh language—our language.

I have travelled throughout the night to support the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). There is a principle at stake, which is why many of us are here to support the hon. Gentleman.

The Welsh language is the oldest language spoken within the EEC, and it is our duty to safeguard the interests of our language. For the last few days, I have had the privilege of attending the Royal Welsh show — a national event attended by many thousands of Welsh and non-Welsh speakers. I was delighted to see the Minister at the show. I am sure he will agree that we were both delighted that the commentators were bilingual.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have, over the years, worked hard to ensure that the Welsh language is recognised in Wales, as provided in the Act of 1967. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon said, the Act should be upgraded in the years to come. Many of us fought hard for our own television channel on which Welsh would be spoken. Many of us fought hard for bilingual education in Wales. I believe that many of us are doing our very best to try to safeguard the interests of our language and culture.

The issue we are debating tonight is different. What one must bear in mind in this debate is the welfare of the old and infirm in our society, for whom the social services have responsibility. In Gwynedd, as in my constituency, I would expect that the vast majority of such people not only speak Welsh but prefer to express themselves in the Welsh language, feeling indeed that they cannot make

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themselves adequately understood unless they speak in Welsh, the language of their home, their chapel, and a language entirely appropriate to their way of life.

To force them to discuss their problems and their fears in what is to them an alien tongue is to treat them as second-class citizens. To say that a knowledge of the Welsh language is not a necessary qualification for a situation that involves close contact with these people seems to me to be entirely wrongheaded and extremely obtuse. I should think that communication through a common language is the most important ingredient in the relationship that involves social workers and their clients. I know through my own experience that many elderly people in the rural areas of Wales find it difficult to communicate in English—what is to them a strange and foreign language.

I have great sympathy with those people in Wales who are unable to speak the language of heaven, but I am sure that the vast majority of them would admit that certain jobs require fluency in Welsh. I am convinced that the position of a social worker caring for the elderly and infirm in the heart of rural Wales is one such case.

I am appalled that the Commission for Racial Equality should have become involved in this matter, which is not concerned with race, colour or creed. What is concerned is the suitablility of applicants for a certain sensitive kind of work and their qualification to perform it — their ability to communicate with their clients who live in Wales.

I am here to support the hon. Member for Caernarfon, the Gwynedd county council and other county councils in Wales. I urge the Minister, in closing the debate, to advise local authorities in Wales that certain jobs within the health and social services require fluency in Welsh. I hope that the hon. Member for Caernarfon and the Gwynedd county council will be successful in their deliberations and that people will be employed who are bilingual and who will look after the interests of those who are old and infirm in our society and need care given to them by people who speak their language.

5.59 am

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): I congratulate my compatriot, the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), on bringing this important topic to the notice of the House at the break of dawn this Thursday.

The Welsh language has shot into prominence as a result of the deliberations at Colwyn Bay, and as a result of what happened yesterday in the Welsh Grand Committee debate on Welsh language and training. The hon. Member for Caernarfon has expressed just indignation at what happened at Colwyn Bay. However, I have some sympathy with the two ladies who applied repeatedly for a job for which they were probably adequately qualified. They could not do work at which they would have been skilled and which would have been useful in that community. I fully agree with the early-day motion in the names of the hon. Members for Caernarfon and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), but again there are far wider and deeper implications for the Welsh language than are implied in parts of the motion.

The Welsh language is now going through a difficult period. Parts of the recent census were encouraging, and parts were not. We are dealing with what happened in Gwynedd. Without doubt it is now the most Welsh part of Wales. I was surprised when I heard the hon. Member for Caernarfon telling us of the tremendous dominance of the Welsh-speaking population in homes for the elderly. We who come from other Welsh parts of Wales must be careful because the situation with us is not so black and white as it appears to be in that part of Wales.

I fully suported the hon. Members for Caernarfon and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) when they referred to the importance that we in Wales attach to the welfare of the elderly, particularly when they have to go into homes and hospitals. Those are acute and traumatic periods of their lives. If they are then not to be allowed to use the language with which they are most familiar, barriers are set up. In the end, they will work to the detriment of the clients.

Reference has been made to the Hughes-Parry report, which we thought at the time would safeguard the equal status of the Welsh language in the Principality. Undoubtedly the report needs urgent revision. I hope that the Minister will respond in some way to the setting up of a similar commission, because there is undoubtedly a great deal of tightening up to be done if the Hughes-Parry recommendations are to be carried forward into the conditions obtaining in Wales in the last quarter of the 20th century.

We are all aware that certain parts of Welsh Wales are desirable places where English people or non-Welsh-speaking people, both young and old, wish to move and settle. Many retired people have settled there. The linguistic mix is constantly changing, but we are not doing enough to ensure that the transition is smooth. There is occasionally friction, which leads to intemperate actions, which often carry through into the headlines when the headlines should tell of the more useful and harmonious occasions.

I have received complaints from parents of young children about the difficulties that Welsh-speaking children encounter when they have to go to hospital. It is essential that paediatric departments should have at least one fluent Welsh-speaking junior doctor. I have often made representations to east Dyfed and the former Dyfed health authorities about the fact that so many nurses are not fully conversant with the Welsh language. It is only natural that children should feel uncomfortable in those circumstances, but some become apprehensive, and we must all be worried about ill children becoming apprehensive.

I was disappointed to learn recently that east Dyfed does not have a speech therapist able to rehabilitate people in their native Welsh who have suffered cerebro-vascular accidents and others.

Mr. Wigley: I thank the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and the Minister for being here. When my two handicapped boys were three and four years old, they had to see a speech therapist in Bangor. The speech therapist did not speak Welsh and the boys did not speak any English. However good the speech therapist was, she could not do the work because she could not communicate. It is not a matter of national pride or culture but the ability to do the work. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in circumstances such as those, to say that knowledge of Welsh is not a qualification necessary to undertake the work is nonsense?

Dr. Thomas: The hon. Gentleman can only feel ill at ease at such a personal incident in his life. It is essential that elderly people and children be able to converse in their first language. It is remarkable that, in any personal conversations, the hon. Members for Caernarfon, for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North, the Minister and I would use the medium of Welsh. In the formal atmosphere of the Chamber we are discussing this matter through the medium of what is the second language of those hon. Members present at this important debate. I do not wish to refer this morning to what happened yesterday, but part of the difficulty that led to the hot-headed action of a certain number of young people lies in the fact that the supportive actions that need to be taken to ensure that the Welsh language is able to flourish and survive are couched in far too vague and ill-defined terms.

I am extremely disappointed that the Secretary of State for Wales has decided not to set up a Welsh language education development body. It would have helped to unify the position. About 500,000 people out of a population of just under 3 million now speak the Welsh language. In cold figures, that means 20 per cent., but for those who speak the Welsh language it accounts for much more than 20 per cent. A high percentage of Welsh speakers are to be found in Gwynedd, while a low percentage of Welsh speakers is to be found in some of the valleys of Glamorgan and Gwent. Unless a body can be established to bring together all these diverse aspects, the Welsh language will suffer.

I hope that the officers and Ministers in the Welsh Office will think again about what is needed to keep alive the Welsh language. At the last census it was stated that the decline in the use of the Welsh language had to some extent been halted. The figures, particularly in the anglicised parts of Wales, start from a very low base line, but they show that there has been an increase in the number of people who are learning Welsh. However, I have found during the last 30 years that in Dyfed there has been a decline in the number of children and young people who speak Welsh. These are the ordinary Welsh speakers, those we refer to as the ordinary Welsh speakers of cefn gwlad. There has also been a decline in the standard and style of the Welsh language that they speak.

I opposed the setting up of the S4C, but I have to admit that its success has been greater than I had expected. That channel ought to be used far more directly so that those whose hold on the Welsh language has become more and more tenuous can discover once again the deep pleasure that can be gained from using the Welsh language.

Once again I congratulate the hon. Member for Caernarfon on raising this subject. It is unfortunate that so many matters relating to Wales are discussed at Westminster at inappropriate times of the night and day. But, at whatever time it is discussed, the people of Wales believe that no topic should have a greater priority, and no topic will have more influence on the future of our country. I hope that the Opposition have not put up a sort of popular front for the future of the Welsh language. The Welsh language is there for all political parties and for all shades of opinion. Yesterday, I was unhappy to hear people on both sides of the debate engaged almost in an auction, trying to say which party had done best for the Welsh language. If the language is to survive, it needs the help of all people of good will in Wales, irrespective of their political opinions.

6.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): There is no doubt in any of our minds about the importance of this subject. I am glad that hon. Members did not go into too much detail about the specific case that was heard before the industrial tribunal at Colwyn Bay, and which resulted in the decisions announced by the tribunal chairman on 19 July, although frequent references were inevitable. Those decisions inspired the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) to seek this debate. Nevertheless, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, the decisions could be the subject of an appeal to the employment appeal tribunal within 42 days of the issue of the judgment in writing. Further proceedings are also possible after the appeal tribunal.

Neither the hon. Gentleman nor I would wish to prejudice such an appeal. The only statements that we can make about the tribunal hearing are based on media reports, for we still await the decisions in a written form. They should be available soon, and we can then study them. In this respect, Gwynedd county council, which was a party in the proceedings before the tribunal, reacted properly after the decisions were announced and offered no comment until it had the decision in writing so that it could consider its implications, and decide whether to appeal. In view of the possibility that the case may become sub judice, it would not be right for me to make any statement which might be interpreted as an attempt to influence the final outcome, and it is certainly not my intention to do so.

The hon. Gentleman also realises that although the Welsh Office has a responsibility for Welsh language matters and for social services in Wales, my right hon. Friend does not have direct responsibility for industrial tribunals or for the Commission for Racial Equality. Nevertheless, it might be helpful if I briefly outlined their remit. Industrial Tribunals are set up under section 128 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978. Under section 54 of the Race Relations Act 1976, an industrial tribunal has jurisdiction to hear a complaint by any person that another person has committed an unlawful act of discrimination against the complainant in the area of employment.

A hearing is normally arranged at which both parties have the opportunity to present evidence before a tribunal. The decision of the tribunal may be given orally at the end of the hearing or reserved, and in cases under the Race Relations Act, among others, the reasons for the decision must be recorded in full in a document signed by the chairman.

Employers or employees dissatisfied with an industrial tribunal decision may appeal to the employment appeal tribunal, established under the Employment Protection Act 1975, within 42 days from the date of issue of the written reasons for the industrial tribunal's decision. An appeal to the employment appeal tribunal can be only on a question of law, not of fact. Employment appeal tribunal proceedings are heard before a High Court judge and one, two or four appointed members with industrial relations experience.

An appeal can be made to the Court of Appeal from a decision of the employment appeal tribunal, but leave must be obtained. The Court of Appeal decision can be challenged in the House of Lords, again with leave. The Race Relations Act makes racial discrimination unlawful

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

in employment, training and related matters, in education, in the provision of goods, facilities and services, and in the disposal and management of premises. The Act, as I have said, gives individuals a right of direct access to the civil courts and industrial tribunals for legal remedies for unlawful discrimination. The Act affords protection against discrimination on racial grounds to everyone in Great Britain. It would clearly be irresponsible to deprive one particular group of the legal protection that is offered to all others.

As the hon. Member for Caernarfon said, the Act defines two kinds of racial discrimination, direct and indirect. Direct discrimination arises where a person treats another person less favourably on racial grounds than he treats, or would treat, someone else. Section 3(1) defines "racial grounds" to mean any of the following: colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. Indirect discrimination consists of treatment which may be described as equal in a formal sense between racial groups but discriminatory in its effect on one particular racial group. It arises where a person—the discrimination—applies to another—the victim—who is seeking some benefit from him, for example a job, a condition or requirement with which he must comply, and where the condition or requirement satisfies certain criteria.

First, it is applied, or would be applied, by thediscriminat or equally to persons of any racial group.

Secondly, it is such that the proportion of persons of the victim's racial group who can comply with it is considerably smaller than the proportion of persons not of that group who can comply.

Thirdly, it is to the detriment of the victim because he cannot comply with it.

Fourthly, it cannot be shown to be justifiable irrespective of the colour, race, nationality or ethnic origins of the person to whom it is applied.

Racial discrimination by an employer is not unlawful where being of a particular racial group is a genuine occupational qualification, a matter referred to by the hon. Gentleman. A genuine occupational qualification is not an automatic exception for general categories of jobs. In every case it will be necessary for the employer to show, if the exception is to be claimed, that the particular job in question falls within the criteria set out in section 5 of the Act. These include circumstances when the holder of the job provides persons of a particular group with personal services promoting their welfare, and these services can most effectively be provided by a person of that racial group.

The hon. Member has requested that the Government should review the working of the Race Relations Act. The working of the Act is, I am glad to tell him, kept under constant review by those Government Departments with responsibility for the various areas of the Act's operation, and by the Commission for Racial Equality, one of whose statutory duties is to keep under review the working of the Act. The Government are satisfied that there is already an acceptable mechanism for keeping the Act under review. As I have already said, I am not convinced at this stage that there is a necessity for change. Nevertheless, I note that the hon. Gentleman has presented a Bill to amend the Race Relations Act and when the Bill is printed my colleagues and I will give it careful consideration.

The central issue in this debate relates to the place of a knowledge of Welsh in appointments. We are well aware of this in Government because there are public appointments where a knowledge of Welsh could be judged to be essential. I cite as an example the chairmanship of the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority. The authority has a responsibility for Welsh language television programmes, and we could have little confidence that such a responsibility could be properly and effectively discharged unless the chief bearer of the responsibility could familiarise himself or herself thoroughly with the content of the programmes and understood the language in which they were produced and transmitted.

There are other appointments where a knowledge of Welsh might be judged to be desirable, but not essential, or where it can be an asset. The needs vary from appointment to appointment.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon referred to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 17 January this year at column *212*. The hon. Gentleman asked about the relationship of the Welsh language and appointments to the Welsh Office. He was told that the guiding principle with appointments to posts in all parts of the Civil Service is that the best available candidate should be selected. This is in no way inconsistent, said my right hon. Friend, with giving appropriate weight in the selection process to ability to speak Welsh in cases where this would be an advantage in understanding the duties of the post concerned, taking account of the linguistic situation in Wales.

One specific example of this is in respect of field monument wardens where we take the ability to speak Welsh into consideration when making appointments in areas where Welsh is the predominant language and where, given the nature of the duties involved, it would be an advantage for those employed to have a knowledge of the language.

Mr. Wigley: In the posts which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State mentioned, the chairmanship of the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority was cited as an example. Will he accept that the Welsh language is a genuine occupational qualification for such posts?

Mr. Roberts: In the most general sense, yes. In the legal sense, it might be open to debate, but I have certainly given my view. Reference has been made to the National Health Service in Wales and, of course, the place of the Welsh language in the Health Service has been the subject of guidance from the Welsh Office. It did not appear to me that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) was aware of that.

In March 1975 the Welsh Office issued circular WHSC(IS) 117 to area health authorities, family practioner committees, county councils, district councils and community health councils on the subject of the Health Service and the Welsh language. I will quote from that circular two relevant paragraphs:

> "In a personal service concerned with the health of patients the relationship between the service and individuals seeking advice or treatment must be close and intimate. Much depends on the establishment of confidence between those administering the service and those who seek it. In this, paramount is the skill and devotion of those who provide the service."

I am sure that hon. Members would not dissent from that sentiment. The circular goes on:

"However relationships between those seeking and those providing the services in Wales can often be assisted by recognising the importance of the Welsh language to those whose first language it is . . . It has a particular relevance to certain groups of patients—the young and the elderly—who in some cases may have difficulty in making their wishes known in a second language — and the mentally ill and mentally handicapped."

We recognise the problem of communication and the importance of easy communication in health matters. We also recognise that linguistic cirmcumstances differ throughout Wales.

Mr. Geraint Howells: I know about the circulars that have been issued by the Welsh Office over the years, but I was urging the Minister to get in touch with local authorities again to remind them that they should give more attention to the Welsh language among the elderly, the infirm and those in care.

Mr. Roberts: I will consider further what the hon. Gentleman has said. The circular that I quoted highlights the difficulties that would be faced in any attempt to introduce a blanket provision on the Welsh language qualification in employment. All our experience of appointments in Wales leads me to believe that it would be virtually impossible to devise a policy that caters for all eventualities that could arise.

To ensure fairness, every job has to be considered on an individual basis with due regard to all its requirements including the qualifications of applicants and the needs of those to be served, all of which have to be carefully defined and weighed to ensure that justice is seen to be done. That is very important: otherwise there is always the danger of a backlash. The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) hinted at that.

Those of us who represent constituencies in the Welsh speaking parts of Wales can understand the feelings that have been expressed by the hon. Member for Caernarfon in the light of the tribunal's decision, particularly as those most directly involved are people who genuinely need the services of a local authority.

The fact that Gwynedd county council is responsible for an area which is essentially bilingual is an important factor in the delivery of services. I fully recognise that. The Gwynedd social services department therefore clearly has to plan its services with that in mind to be as effective as possible. It has to deal with a range of client groups, and individuals within those groups will prefer to speak in Welsh and the social services department has to take that into account. The need to ensure an adequate number of capable front line staff who are also fluent in Welsh is a natural consequence of the situation within the county. The social services department is concerned to ensure that the rights of individuals are fully respected in the planning and provision of services. It has to be borne in mind that social services work with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of society who are often suffering great personal stress and anxiety when they come into contact with staff. This means that everybody who comes into contact with the social services would expect to be able to express their concern and needs in the language in which they feel most comfortable and are able to communicate most effectively. There is no question of denying such a right to anyone.

If I single out an example where the language is an important factor in the delivery of services, I do so only because recently I visited Antur Waunfawr in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. This is a project whereby the mentally handicapped are preparing to lead more independent lives in a naturally Welsh speaking community which fully supports the venture. Clearly the support given by the county council to this project would reflect the linguistic nature of the area, and the people employed in the venture—not, incidentally, staff of the county council — reflect this as well. The hon. Gentleman will recall that when I officially opened that venture — he was present — my remarks were almost entirely in Welsh because the audience was predominantly Welsh speaking.

Of the population of Gwynedd, some 67 per cent. speak Welsh, and in overall terms this accounts for a quarter of Wales's Welsh speakers. Gwynedd has traditionally been in the forefront of developments in the use of the language, and this naturally extends to the county council's services. I understand that the social services front line staff are organised on the basis of the three main client groups of the elderly and physically handicapped, child care and mental health, and the use of the language clearly has an important part to play in delivering a service to individuals within each category.

It is, however, a matter for the county council itself to ensure that it is able to deliver the most effective service against this background. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the county council and what it needs to do. There is, of course, scope for further education and training to ensure that there are Welsh speaking people available to do jobs where Welsh may be considered essential.

The county council has to ensure that it recruits staff who are able to provide a good service and are abreast of current developments. Clearly the employment of qualified and experienced staff and ability to speak Welsh are relevant considerations in Gwynedd. However, the statutory obligation lies with the county council, and it is not for me to make detailed observations on the way the county carries out its duties.

It will interest the House to know that the Welsh Office has assisted the department of social theory and institutions at the Univeristy college of north Wales, Bangor, to set up a social work practice centre. One post within this centre will seek to identify and meet the special needs of social work within the Welsh cultural and linguistic setting of the area. I am pleased that, under the grants available for bilingual education under section 21 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1980, we have been able to assist financially with this project. This is a clear indication that I and my right hon. Friend fully appreciate the needs of training through the medium of the Welsh language in this particular field. Naturally one understands the initial public reaction to the tribunal's decisions, but I would suggest to the hon. Member that, although we are grateful for the debate, to seek to come to any conclusions about the possible broader implications of the decision at this stage is somewhat premature.

As I have said, the Race Relations Act clearly sets out the grounds on which it is unlawful for a person to discriminate against another in the area of employment. It also lays down exceptions to those grounds for genuine occupational reasons. Hon. Members would not expect me to interpret the provisions of the Race Relations Act—that is a matter for the courts, I explained the procedures

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earlier. It would be totally inappropriate for a Minister to comment about the grounds of tribunal decisions, the terms of which I have not yet seen.

I can, however, assure hon. Members that if, having considered the written judgment of the tribunal, and in the light of any appeal that might be made and proceedings that may follow, there are issues which directly affect the well-being of a particular client group dependent upon a local authority for the provision of a service or if there are issues concerning the use of the Welsh language in general, I will naturally consider such matters carefully and consult my ministerial colleagues as necessary.

I hope that the originator of the debate and other hon. Members who have attended at this early hour and taken part will be satisfied with the assurance that I have just given.

Motor Industry

6.42 am

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): It is about two years ago that I had the pleasure of introducing a debate during a similar operation to the past 12 hours on the subject of the British motor industry. If my memory serves me right, I drew an early spot and the debate lasted three hours. It was noteworthy that so many colleagues attended because the debate started the right side of midnight.

I make no apology for introducing a similar, or even identical, subject this morning, because the British motor industry is our largest manufacturer. It employs more people than any other manufacturing industry. We could possibly say that it is our largest industry, including agriculture. Its importance to the country is substantial, and especially to the midlands, where the production of motor vehicles, components and accessories employs a great number of people.

The history of the industry is well documented, but it is a salutary reminder when one appreciates that in the late 1950s we were the second largest car producer in the world —second to the United States. Today we have slipped well down the league to about seventh or eighth in production capacity. More cars are made in the midlands than anywhere else in the country. We have examples of mass production at the Austin Rover plants and the small, but valuable, production of Jaguar cars at the other end of the market.

Additionally, there is a substantial number of component manufacturers—firms such as Luca, GKN, Tube Investments and Triplex — which are almost household names, not only in Britain but throughout the world. Indeed, seven of the country's top ten component makers are based in the midlands; the importance of the industry to that area is shown by that fact alone. About 40 per cent. of manufacturing jobs in the industry involve people employed in Birmingham, and in the midlands as a whole, more than 50,000 jobs are involved with car production.

Considering the importance of the industry, one would hope that it would receive absolute priority in all forms of industrial planning and that Governments of all political persuasions would do their best to ensure its expansion and development. However, in many respects Government acted in an unhelpful way. In the 1950s, when production was substantial and we were number two in the world after America, the need to expand caused Governments of the time to dictate to the industry to where it should expand, and developments took place in the north-west of Scotland and South Wales, where plants for the production of components, cars and commercial vehicles were established.

It is clear in retrospect that that was a bad move, but at the time there was the problem of providing jobs for those areas. The rate of unemployment in the west midlands was so low that finding people to man the production lines involved taking the jobs outside the midlands area. Although the motor industry objected strongly at the time, because it felt that concentrating capacity in or near its home base was conducive to improved productivity, It had to accept the Government dictates of the day if it wanted to achieve the greater production that it needed.

The results were seen in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with lengthy production lines, sometimes as long as 300 miles between plants, and that only helped to hinder the development of the industry as it strove to compete against foreign domination. The incursion into western Europe by Japanese motor manufacturers began to take place in the early 1970s. They found an opening principally because the quality and design of many of our cars in production here left much to be desired.

We have always had the expertise to design cars which are technologically adventurous, and throughout the history of the industry we have produced many innovations. Possibly the most substantial was the advent of the Austin and Morris mini cars in 1959, when the introduction of front wheel drive in tiny mass-produced vehicles was something of an innovation. The design of those cars was highly innovative and set the trend; the vast majority of cars of under two litres are now produced with front wheel drive.

The trouble was that, while the design was good, its detailed execution was not, and the problems involved in producing vehicles to a quality and price to enable a profitable return to be made somehow did not occur in the way that the then British Motor Corporation hoped.

Many other United Kingdom motor manufacturers tried to emulate that design process. The old Rootes Group produced a rival to the mini that was called the Hillman Imp, which turned the Issigonis theory on its face and put the engine in the back of the car. The car was well received by the motoring press and the public initially, but flaws in quality control virtually condemned the car to languish until its demise 10 years later as an also-ran. That was the reaction of the motoring public.

The problem of providing cars for the purchaser that he could use with the utmost reliability was one that the Japanese were able to overcome. Their cars were not adventurous—they had no technological advantages over our indigenous products — but they had quality and reliability. Once the Japanese industry gained a foothold in Britain and a reputation, and in Europe generally, they were able to retain it. The Japanese are now foremost in design innovation and it cannot be said that they are merely copying the West. They are playing their part in pushing back the frontiers of technology in car design.

Nowadays we tend to refer to the European car market and not the United Kingdom market. The result of joining the European Community is that we must look to a wider area of car production, and in western Europe the capacity of car factories exceeds the number of sales that are likely to be gained during a 12-month period by about 2·5 million vehicles. This over-capacity is not helped by the number of vehicles that are imported into western Europe, some from the Comecon countries and many from Japan.

Jobs in industry depend upon our industry providing products that will enjoy design acceptance — in other words, products that the public will want — and a recognition of quality. Much has changed over the past 10 years or so as the industry has realised that to get the employment and the profits that it requires, it must meet the competition head on and produce the vehicles that the public want to buy. In the west midlands, that realisation is translated into jobs and prosperity for the region.

The Longbridge car plant in my constituency has experienced improvements in productivity and rationalisation over the past five or six years. The plant had struggled on for many years with a large work force—at one time there were about 21,000 employees. It produced cars of questionable quality, design and market acceptance. I used to work there, so I can vouch for what I have said. The advent of the BL corporate plan and the leadership of Michael Edwardes, as he then was, caused the management drastically to rethink. That was borne of necessity because technically BLMC, as it then was, was bankrupt as a result of it being unable to sell cars in the numbers that would enable it to embark on an investment programme to produce new models. We faced the challenge of bringing the industry into the latter part of the 20th century.

The corporate plan set out the development of a new range of cars and Longbridge has seen the development of the Metro over the past four years. It is an outstanding example of what the British car industry can achieve. That is true of design and production capabilities and the capability of the work force. The number of cars turned out per man per year has risen substantially. At Austin Rover the number has increased from five in 1979 to 14 in 1984. Taking just the Metro line at the Longbridge plant, the number has increased to 50 per man per year, and the aim is to achieve 60 per man per year.

Much of this improvement has resulted from automation. This is an outstanding example of how a work force has come to terms with the challenge of modern production facilities as the company has sought to meet the challenge, from not only Britain but overseas in producing cars for the world market.

The position of the other manufacturers is more complex. The other major manufacturers are owned by multinational companies. Vauxhall is owned by General Motors and Ford is a company in its own right. They have sought to develop the "world car" concept, which has meant that design and development have to a large extent taken place outside Britain. Much of the production capacity of those companies has been taken over in producing cars from kit form and certain components. Other components are imported from European factories.

The manufacture of components in Britain has decreased. The overall United Kingdom content of cars has fallen considerably, and this is certainly the case with Vauxhall. Some observers say that only 22 per cent. of Vauxhall can genuinely be said to be United Kingdom sourced. Of course, this is not exactly helping the British motor industry, especially the component industry. We must ask the multinationals whether this trend will continue or whether they will encourage more home production. This is a timely reminder, as Vauxhall is not a dwindling force on the United Kingdom Market. It is a formidable company which, over the past three years, has increased market penetration to 15 or 16 per cent., and at times to even higher levels. Its Cavalier model has been in the top three places since it was first produced. Most of the components of that car are imported.

Will this policy continue? Do the Government believe that they should discourage the element of multinational content and encourage British manufacturers to provide many of the necessary components? Why does the glass for cars have to come from overseas? Glass is extremely heavy and difficult to transport. There are British glass manufacturers. Given the volume of imports, I should have thought that it was in order for British manufacturers to produce the glass needed for Vauxhall cars.

There may well be cost and production reasons for importing glass from the continent. For how long will we

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put up with this non-commitment to United Kingdom component suppliers while Vauxhall occupies such a prominent place on the market?

Job opportunities in the motor industry have dwindled over the years, although I am happy to report that in Longbridge extra jobs have been created as a result of automation, better products and a step-up in production and sales. During the past 18 months, about 2,000 people have been taken on, 1,400 of whom are in new jobs and 600 of whom have replaced those who have left. The present labour force in that complex now numbers about 10,500, and about 20 per cent. of it was not employed by the company two years ago. Therefore, substantial job opportunities are available in the motor industry, which we wish to encourage.

The main problems facing the industry are a lack of customer demand, or too many manufacturers trying to satisfy that customer demand. The many ways in which demand for cars could be increased have been trotted out before, but I make no apology for mentioning them again.

The motor car is the only product to attract a special rate of tax. Both VAT and the 10 per cent. car tax, which was introduced as a temporary measure over 10 years ago and remained ever since, are added to the price. One cannot understand why the car has remained the one recipient of that special tax. Neither Japanese videos, Taiwanese radios nor any other product is taxed in that way. The British motor industry cannot understand why that extra tax should be levied, which artificially increases the price of a car.

The industry has made in clear that if that tax were removed, it could make up the revenue of the Chancellor of the Exchequer by increased sales and production. It has been argued that if the 10 per cent. car tax were removed, importers would take up the possible extra sale of 100,000 cars a year. Certainly that may have been true some years ago, but that is no longer the case with the resuscitation of Austin Rover as a formidable member of the manufacturing clientele that provide bread and butter cars. Austin Rover could well take the lion's share of the extra sales. It is up to the Chancellor to accept the challenge put to him by the motor industry that over three years the equivalent of that 10 per cent. special car tax will flow back into his coffers as a result of increased sales. Furthermore, the increased sales will bring an improvement in employment prospects and therefore a net gain from the unemployed seeking employment in the car industry.

The Chancellor could consider other aspects, such as VAT on company cars, which affects only a modest number of purchasers. In many cases the company car is a business tool. One must distinguish between company cars provided as a perk and not used for company business, and those which are a business tool, and which a sales or engineering representative, for example, may use in his job visiting customers and getting orders. It is as much a tool of his business as a desk top computer, a telephone or a desk. Yet the business can reclaim the VAT on all those items except the genuine company car. It seems to be grossly unfair that the car should be singled out for this special treatment, and one hopes that the Chancellor will look benevolently upon the genuine company car.

There is no difficulty in sorting out a genuine company car and a company perk. We already do that in regard to the cut-off point for tax on the size of car that a company provides to an employee. For example, on a car that is more than 1800 cc, one's personal tax liability is greater than it is under 1800 cc. That cut-off point seems to have been decided arbitrarily by someone. However, if a person travels 18,000 miles on company business, he qualifies for a reduction in personal tax liability because he is a genuine company car user. If a person does more than 18,000 miles on company business, the car might well be eligible for a VAT reduction, as it is obviously being used in a genuine company way.

I look to the Chancellor to cut VAT and to have a look at the personal cut-off point. I am not ashamed to admit that Austin Rover is disadvantaged by the 1800 cc limit. It does not have an engine that comes into that bracket. In that area, its engine sizes are 1·6 litres and just under 2 litres. Many European manufacturers and the other so-called United Kingdom manufacturers—General Motors and Ford—have produced engines that fit just under the 1·8 litre level, and they are brought in from many continental factories.

If, for once, we could be patriotic, wave the flag and stimulate the British element of our industry, at a stroke the Chancellor could raise the cut-off point for personal tax liability from 1800 cc to 2 litres. That would hurt no one. It would not hurt Ford or GM, who would continue to make 1·8-litre cars quite satisfactorily. But it would help Austin Rover to find an extra market for its 2-litre cars, which on a company basis is at present not so attractive as the 1·8-litre competitor cars. One hopes that the Chancellor will try to stimulate interest and business in the motor industry by adopting some of these modest measures.

The Government are a substantial purchaser of cars. It appears that over the last few years much of their purchasing has been of continentally derived vehicles. For example, the policy of the Ministry of Defence has been to buy Vauxhall Cavaliers in very large numbers—2,000 to 3,000 over the last 18 months alone. Do not the Government have a buying policy which, in addition to seeking the right product at competitive prices, asks manufacturers about the United Kingdom content of the product that they wish to supply? I hope that tender documents in future will request the United Kingdom content of the product being offered to Ministries.

Some observers would say that the Cavalier languishes at around 22 per cent. United Kingdom content, but it is no more than 50 per cent., even on the most optimistic assertion. The Montego has a 92 per cent. United Kingdom content, but at present is not purchased by any Ministry. Fortunately, the cars that we see in New Palace Yard are totally British in content. In addition to the Chancellor's bringing about some fiscal encouragement for the industry, one would hope that the Government generally would continue to back it with hard cash by buying the products that are made largely in this country, and insisting that manufacturers tell them how much of the product is made in this country.

One of the challenges that faces western Europe is the desire of member states to clean up car exhaust systems, and the extra cost that that is likely to mean to the European and British motor industry. With the very substantial vehicle population moving about Europe, the degree of pollution varies according to the state of the car engine and how well it has been maintained.

The determination by the environmentalists to clean up the car exhaust systems is in many people's eyes an encouraging step forward. I will not say that car exhausts should not be cleaned up, because I think that much work can be done. The Germans in particular seem to have taken a number of panic measures in order to protect their forests, which they believe their motor industry and cars are destroying.

Of course, none of that can be proved beyond all shadow of doubt, but the very substantial presence of the environmentalists in Germany—the so-called Greens—has ensured the instigation of legislation on a European bais on the quality of car exhaust emissions. The result has been the EC arriving at stringent plans. This will mean a substantial extra cost to motor manufacturers throughout Europe.

Not many motor manufacturers in Europe are operating profitably at present, certainly none in France. Some motor conpanies will get Government assistance. The French Government will bail out Renault, giving it interest-free loans. It will no doubt eventually provide cars that will meet the standards. In our own country the challenge facing Austin Rover is to produce cars using money borrowed from the market place, albeit underwritten by the Government but paying substantial interest rates as well.

Many of the requirements laid down by the EEC are hard to meet with presently available technology. Austin Rover has set its heart on the development of a lean burn engine, an engine that uses more air per element of petrol than is used currently, and a cleaner exhaust is the result. But since the EEC directives set down slightly stricter standards, the alternative method of cleaning up exhaust emissions, the exhaust catalyst, will have to be used. That will add substantially to the price of a car, as well as to the running costs. It has been estimated that about a 10 per cent. power loss will be involved, so that an extra 10 per cent. consumption of fuel can be expected if bread and butter saloons use a catalyst.

When BL laid down its corporate plan envisaging £1·8 billion expansion over five years, it included an element for improving its vehicle exhaust emission to a standard acceptable under the EEC directive arrived at on 20 March this year. Since then a much more stringent directive has been introduced, and one wonders how much extra cost will be involved, principally by Austin Rover, to meet the standards laid down in that directive. That cost was not actually included in the corporate plan. I have heard mention of sums as high as £200 million as the extra cost of cleaning up exhaust emissions.

More to the point is the fact that the directive on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer lifted his reserve and which we assumed to be the directive involved is actually subject to a number of technical alterations. I would welcome a reply from my hon. Friend the Minister on this point. What element of technical alteration is allowed under that directive? I know that much of it is confidential negotiating, but a set of rules is laid down by the directive. We have lifted our reserve on them. Does that mean that we have accepted that requirement and those regulations, or does it mean that we have sort of accepted them but are able to negotiate large elements? The British motor industry, certainly Austin Rover, would like to know, because time rolls on and commitments have to be made in terms of money and engineering time. To delay for long means that the industry will find it ever more difficult to meet the time scales laid down by the EEC.

One element that is discouraging the British motor industry is the level of Spanish competition. That is an old issue, which has been debated many times in the House, but it is still extremely relevant. Indeed, it is more relevant now than it has been over the past few years. Spanish cars are coming into the country as a result of the dispersal of motor manufacturers to Spain, where labour costs are sometimes 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. below ours. As the industry has developed—it is now exceeding ours in the total number of cars produced—much of that production has been exported throughout Europe, principally to this country. Every Vauxall Nova that is sold in this country is Spanish-built and an increasing number of Ford Fiestas are similarly assembled in and brought into this country from Spain.

In addition, Spain has its indigenous car manufacturer, SEAT, which is now busily about to launch its product range into the United Kingdom market, commencing in October this year. A dealer network is already being set up and cars have been tested and developed and found to be extremely competitive. In fact the engine was designed by Porsche, which is a household name for quality of engine design. Therefore, it is not like a cheap east European car, but is an extremely competitive product in price, quality and design innovation.

The problem with Spain is that she has set up import tariffs to prevent us from sending our products over there in any quantity, and we have virtually no import tariffs against Spanish products coming into this country—the legacy of the 1970-71 agreement with the then EEC, when Spain was largely an agricultural country. She had no industry. The EEC felt that her industry should be encouraged. The result is that, as that industry has been encouraged and is developing into a formidable motor industry, we have the one-sided arrangement whereby I and most motor forecasters predict that about 130,000 Spanish-derived cars will come into the country in 1986 compared with about 3,000 British cars going back to Spain. That is deplorable, because many of those Spanish cars are competing with our home-produced products.

Those who buy a SEAT in this country and who handle SEAT cars will be acting unpatriotically. There is no need for the company to have a presence in this market place. The only way that we should like SEAT to come into this country is if we could send one of our cars to Spain in exchange for one SEAT coming to this country. Those who buy SEAT cars from October onwards had better be aware that when they do so, they are buying people in this country out of a job. That is what it amounts to. They need to think carefully, however attractive the product might appear, that it represents a one-sided trading system and a hammer blow to the British motor industry. I hope that every dealer will be boycotted and that nobody will buy SEAT cars until Spain voluntarily allows us a fighting chance to sell our cars in the Spanish market.

The motor industry has to get over many little obstacles. One is the registration suffix or prefix. It is happening again this year with the C registration. Factories work overtime so that there is an enormous park of cars of all colours and specifications and then the market dives steeply after 1 August to the dead month of September. No other European country presents its motor industry with such a Becher's brook of an obstacle. It was introduced at

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the request of the motor industry which felt that it would be better to have two peaks, the other being at the end of the year.

United Kingdom manufacturers met between 70 and 75 per cent. of home demand then and were able to cope with that hiccough in sales. They now meet about 42 per cent. of home demand. Importers simply ask foreign factories to turn production away from their home markets when everyone is on holiday and not in a car-buying mood to the United Kingdom market, where everyone is on holiday but in a car-buying mood. Importers are encouraged to dump in Britain at a time most convenient to them as European sales are in a trough. Our manufacturers have to gear up production every year for the peak and then face terrible problems afterwards.

Who will seize the opportunity to do away with the registration suffix or prefix? The Department of Trade and Industry? The Department of Transport? There is no reason why we could not be issued with a permanent number plate. Regular sales throughout the year would help our motor industry enormously. The troughs also cause havoc for the myriad component manufacturers. We need a Lord Beaverbrook of the motor industry. We must encourage the industry to produce and to expand the market for its products. Trading opportunities with other countries must be fair. Legislation affecting the industry should not cause it delay and expense. The industry is a major source of employment and prosperity. It must be clear that if we do not ensure that what we buy is made in the United Kingdom, we cannot be blamed for job losses. "Buy British" is a hack cliché, but never has it meant so much as it means in the motor industry.

7.25 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): After a long day and a long night I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the problems that face British Leyland at Bathgate, but before doing so I should like to refer to the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who has performed a service to the house, and to raise three matters.

First, I echo his question about public purchasing. Are we sure that every Government Department asks about the United Kingdom content not only of cars but of other vehicles? Of one thing we can be quite certain: that in France it is inconceivable that any public authority would buy other than French. The same is true of West Germany and of every other country in the world. The British tend to be ultra-silly about this. If everybody else follows such a policy, it is about time that we began to look after our own interests. From now on, therefore, everybody should ask about the United Kingdom content of vehicles.

I also echo the hon. Gentleman's question about exhaust emissions and exhaust regulations. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and I went to Uxbridge a fortnight ago to see Mr. David Andrews and Mr. Les Wharton, the managing director of Leyland vehicles, in relation to Bathgate. It would serve no purpose to deal in detail with what they said about engines, but they told us that the emission regulations, for which the House of Commons is indirectly responsible, made their problems infinitely more difficult. We may have to develop new technology, but, as the hon. Member for Northfield said, what do the Government think about the time scale within which this country is supposed to operate in terms of the European Community regulations? And what is the Government's policy on emissions? Do we think that we are being fairly treated? In particular, has the Minister anything to say about the particular problem for British Leyland of the emission regulations as they will effect the good engine that is still made at Bathgate?

Thirdly, may I follow up the hon. Gentleman's question about Spain. He referred to the dealer network. I am reluctant to call anybody unpatriotic, but there will be extremely sad consequences for well established dealers. I shall mention just two: Tennants and Carmichael Baxter. Do the Government have a policy in relation to Spanish entry laws, which will alter the position, and also in relation to our entry into the Spanish market? These are highly relevant questions.

The House will excuse me for returning to the problem at Bathgate. It is still the largest machine shop in Europe. Ministers, and certainly the Scottish Office, acknowledge the very responsible leadership of Jim Swan and the joint shop stewards committee. It is also acknowledged that the engine is a good product and that other good products are made at Bathgate, However, it is faced with a very considerable problem and the Minister knows what it is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston and I were most courteously received by David Andrews and Les Wharton, and we have an invitation to return any time we wish. This is part of a dialogue in what I hope will be a rescue operation.

My specific questions this morning are as follows. Is the Department of Trade and Industry prepared to take part in the rejuvenated working party, which involves the Scottish Office, the Bathgate area support enterprises group—under the leadership of Michael Fass and Bob Mears—and West Lothian district council? The Scottish Office, especially Mr. Gavin McCrone, is working very hard on this. Do the schemes put forward by BASE interest the Department of Trade and Industry?

An especially difficult problem in relation to the British Leyland corporate plan for the future is whether British Leyland, should some phoenix arise, will be prepared to grant manufacturing rights on regional terms to anyone who can retain a manufacturing capacity at the Bathgate site. After all, this is the heart of industry in central Scotland. I am not one for going over history, but I should tell the Minister with responsibility for the west midlands that, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a decision of a Tory Cabinet—it was the Macmillan Government—against the wishes of Sir George Harriman, to whom I have talked, and other leaders of the motor industry, brought tractor manufacture and vehicle manufacture to Bathgate. It is not right, after so much money has been raised locally through the district council and the community, for the Government to wash their hands of the matter. When Mr. Les Wharton says, "We are in the business of truck manufacture, and others must look after the community," I understand what he means; but there are governmental responsibilities in this. Although Leyland may say, "We are in the business of truck manufacture", nevertheless, morally and otherwise, there are overwhelming reasons why the Government should be deeply involved.

Will the Minister say this morning that his Department will support the working party and the schemes put forward by the shop stewards and by BASE? He will discover that there is much good will among his ministerial colleagues and officials at the Scottish Office.

I have constantly raised with the Minister for Overseas Development the question of trucks for the Sudan and Ethiopia. On his return from Ethiopia, the Minister told me that one problem is that, in east Africa, they are so committed to Mercedes and Fiat that it is doubtful whether the Ethiopian authorities want Leyland trucks. There are £40 million worth of good trucks sitting in the car park at Bathgate, many of which would be highly suitable for east Africa. Could there be proper discussions with Leyland and with the aid authorities to discover whether, if problems arise with the supply of spare parts, Britain could do something to alleviate the immediate problem?

I understand what the Minister for Overseas Development told me, but it is not beyond human wit and governmental will to overcome that problem. The British commercial vehicle industry has a considerable potential contribution to make to the desperate need for transport in the developing countries of Sahel Africa.

I would like the Minister's comments on all those points, if possible, by letter or by meeting. I would ask especially that senior officials of the Department of Trade and Industry should be available in August to take part in the ongoing discussions in and around Bathgate.

7.34 am

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on giving us the opportunity to have this debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on pursuing, as he always does, the campaign to ensure that Ministers are fully aware of the problems facing Bathgate and the opportunities available through the truck capacity that is standing idle.

There is a growing consensus on the essential need for us to sustain a British-controlled capability in the car industry. In the late 1960s the Labour Government undertook the saving of the collapsing British Leyland. We were berated by the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) for daring to intervene with public funds to save the company. That was despite the fact that so many other firms and jobs depended on the survival of the company. One can welcome the conversion, and say that we are glad that at last the Conservative party has recognised what we were advocating in the 1970s. We had to put up with several years of diatribe for doing something that nearly everybody would now recognise as an essential service. That is particularly true with regard to the number of jobs. The industry has over 180,000 jobs, and over 500,000 dependent jobs. As the hon. Member for Northfield said, it sustains many other jobs in the glass, rubber, steel and other sectors.

The industry is critically important to the technological future because we need its demands for, for example, plastics and electronics if we are to stay in the forefront of those industries. It is astonishing that there was ever any doubt in the mind of the Conservative party about the desirability of saving British Leyland.

The collapse of BL was the ultimate saga in the collapse of private enterprise in the car industry. British Leyland became the dustbin of the car industry. Every time a private firm ran into difficulties, the automatic idea was, "Add it on to British Leyland." As a result, an unplanned managerial nightmare, which we had to unravel, arose from this unplanned conglomerate and the residue of the collapsing private sector industry in the car sector in the United Kingdom.

Our industry has not been helped by the somewhat erratic and eccentric policies pursued by the Government in relation to the pound and interest rates. It is anomalous that we have high interest rates to keep up the value of sterling, thereby putting our industry at the maximum disadvantage, while the Japanese are using all their efforts to keep the yen low to keep their industry at an advantage in world trade.

It is hardly surprising that our industry has lost so substantially, particularly when it is then crippled by the interest rates that are being used to create the prejudicial atmosphere for sterling in which our industry has to export and fight import penetration. It is hardly surprising that while exports are £4 billion, they are less than half the level at which they stood 10 years ago.

The hon. Member for Northfield is right to emphasise, as we all are, that all the import penetration since 1974 has not been the failure of our indigenous car industry to compete. Nearly all the import penetration has been as a result of the deliberate self-interested managerial decisions of Ford and General Motors. We should not apologise for rubbing the noses of these companies every possible time into the fact that here investment policy has been having a damaging effect on the pattern and structure of the industry. That has added to a great many of the uncertainties we face.

In the early 1970s, Henry Ford said there would never again be any investment in the United Kingdom. I was lucky enough to be involved in the negotiations to get the Bridgend engine operation. That was at the end of the 1970s and the first break from the personal policy decision of one man who had dominated the investment patterns of Ford for most of that decade. It is also useful to emphasise, as the hon. Gentleman did, that models such as the Nova and the Fiesta are providing substantial numbers of jobs for overseas workers rather than for British workers.

The hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow correctly highlighted the ridiculous situation which is allowed to continue in relation to Spain. One of the great scandals of the car industry is that Spain, with well developed and sophisticated high technology, has been able to impose penal tariffs on imports from Britain and the rest of the Common Market, while Spain has free access to those markets. As the hon. Gentleman said, Spanish penetration into this country next year will be over 100,000 units. When one relates that to the total production of British Leyland, one sees what is happening to sabotage our own car industry.

In 1979 at a TUC seminar in Wales on microtechnology, one of the senior trade unionists talked about the new technology and described how we would have to encompass it. He made the point that he and a deputation of trade unionists had just been to Spain, and he said at that time:

> "Let us be honest. There are Valencia people straight out of the lemon fields who are producing a better quality car using the latest technology than we can produce anywhere in the United Kingdom."

That high technology Spanish industry has been allowed to pirate the trade desperately needed by our own industry. For General Motors to be operating with a 22 per cent. UK content is a scandal. That company has had major Government assistance over the years and expects a high

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proportion of the British market and wants free access to it. On the other hand, we do not have free access to its productive plans and capability. It is strange to think that General Motors would be the first to howl if this or any Government were to suggest they were going to allow a Japanese company to establish an operation in this country with an as low a British content as GM by its policies takes as its right to insult us with. It has actually removed its design and research and development base from this country.

The points made by hon. Members about public purchasing are valid. I know the difficulties and I do not pretend it is all that easy. We tend to play a straight and honest game when it comes to public purchasing. I remember an occasion when I tried to get the Home Office to intervene with police forces which were buying BMWs. "Oh no," said the Home Office, "It is absolutely imperative that each police force has complete discretion to decide which model of motor cycle or motor car is suitable for its own area. They know their areas best and must be given freedom of choice." No such freedom of choice is allowed to police forces anywhere else in the world.

I was disturbed as, I am sure, was the Minister, when the managing director of BL Technology, British Leyland's research and development unit, told the press earlier this year that because of lack of investment, inadequate Government support and a dearth of designers, engineers and other technologists, we were falling so far behind in R and D capability that we may already be "below the critical level." I am sure that the Minister agrees that if that is true, we need to remedy the situation. The managing director suggested that there were already few designers left in the United Kingdom who were capable of producing an automatic gearbox and that there would be no engine design capability left in Britain within a decade. I hope that the recent announcements about BL will help to avoid that possibility. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what effect they will have on sustaining our capability.

We welcome the Ford engine project. I am sure that it is particularly welcomed in Dagenham. Can the Minister tell us whether that will have any R and D benefits?

It was disturbing to learn that Jaguar, one of our prestige companies, still has difficulty in recruiting engineers at salaries of up to £20,000 to carry out expansion of output and work on the new model. I suppose that that is hardly surprising when we realise that we produce half as many engineers—as a percentage of the relevant age group—as do the Japanese. When I became a Minister and inherited the problems of the British motorcycle industry I found that the Japanese had more graduate engineers employed in R and D than we had workers employed in the production of motorcycles. Private enterprise lived on the seed corn and put nothing back into the industry. That industry no longer exists in this country.

There is a shortage not only of engineers but of funding, certainly compared with other countries. The managing director of BL Technology said:

"It is likely now that total output in research and development spending in the UK motor industry has fallen to below £200 million".

But about 95 per cent. of that is new model work. In other words, only about 5 per cent.—£10 million—is going into truly original research.

Our record of Government support is worrying. The United States Government are putting £1 billion of support into R and D in their motor industry, but the figure in the United Kingdom falls short of £3 million. Small wonder that we are way behind the Japanese, the West Germans and the Americans in R and D spending.

Even if the Government decide to increase the funding of R and D work in the motor industry, we shall remain at the whim of decisions taken overseas. It is significant that the only British controlled unit, BL, has a 92 per cent. domestic content, whereas the American controlled General Motors has a derisory 22 per cent. We are unique in the extent to which we have allowed ourselves to become dependent on overseas decision-makers in the industry. Virtually 60 per cent. of British car production is controlled by the Americans or elsewhere overseas. This compares with only 30 per cent. in Germany, less than 5 per cent. in France and the United States and nil in Japan and Italy. It is small wonder that our components manufacturers feel that they are particularly vulnerable when they are dependent on the vagaries and uncertainties of tactical decisions taken by men still lingering in the shadow of the now dead world car concept in Detroit and other overseas centres.

With regard to sustaining the British control capability, at least the new technology has made this easier. It has invalidated the world car approach, and means that a medium-sized firm such as BL has now an excellent chance of competing successfully.

However, I accept completely, as I think the industry does, that R and D is an area in which the economies of scale are still a significant factor, and it is difficult for a medium-sized firm to sustain within itself the full R and D capability that is needed.

The trend towards a technical relationship with a strong overseas partner such as Honda therefore makes sense, but in terms of R and D only. We do not want to see a closer integration, with BL slipping along the same path that was taken by Ford and General Motors, or decisions being taken overseas, which, although no doubt very sensible and in the interests of the overseas board of directors, are not in the interests of British industry, and the British car industry in particular.

7.51 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I join Labour Members in thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) for providing the House with an opportunity to debate again, and perhaps at a significant moment, the future of the British motor industry.

Before I deal with the major themes that have run through the debate, may I say that I will of course take up each of the points and queries that right hon. and hon. Members have raised. I shall also refer the repeated but relevant recommendations of my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield on company car tax, reclaimable VAT on company cars, the tax break point and whether there should be an 1800 cc or a 2000 cc cut-off point for higher level of personal tax liability and, indeed, the

Government's purchasing policy, to the attention of my right hon. Friends not only in the Treasury but, in one particular case, in the Ministry of Defence.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made a thoughtful and considered speech, and identified a number of areas on which there is agreement in the House. In one area, he may inadvertently have introduced a little controversy. He asserted that BL and the British motor industry generally may be denying itself, or may be being denied, the resources to involve itself in the leading edge technologies and the development of them as they apply to the motor industry.

It may be a little presumptous for me to offer an invitation to the right hon. Gentleman on sombody else's behalf, but a Mr. Roy Axe, in Canley, Coventry, who heads the BL design team, has a formidable group of young designers working round him using the best hardware and software, some of it developed by BL systems. I know that they would be delighted to host the right hon. Gentleman. While he was there, I would be delighted to take him to Warwick university to meet Professor Bhattacharyya who has implemented some very good work in manufacturing systems engineering, not just for BL but for others. If the right hon. Gentleman tells me that he has just met him, I shall withdraw the invitation.

Mr. Alan Williams: I have had invitations, but I am grateful to the Minister. It is interesting that the very points that I made about capability were made by the managing director of BL's research arm, Mr. Harry Sheron. That was reported in the *Financial Times* on 6 March.

Mr. Butcher: That gentleman may have had his own reasons for making those comments, but I think that they would be challenged by people both outside and inside the industry. There are people within BL who would demonstrate that the company is making very big strides, especially in manufacturing systems engineering and in bringing forward the very latest design techniques.

On the shortage of engineers, perhaps aptly, later today my Department will be issuing the final report on skills shortages as they affect particularly the areas of high added value engineering. There are also shortages in the information technology industry. Of course there are shortages and, of course, the Government must do their bit to help resolve that, which is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has announced an additional £43 million of expenditure in that area.

I am sure that the House will remember that when Jaguar wanted to take on a number of apprentices greater than its immediate requirements, it was the local trade unions who said that they would not look well on that because the additional apprentices would be paid at below the historic rate, although the rates of pay would have been equivalent to those paid to German apprentices. Therefore, we each have our responsibilities to face when we try to remedy the problems of skills shortages and especially when we try to obtain more, relevant and high value work experience for our young people—the future engineers in the automotive industry.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), in a helpful and courteous speech, asked for a number of assurances and for attention to two or three areas. He joined my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield in requesting the Government to ensure that our public purchasing is enlightened, and whereas it might have to be GATT and EEC-proof, we should at least recognise enlightened purchasing which would involve implementing policies on purchasing that make it more likely that one is buying British because those British products have become the best.

There is a happy alliance between the needs of the customer to obtain value for money. By using proper and close relationships with buyer and supplier, we can ensure that suppliers can improve their performance over the medium and long term and, therefore, on merit justify the decision to buy British.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Bathgate area support enterprise group—BASE. He will recall that we have said that in the first instance it would be a matter for my hon. Friends the Ministers in the Scottish Office. There is an industry Minister in that office. In the first instance —not because we wish to be negative or unhelpful—we say that it is their responsibility to build those bridges, and any Minister welcomes efforts at self-help and developments which involve co-operation between the public and private sectors to try to produce jobs in areas such as Bathgate where structural change has taken place. That is the biggest machine shop in the United Kingdom and there are undoubted skills on that site which everybody wishes to see deployed to the fullest possible extent.

I visited the Sudan three and a half years ago and at that time there were many British trucks on the roads, although they were not BL trucks. I shall communicate to the Minister for Overseas Development, who will be participating in a later debate, the comments of the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

We have been discussing what is a job creation programme. On many occasions in the House we discuss job creation. But the job creation programme that could have the most dramatic impact on our economy and on the unemployment queues is that programme which results in an increase in Britain's share of world trade in manufactures. Hon. Members may be familiar with the figures. In 1964, the United Kingdom had about 14 per cent. of the world's share of trade. By 1979 it had gone down to 8 per cent. The CBI tells us that each 1 per cent. represents 250,000 jobs. Thus, in one way or another, our economy was so weakened during that period that, in effect, we exported 1·5 million British jobs. To get back a significant proportion of those exported jobs would indeed make major inroads into the numbers unemployed.

In the British motor industry we have BL employing 81,000 people; Ford, 57,300; Vauxhall, 20,053; and Talbot, 7,109. They together account for over 90 per cent. of car and commercial vehicle manufacture in the UK. We have a number of independent and specialist manufacturers in both sectors, including Jaguar, Rolls-Royce, Lotus, TVR, and Reliant. The components industry, to which hon. Members have referred, includes large multinational companies such as Lucas and GKN and numerous small specialist companies, in all employing about 200,000 people. In the main, the motor industry provides the bulk of its employment in the west midlands and south-east regions.

The good health of the industry, with an increase in its share of the domestic market and an improvement in exports, could bring about a healthy increase in the number of jobs available in manufacturing industry generally. When we discuss job creation, we should ask ourselves what a certain Government measure or request

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to the Government would do for our competitiveness in our endevour to increase our share of world trade and, therefore, increase the number of jobs in the economy.

We are coming up to the peak buying period for cars. At this time somebody in the House usually appeals to the nation's consumers to buy British. This time there is more reason than ever for British consumers to note the rapid improvement in the quality of British cars and in the level of productivity of our car plants—there has been a truly dramatic increase, particularly at Longbridge — to examine the changes that have taken place on the shop floor and in the style and professionalism of management. It is surely correct for us to say that those who are really concerned about job creation, which includes the vast majority of the public, should think hard, if they are exercising a buying decision, about which car to buy with a new registration plate attached to it. I know that by saying that there will be a few people who will put pen to paper immediately to tell me, "I bought British, but the car that I bought was of poor quality, it did not perform and it was a rogue. I shall never buy British again." I know the contents of such letters almost by heart. I shall not report the name of my most fanfous correspondent, but there is a solicitor in Bristol who seems to enjoy responding to any exhortation to buy British. I take the opportunity of advising him that I have noted his past letters. I hope that he no longer has reason to complain about the quality of his car.

There has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of British produced cars. It is time for consumers to look again at British products in the interests of consumer satisfaction and in the broader issues of the British economy. In so many respects, we have a good story to tell.

The level of import penetration in our markets is uncomfortably high. That is in part a consequence of our recent industrial history. For a number of reasons, the industry failed to meet the needs of the consumer. This has been the not unexpected consequence of a more general industrial malaise. There has been too much capacity across Europe and the industry has been chasing too few customers, which has resulted in disorderly and unprofitable levels of pricing. Our component suppliers and assemblers are starting to perform again. They have re-entered the competitive race and they are matching our competitors on quality and price.

I know that the House will not wish me to delay it for too long. However, I shall respond to the comments made about multinationals. It is common ground between the Government and the multinational vehicle producers that it is necessary for a better balance to be struck between what these companies sell in the United Kingdom and what they manufacture or source here. This applies as much to components and materials as to complete vehicles. In order to encourage an improved balance, we have had and are continuing to have meetings with senior management at Ford, Vauxhall and Talbot to get across our message of concern and I hope that the companies are now aware of the seriousness of our intent.

I shall take the three companies in turn. A quiet revolution has taken place at Talbot. It has declared its intention to manufacture a significant proportion of its new mid-range model, the C28, at its Ryton plant, commencing at the end of the year. I welcome that. We welcome the continuation of the contract with Iran, which is still extremely significant.

Ford is committed to raising the British-built share of its car sales in the United Kingdom although much depends on how successful it is in improving the performance of its car plants in Britain. In the past three years, the contribution from Ford's British assembly plants has increased from 51·6 per cent. to 57·3 per cent., but if Ford could achieve full utilisation of its installed capacity in Britain, the percentage would rise significantly. At present, the United Kingdom content of Ford cars built in Britain averages 80 per cent. and the overall EEC content of its cars averages 92 per cent. Ford also makes in Britain all its trucks, tractors and Escort vans for the whole of Europe and exports large volumes of engines and other major components to Continental plants. Recently announced plans for the manufacture of new engines at Dagenham and transmissions at Halewood are important in this context and I applaud them.

I am encouraged by Vauxhall's recent concern with respect to broad balance and in particular by the fact that it has set up a high level task force covering General Motors' operations in Europe as well as in the United Kingdom. The function of this task force is to investigate ways of improving GM's performance with regard to United Kingdom sourcing. The Government expect that the task force will arrive at positive recommendations for improving the current state of affairs by which Vauxhall produces here less than half the cars that it sells in the United Kingdom. Even in those cars, the average United Kingdom content does no more than hover around 50 per cent. The Government look to Vauxhall to support its declarations of intent with positive demonstrations of its determination to move in the right direction. I hope very much that these demonstrations will be forthcoming. I know that the fleet buyers in particular will follow these developments with great interest.

The message is clear. The companies, wherever they have not done so, need to attain international levels of competitiveness. Once that is achieved, the United Kingdom will look for the same contribution in terms of investment and jobs as has been diverted in the past, to locations abroad. The contribution of the multinationals must be commensurate with the gains that they derive from our markets.

Of course, the Government seek to take a lead in our public purchasing policies by encouraging all major public purchasers to think carefully about the local content of vehicles before buying them. Individual consumers can also contribute to the future of the vehicle industry.

Within Europe, I know that our trading terms with Spain, especially the imbalance in the vehicle sector, has been a deep grievance throughout the industry. As hon. Members are aware, this problem originated in the agreement between Spain and the Community which was signed in 1970, before we were even Community members. We have now addressed this problem under the terms of accession of Spain to the Community.

There are three principal measures that should be helpful. First, all the Spanish import duties against our cars will be phased out over seven years, and one half of that cut will be in the first three years. Secondly, Spain will be required to impose VAT, rather than her present tax regime for imported cars, from 1 January 1986. This will lessen discrimination against imports——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's Ruling—(Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19)—the debate was concluded.

Agriculture (Scotland)

8.12 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am sure that hon. Members welcome the opportunity to debate this important topic, albeit at this early hour. People realise that this is a critical time for Scottish agriculture. Agriculture in Scotland and throughout the Community can be said to be at a crossroads. Those of us who have regular contact with the industry are well aware of people's concern.

For most of the past 40 years, the industry has been urged on by Governments, whatever their political hue, to increase home food production. The industry has responded, in terms of efficiency and productivity, when contributing to domestic food production. Such production made an important contribution during those years when we did not have the benefit of North sea oil to prop up our balance of payments.

The message to the industry is now different. Agriculture is clearly in transition. Governments and the public recognise the need to contain expenditure on the common agricultural policy. There has been control of production in commodities in the case of structural surpluses. Last year, the dairy industry had to go through a traumatic period of transition to accommodate the new quota system. Now cereal growers are uncertain about future moves to cut cereal production.

There are ever-increasing pressures on modern agriculture to take account of modern environmental interests. Those interests are quite proper, provided that those who push them remember that our rural areas are living regions. They are places in which people have been brought up and work and are not simply those parts of the countryside to which the urban dwellers retreat at weekends.

Generally, the National Farmers Union of Scotland has been responsive to these changes. It is clear from regular reading of press releases and the proceedings of the meetings of Scottish members with their officers that these new factors are in people's minds. If the industry is in a state of transition, we hope that the Government will be more responsive to its problems and more supportive of it. Last month when the Secretary of State attended the Royal Highland Show at Ingliston he said that the Government were the friend of the farmer, but many farmers to whom I have spoken say, "With friends like that, who needs enemies?"

All hon. Members will have received representations from the National Farmers Union nationally and locally about the anxiety of the dairy industry at the rumours that quotas may be transferred from Scotland to Northern Ireland. Scotland's full allocation of almost 30 million litres under the outgoers scheme has been taken up. There is considerable anxiety that a further sum will be made available to fund outgoers, but that the quotas so released will not be retained in Scotland, but transferred to Ulster.

The Minister will be well aware of the opposition that that has generated. It is feared that such a scheme will represent the loss of what may rightly be described as a Scottish asset, and will generally undermine those still engaged in dairying in Scotland. Above all, it is feared that if we lose any more milk production, the viability of many local creameries will be threatened. While that is the general case for Scotland, I am not ashamed to say that it

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is particularly true for the islands. Given the Under-Secretary's constituency, knowledge and background, he must share similar anxieties.

One must pay tribute where tribute is due, and the Government have acknowledged the particular problems faced by the islands. There was a lower percentage cut when the quota regime was introduced, and in the regulations laid before the House in March a specific provision was made for the allocation of outgoers quota in remote and island areas.

In some parts, such as Orkney where the creamery is highly dependent on sustaining a particular level of throughput, there is anxiety that, if there is further loss of production by individuals, that quota should remain within the islands. Certainly, if the Government are considering transferring quota to Northern Ireland, the entire Scottish industry will find it a bitter disappointment and will oppose it. Indeed, it has already voiced its opposition. It would be particularly grievous to the island economies if they lost any quota.

There has also been considerable consternation throughout the industry about the cut in capital grants. Initially a £5 million cut was announced last December, which was compounded by the announcement earlier this month of the new capital grant regulations. I am sure that the House does not need to be reminded that 87 per cent. of Scottish farms lie within less favoured areas. We use the term "less favoured areas" so often that we may forget what it means. They are less favoured because of the land, and for geographical and climatic reasons. The point of designating those areas as naturally less favoured is that they need more favour from Community and national agricultural support. Despite the high percentage of Scottish farms in less favoured areas, they have had to bear an equal, and some may argue a disproportionate, proportion of the cuts in agricultural spending. Field drainage grant support has been reduced within 12 months from 70 to 30 per cent. Farmers in those areas, especially hill farmers and livestock producers, are not contributing to structural surpluses and over-production. The grants which they seek were previously available at higher rates, for example for reseeding, field drainage and fencing, and are for works of necessary and routine maintenance. There is a great fear that, because of the cut in grant support, these very necessary investments will also be cut. That in the long term must spell danger, and it will be unsatisfactory in the context of future long-term prospects for agriculture.

These cuts come at a time when there is little buoyancy among the livestock producers in the less favoured areas. The annual review of agriculture published earlier this year examined income developments by farm type, and concluded that on hill and upland less-favoured area farms, there was a general fall in income in 1983-84 following a more pronounced drop in the previous year. That report added:

"In 1984-85 incomes in these farms are expected to show some recovery, except in Scotland where a further fall is forecast".

Even though their own White Paper says that there is an expected fall in incomes, the Government nevertheless go ahead and cut the grants that were previously available.

I wish to make two detailed points, to which I hope the Minister will respond. As I understand the new provisions, a farmer can no longer apply for ad hoc grants for such measures as reseeding, field drainage or fencing as was previously possible under the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme.

I further understand that, having regard to the monetary limits under the new scheme — the agriculture improvement regulations — a farmer could make applications for assistance up to a limit of two in six years. But that would require the submission of an investment plan.

Given that in the last week the Government have been trumpeting about lifting the burden on small businesses, how can they justify this additional bureaucratic imposition on those who are seeking to do routine maintenance that previously they were able to do more easily because of the ad hoc grant system?

Secondly, I wish to know the extent to which the reduced rates of grant might lead to reduced take-up. Investment plans will not now go ahead, because the money is not available to finance them. How does the level of take-up in April to June this year compare with the same period last year, when the grants were at the higher rate? Will the Minister look again at the rates of grant if it appears that during this financial year the savings to the Exchequer because of the cuts will exceed those that were budgeted for because of the lower rate of take-up? In the light of that, will he review the rate of grant?

Scottish agriculture is also concerned about the reduction in expenditure on the advisory services and research and development. That is a totally insensitive and illogical move at a time when agriculture is in transition. There are ever-increasing needs of the market to improve quality, as well as the need to reconcile farming interests with environmental concerns.

Much time has been spent in the House debating whether the rate of cutback in Scotland was the same as in England and Wales. The advisory services in Scotland do not always perform the same functions as those in England and Wales. But even if they are identical and we are comparing like services with like, that seems to ignore the fact that such a vast cut—41 per cent.—in one go must have a greater impact in Scotland, because of the greater area of Scottish agriculture that is part of less favoured areas, than in England and Wales.

Greater distances must be covered in parts of Scotland, and there is a need for advisory services in less favoured areas where agriculture faces difficulties caused by climate, geography and quality of the land. The great fear in constituencies such as mine is that, if funds are withdrawn or reduced, the type of services that will be cut —particularly for transport cost reasons—will be those to the outlying parts. As a result, the very necessary advice to those areas will be diminished. It was clear to my hon. Friends and me when we saw the Minister of State, the noble Lord Gray, that the sum of 41 per cent. referred to was not negotiable. Now we are debating where the cuts should fall. It is clear that there will have to be considerable rationalisation of the colleges of agriculture and the functions they perform.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I think my hon. Friend will recognise that, having half of the north of Scotland college of agriculture in my constituency, the point he has just raised is of considerable concern to me. That college is talking about the redundancy of 350 experienced specialist advisers who are needed and who will almost

certainly have to be re-recruited as and when the reorganisation has taken place. This decision seems to be wasteful of individuals as well as of a natural resource. Will my hon. Friend press on the Minister that, if he will not negotiate the 41 per cent., he must negotiate the timing — the speed with which the change is introduced — to avoid the redundancy and waste of time involved?

Mr. Wallace: My hon. Friend has made a valid point and has stressed the point clearly himself; the Minister will have noted it. He underlines the point, in saying that this will lead to 350 redundancies, that the cuts do not make sense. Indeed, no matter how these cuts are made, clearly parts of Scottish agricultural research and development and our advisory and investigative services — all of which in their own way are vital — will be unacceptably cut. We have already had an Adjournment debate on the valuable work done by the Scottish Institute of Agricultural Engineering, and the fears that it has about a cut in expenditure on research and development.

From the point of view of my constituents, I am greatly concerned about the possible impact of the cuts on the veterinary investigation service, in particular the laboratory at Thurso, which does very valuable work. The veterinary surgeons in my constituency were full of praise for the work done and the service provided to the agricultural community in Caithness, Sutherland, Orkney and Shetland. When the Rayner review looked into this matter in England — Scotland was excluded from its deliberations — it concluded that

"the absence of a sophisticated diagnostic and investigational service would represent a serious loss to the industry as a whole. A laboratory based diagnostic service is necessary to support statutory disease eradication schemes and for the identification of new and emergency disease conditions. The private sector would not find it worthwhile to offer the full range of diagnostic and investigational services currently available from the Veterinary Investigation Service."

I can see no reason at all why a similar conclusion should not be applied to Scotland. We will create long-term problems for animal health and welfare if the future of institutions such as the Thurso laboratory and similar laboratories in Scotland is not safeguarded.

The cumulative effect of the cuts will be less assistance in areas where incomes are accepted by the Government to be falling. If investment help is down, that will force the farmers concerned more and more to increase their debt and to have to service debts. In addition, some funding will inevitably be required from the industry to support advisory services, funding from incomes that will be smaller anyway, and in some cases just not there.

How do the Government see the future of Scottish agriculture, when the cumulative effect of their policies are considered? I have no doubt that in his response the Minister will tell us how much the Government is spending on agricultural support in Scotland. One could ask how much would have been spent had these cuts not been made. It sounds almost like a great achievement by the Government that they have not actually cut out agricultural support altogether.

The Minister will also tell us of the increase in amounts payable for hill livestock compensatory allowances, increases which I acknowledge, in particular the supplement in the Highlands and Islands area. I have gone through the figures with NFU representatives in my constituency. It is clear that, if one considers the interrelationship of the increases with the decreases in grants, there is no net benefit at all to the industry. In fact, it is worse off.

I should like to make a constituency point. The grades of land that are used for the payment of allowances in the Highlands and Islands area were based on classifications for winter keep and bear no relation to the problems caused through additional transport and fuel costs or the problems in the remoter parts of Scotland. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) will accept that grade A land in Easter Ross is a slightly better proposition when it comes to things such as transport costs and accessibility to markets than grade A land in Orkney. We wish the Minister to reconsider the classifications to see whether they are fair and to ensure that the support is properly going where it is needed.

It is clear that agriculture in Scotland is important not only on its own terms but for the part that it plays in the whole rural economy. If one cuts grants, it is not just the farmer who suffers, but the small contractors who have been undertaking his fencing and drainage work. That has a pervasive effect throughout the rural community. It could put in jeopardy the rural school and other services.

We wish to see a total turnround in Government policy. Support should not be withdrawn. We should be looking forward to such things as an agriculture development programme for the Highlands and Islands, which seek to regenerate the rural economy. There have been signs in the past few weeks that the European Commission is anxious to talk to the Government about the matter. I hope that the Minister will say that the Government will take a more positive approach than in the past. That would be welcome news, because the news over the past 12 months has not been of encouragement and support for Scottish agriculture.

8.31 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on his good fortune in raising this important subject. I am grateful for this opportunity to register the strong feelings of the Labour party about the decay of rural Scotland in recent years and indeed about the Government's abject failure to give a proper lead in assisting the Scottish rural economy to come through this time of drastic change and great uncertainty, which everyone acknowledges to be the case.

Apart from agriculture, we have seen the impact of other aspects of Government policy on housing and transport, to name but two, in rural Scotland. the Government must stand condemned for that. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said, we need a proper rural development policy not only for the Highlands and Islands but for other rural parts of Scotland. That must include an agriculture policy.

I think that there is general agreement about the urgent need for a drastic review of the European common agricultural policy. However, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is clearly hopelessly out of his depth in addressing himself to the problems. In Scotland, we have the additional problem of having a Minister whom one can only describe as the invisible man responsible for the agriculture industry. In this instance, I am talking not only about the Secretary of State for Scotland himself, but about someone who is even more invisible—Lord Gray

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

of Contin. Perhaps the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) can tell us something about him because I have not seen him since he lost his seat at the last general election.

The Government have conveniently identified a case for cutting expenditure, which they are always keen on doing, and they are turning both their blind eyes to areas of Scottish agriculture and the Scottish rural economy that require extra incentives. Let me give a couple of examples. I start with one mentioned by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. There is a massive attack on the budgets of the Scottish agricultural colleges—a 41 per cent. cut over less than two years. That approach to the research and advisory organisations under present circumstances seems to us to be little short of criminal.

Those organisations can help the industry to adjust itself to the new climate of reduced production, increased emphasis on environmental issues and the general need for diversification and change. If anything, one might think that those colleges needed more resources, but the Government are hell-bent on cutting expenditure regardless of the consequences. We know what is happening to those colleges at present. It has been suggested that money to sustain research and advisory services could be raised from the industry. On the principle of he who pays the piper calls the tune, I suspect that the bigger farmers would be able to benefit from advisory services' research while smaller enterprises, which have the greatest need of it, might not.

Capital grants to agriculture in Scotland, as elsewhere, have been halved in three successive years. For redrainage of land on low ground, capital grant is now 15 per cent. That is not an adequate incentive, even under present circumstances, for vital capital improvement work. Quite apart from the impact that the cuts may have on agriculture, there is cause for acute concern about their disastrous effect on agricultural contractors, who are an important source of employment in rural areas.

We should pay special attention to the most fragile parts of the agricultural economy in Scotland—the hills and uplands. It is essential to sustain employment in those remoter areas. We should consider additional means of protecting existing enterprises in the remoter areas and of creating more smaller farms when possible. To give credit where credit is due, I must add that the Government have responded to pressure to maintain the hill livestock compensatory allowances and the beef and sheep variable premium. That general level of support must continue to guarantee the long-term future of hill livestock farming. I hope that all parties acknowledge that need.

As for the pig industry, we deplore the fact that the Government have refused to accept the recommendation of the Select Committee on Agriculture on the funding of the scheme to eradicate Aujeszky's disease. The Government's failure to underwrite the eradication scheme will make it much more difficult to institute voluntary eradication schemes for animal diseases in future.

The dairy industry will not forgive the Government for the shambolic manner in which production quotas were introduced last year and I do not understand why the Republic of Ireland is getting additional quota of 58,000 tonnes when there is a serious threat of badly needed Scottish milk quota being transferred to Northern Ireland. We must press the Minister for a specific reply and an assurance that Scotland's milk quota will be protected.

We know that there are massive and costly surpluses of cereals in the European Community. We have the grotesque embarrassment of having huge carry-over stocks from last year's harvest still in intervention stores as we begin the 1985 harvest. That is a direct consequence of the distorting effects of the intervention buying system and the common agricultural policy in its present form. We require a massive overhaul of the CAP, not the timid tinkerings that we have had with cereals.

Savings must be made, and there is a need for urgent steps to reduce production and encourage alternative use for land. I suggest that the 1·8 per cent. reduction in prices being imposed by the Commission as a means of circumventing the veto put in by the Germans on the original agreement, will probably be worse than useless. Such a marginal cut in cereal prices is likely to be interpreted as an incentive to increase production, which must be the last thing that we should do.

If the Minister pursues his policy of cutting prices as the means of reducing the production of cereals, he will have to make much bigger cuts, and such substantial cuts could well lead to bankruptcies among smaller producers. That policy is unlikely to succeed. We need a combination of incentives to change patterns of production by the introduction of alternative crops. Price restraint is needed. We must also consider the introduction of quotas. I do not like the idea, but rather than being stampeded into the imposition of quotas, as happened over milk quotas, there should at least be contingency plans for a quota system for cereals.

I have referred to the need for incentives to change production patterns in the rural areas of Scotland. We must encourage people to stop producing commodities that are in surplus. The new agricultural improvement grants that were debated last week in Standing Committee included a new provision for grants and incentives to plant broadleaved shelter belts. During the debate in Committee I raised this point with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. She reiterated the Government's refusal to implement article 20 of the European Community's structures directive which would have provided a very substantial incentive to plant broadleaved trees.

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Scotland said in a written reply that through the Forestry Commission he intended to institute a new planting grant scheme. At first sight this appears to be at least as attractive as the article 20 incentives proposal of the European Community. At least that will be the case for areas of up to three hectares. After that the article 20 incentives would be more generous. Why not implement article 20 in full? European Community cash could then be used to encourage the substantial planting of trees not only in the Highlands but on low ground. The extra planting of trees would not only improve the landscape; it could lead to a significant reduction in the production of cereals and other surplus crops and it would lead to an increase in the production of much needed timber.

There is an urgent need to restrain the production of surplus crops in the European Community. The hamfisted cuts in research and in general support for the industry are typical of this Government's approach, but they are wrong. We should redirect this budget towards

restructuring the industry. If savings can thereby be achieved, so much the better. However, our top priority should be the revitalisation of the Scottish rural economy. Scotland contains a high proportion of remote rural areas. Its special case demands special attention in the review of agricultural and rural policy. I fear that that may be too much to expect from this discredited and unrepresentative Government.

8.43 am

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Conscious though I am of the time, I want to place just a one-minute contribution on the record before the Minister replies to the debate. I echo the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on having been fortunate enough to introduce this debate and for the manner in which he did so. I fully endorse the thrust of his argument.

There is great concern in the Ross, Cromarty and Skye constituency and in the Highlands and Islands generally about the envisaged level of cuts in the capital grant scheme and in the agricultural, scientific, research and general support services. My hon. Friend said that it will have a severe impact upon those who farm in the less-favoured areas of the Highlands.

Secondly, an application has been sent from the Highland Regional Council to Lord Gray of Contin requesting 100 per cent. Scottish Office support for the necessary funding of the work that has to be done after the flooding of the River Conon just over a year ago. I hope the Government will seriously consider that request.

Thirdly, may I back up my hon. Friend's plea that there should be a full agricultural development programme for the Highlands of Scotland. Optimistic signals are coming from Europe. There is a clear indication that the European Commission wants to talk to the Scottish Office. I hope that it will respond constructively. It would go a long way towards reversing some of the indebtedness and general difficulty which the agricultural community in the Highlands is experiencing.

8.44 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I congratulate the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on his first appearance as the Liberal party spokesman on agriculture in Scotland. In the time available to me, I doubt whether I can cover every point made, but I hope to cover the main ones.

At this early hour—it is almost mid-morning for a farmer—I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman managed to slip his debate into the last of the 12 hours available. It gives me the opportunity to put on record the state and future of Scottish agriculture, and to re-emphasise the Government's excellent record of support to agriculture in Scotland. The industry is in reasonably good shape. Last year, net farm incomes increased by about 32 per cent. to £141 million. Although I am delighted with that improvement, we were careful to say when the figures were published that one should not read too much into single year-on-year comparisons. Many variable factors in agriculture, not least the weather, have a bearing on farm incomes. This year, the weather has been less than kind in many parts of the country.

Since we took office in 1979, the upward trend has become clear. We halted the decline in net farm incomes which we inherited, and then reversed the trend to enable the industry's financial position to recover. The Government can legitimately take the credit for helping the industry to pull itself out of the trough, because we continue to inject large sums of public money into its support. In 1985-86, about £106 million will be paid in direct financial assistance to Scottish farmers. The 1978-79 equivalent was only £73 million. When one considers that, one realises that the remarks this morning of the Lib-Lab alliance were not well-founded.

I suspect that many farmers forget—perhaps some hon. Members have forgotten it, too—that Scotland benefits substantially from the £1·2 billion that is likely to be spent this year in supporting United Kingdom farm prices under the common agricultural policy. Scotland's share of the sum is difficult to quantify but, on the basis of a special exercise carried out in 1983-84, we can place it at about £135 million. Agriculture tends to forget that those sums are part and parcel of the Government's support for the industry. In addition, we spend about £50 million on research and development and education, which benefit agriculture, although less directly.

I am glad that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) mentioned forestry. The Forestry Commission estimates that about £27 million will be spent in Scotland in 1985-86. As my noble Friend Lord Gray noted at the annual general meeting of the Scottish NFU in March, Scottish agriculture now receives about £300 million a year in support. By any yardstick, that is considerable support from the Government and, ultimately, from the taxpayer.

Despite the difficult and protracted price-fixing negotiations this year, the outcome was good for farmers, as the Scottish NFU publicly acknowledged. It is never easy to secure all that we want in those negotiations, and this year was no exception. The continuation of the beef variable premium scheme was especially important to us, and that was certainly recognised by the NFU. The sheepmeat provisions are largely unchanged from previous years, thanks to significant negotiating achievements by the Government. We have resisted attempts to tinker with these schemes. I know that the producers were relieved at the splendid Government achievement in the negotiations.

The real disappointment this year was the failure of the Community to take the right course on cereals. As the House knows, the Germans blocked a proposal to cut cereal prices by 1·8 per cent., and even that proposal had to be seen as a rather weak compromise when related to the 5 per cent. cut due in the light of the Council's sensible 1984 decision on guarantee thresholds.

It is interesting that the hon. Member for East Lothian seemed to be more realistic in facing up to the problems that agriculture will face, and is facing from the problem of surpluses than the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland. He rather skidded over the problem of surplus production in the Community, not just on cereals but other products.

It might be interesting for the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland if I read out to him what one one of his leaders said in a debate in January. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that hon. Gentlemen are cheering the hon. Member. Perhaps it is the selection of leader that brings a cheer. He said:

"It has been clear for the past five years that a continued open-ended system of agricultural support was bound to lead to

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trouble, compounded by the seldom mentioned fact that the problem is not just open-ended production with the need for subsidy capping, as it were, but the rapid and expensive result of advances in agricultural technology, as the support system was devised without the expectation of full production or production in balance with demand."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 911.]

That simple truth does not seem to have penetrated to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, although the hon. Member for East Lothian has got the message, which is particularly relevant to cereals. In a report published by Agra Europe, published on 12 July 1985, it was said:

"Budgetary costs could be trebled by what is a conservative forecast of cereals production of 154 million tonnes by 1990 if present trends in support prices and productivity improvements are permitted to continue. The Commission's own forecast is of a 163 million tonne harvest in 1990, which would mean over a 40 million tonne surplus. Even taking the more conservative figure of 154 million tonnes this would result in EEC support of at least £5,000 million in 1990, roughly 50 per cent. greater than the level which in the milk sector forced farm Ministers into the dairy quota scheme."

The surplus in cereals is a serious problem that we must face up to, and there was more recognition of that in the contribution from the hon. Member for East Lothian than in that from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland.

The Scottish NFU was clear in all its representations to Ministers about milk quotas. They saw milk quotas as the way ahead. They have got that, and I pay tribute to them and to the Milk Marketing Board for the way we have managed to introduce milk quotas in Scotland, with the minimum trouble, although there are real problems with some milk quotas.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland asked about milk quotas in Northern Ireland. I believe that he is to see my noble Friend later today, as is the president of the Scottish NFU. This matter is under discussion and I am not able to pre-empt the outcome of these discussions.

As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland recognised, the Government are anxious about the future of the small island communities, whose dairy base is dependent on the local creamery. We have looked after the dairy farmers on Islay, Bute, and Kintyre, South of Tarbert, which, for the purposes of the debate, is considered an island. Added on to that is Orkney and Shetland. The hon. Member will know that in Shetland the quotas were not cut last year and will be exempt from the 1 per cent. cut this year.

In Orkney, as in the islands of my constituency, my noble Friend has certainly given an assurance that the quota removed from the islands by the outgoers scheme will be returned this year. We are mindful not just of the needs of individual producers in these areas, but for the need for the cumulative amount of milk in the area to be able to sustain a viable creamery. We have certainly done that and I was pleased to hear the hon. Member acknowledge that fact.

Capital grants have been mentioned and the new grants scheme which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture on 8 July. The hon. Member expressed concern about the proposed rates of support and asked for them to be increased. It is extraordinarily easy for the hon. Gentleman to say that his party can promise more money here, there and everywhere, safe in the knowledge that it will never have to keep the promise which, if kept, would in any case mean higher taxes.

Of course the hon. Gentleman wants more help for his constituents, as we all do, but we also have to recognise that it is those same constituents who have to pay the extra tax, and they will not be too keen to do that. At a time of great pressure on public expenditure, we all have to cut our cloth accordingly, and the farming community understands that. The hon. Member has failed to look at some of the positive features of the new scheme. I stress that these are schemes which not only reflect the decisions of the Government, but stem from our obligations to implement community regulation 797/85.

Among the positive features, I include the proposal to introduce the new schemes on the basis of a clean slate. In other words, farmers will be allowed to spend up to the permitted ceiling regardless of the substantial support which many have received under the AHGS and AHDS schemes. From the representations made by many farmers in my constituency, I know this will be welcomed. Eligibility under the principal new scheme will be extended to small and part time farmers. Aid will be provided for craft and tourism projects in the less favoured areas, and this will permit farmers to augment and diversify their income.

Additional support will be provided for young farmers entering the industry. In addition, we are taking the opportunity to increase standard costs. These provide the basis on which grant is calculated where farmers undertake eligible projects using their own labour. These various measures coupled with general rates of grant of 30 per cent. and 15 per cent. demonstrate not only our continuing commitment to the farming industry, but, with the higher rates of grant — double that in the lowlands — the continuing priority which we are according to the less-favoured areas.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland mentioned plans. Compared with the previous FHDS scheme, the redevelopment plans will be much simpler and less onerous on farmers. I do not consider it unreasonable that farmers applying for grants paid for by the taxpayers should be required to place their applications in the context of a plan, and we are satisfied that two plans in six years will adequately accommodate all the worthwhile developments.

Hon. Members expressed concern about research and development and about the advisory services. As I said the other night, considerable changes are taking place in agriculture. I have mentioned some of them, and there will be more in future as we face the problem of surpluses. There is concern not only about surpluses, but about the environment and its interface with agriculture. There is also pressure to improve the welfare of farm animals, and considerable interest in the relationship between diet and health.

Against that background, it is essential that we review our strategy for research and development, assess the priorities, and see to it that the taxpayer is getting value for money. It is not unreasonable to expect the prime beneficiaries from the fruits of agricultural research and development to make a contribution towards its cost. My Department recently issued a consultation paper in relation to all this which was widely distributed and comments are now being considered.

We recognise the important work carried out by the college advisory service, but we take the view that farmers should make a contribution towards the cost of a service from which they benefit. Even after the reductions are

made, the majority of the money, the lion's share, will still come from the public purse. The colleges and the Department are consulting various interests, not least individual farmers. The Department will produce a consultation paper in the early autumn seeking reactions to proposals for implementing the changes which flow not simply from the decision to reduce public funding, but also from the reviews which go along with that.

Of course, I agree that less-favoured areas have particular needs and problems to which we must continue to have special regard. We shall certainly be doing that in all our consultations and considerations.

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Patient Referrals (Cumbernauld)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

9 am

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): This has been a long day, though for Parliament it is still Wednesday — a Westminster eccentricity which must bewilder the outside world. Those of us who have kept the watches of the night, including my hon. Friends the Members for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), will be relieved that we are at last reaching the end of the sitting.

It would be appropriate for me to place on record on behalf of hon. Members our appreciation of the staff of the House who, with diligence, patience and characteristic courtesy, have seen us through the past eighteen and a half hours.

I shall not detain the House for long, but I have to raise an important constituency matter that is worthy of the time that remains. For a number of years, general practitioners in Cumbernauld new town have been concerned about patient referrals from the new town to hospitals administered by the eastern district of the Greater Glasgow health board and by the Lanarkshire health board.

The principle has always been that doctors used their clinical judgment to determine the best hospital for their patients' needs. That principle has come under increasing pressure because of the growth of the new town and a reluctance by the Glasgow royal infirmary readily to accept emergency admissions. The important requirement for the GPs is that there should be clear and adequate provision both in Glasgow and at Monklands district general hospital. Other hospitals in Lanarkshire, such as Law and Hairmyers hospitals, are not well placed for access from the new town by public or private transport.

The matter came to a head in July 1982, when a Cumbernauld GP received a letter from the eastern district of the Greater Glasgow health board informing him that the substantially open-door policy would continue at the receiving physician's discretion until 5 pm and that at 5 pm or earlier, if there were eight beds or fewer vacant in the medical division, the receiving team would inform the district medical officer or his deputy of the position.

Such was the concern of the GPs that they called a meeting in February 1983 to discuss the future hospital care of Cumbernauld people in view of the reduction in the number of beds at Glasgow. Consultants at Glasgow felt that there would soon come a time when they would be unable to provide a hospital service for Cumbernauld if there were further reductions in the number of beds. Their colleagues from Monklands general hospital said that they could barely cope with the work load from Cumbernauld that they were receiving at that time and would be unable to cope with increased numbers.

The problem is that Monklands general hospital was not built large enough to cope with Cumbernauld's increasing population and cannot cope with more than the numbers that it takes now. If Glasgow stops taking patients, they will have to go to Law and Hairmyers hospitals with increasing frequency.

Doctors asked the chief medical officer for Scotland to their meeting because either Glasgow would have to change its policy of reducing the number of beds, and would have to be given money to provide a service for two

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thirds of Cumbernauld's population or Monklands general hospital would be trying to cope with a demand which it was not large enough to satisfy.

The chairman of the Lanarkshire health board and the chief area medical officer were asked how they proposed to care for Cumbernauld's population. They replied that they hoped the situation would remain as it had been in the past. However, the Greater Glasgow health board was not prepared to let patients continue to have freedom of choice, and its cut in finances will affect Cumbernauld patients, who will find it increasingly difficult to get into Glasgow hospitals.

There are only two options for Lanarkshire health board in these circumstances. It either extends the Monklands district general hospital or zones Monklands not to accept patients from certain parts of Lanarkshire so that it can have more beds for Cumbernauld patients. As an alternative, Cumbernauld asks that it should be put into the Greater Glasgow health board area, which would mean that the responsibility for taking patients would be that of Glasgow. This would result in its getting more money, and not having to cut the number of beds that it is being forced to cut at present.

These questions were put to the chairmen of both boards, but it appears that the two chairmen failed to agree. Lanarkshire wrote on 19 September that any action that it took would be simply to take up the same stand that it had taken two years previously.

In theory, a complicated administrative procedure has been devised to keep the Monklands hospital doctor receiving the case informed where the patient may be accommodated. In practice, it never works out. In approximately 50 per cent. of medical cases, admission to Monklands hospital is simply refused. That is perhaps fortunate for the people of Cumbernauld, for the scheme as devised might mean admission to Hairmyers hospital or Law hospital. I stress that I am not criticising those hospitals. It is simply that it is not convenient for the people of Cumbernauld to go there. Only when all beds in Lanarkshire are full does the scheme envisage asking Glasgow royal infirmary for help.

Throughout the conduct of this issue, I have had meetings with the doctors. Their representatives and I have met the chairmen and officers of the two health boards. Although these meetings were useful in exploring the difficulties and determining the provisions which exist for my constituents, they did not successfully resolve the central question. In the event, I arranged a meeting with the Minister in an endeavour to obtain ministerial advice to the boards, on which it was hoped they would act so as to resolve the problem.

However, in the last letter which the Minister addressed to me, he merely reiterated that the problem of emergency referrals of Cumbernauld patients was essentially an operational matter for Lanarkshire health board to resolve, in discussion with the Greater Glasgow health board. The Minister stated that Dr. Thomson's letter of 19 September 1984 resolved the uncertainty which had prevailed to that date. He further claimed that the two boards concerned had now clarified the procedure to be followed.

The procedure is, of course, important, but it is not the central issue. The central issue is the capacity of Lanarkshire health board at Monklands general hospital to cope with Cumbernauld referrals, and the willingness and ability of Glasgow royal infirmary to accept unselected referrals from the new town. This has been underlined by a case referred to the royal infirmary by a doctor from Cumbernauld, which was the subject of correspondence between him and that hospital in May this year. It is clear that, if additional cuts continue in Glasgow royal infirmary then, while it will be willing to accept normal gynaecological complaints, patients requiring termination will not be considered.

It is essential that the Minister resolve the matter between the two boards. I hope that he will feel able to say that funding will be such that patients have a choice of which hospital they wish to attend. I hope that he understands that, if the choice is not given, there will shortly come a time when there are insufficient beds for the care of patients from Cumbernauld.

9.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr John MacKay): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), despite the unusual hour, for giving me this opportunity to discuss the particular problem about which he has spoken and to place on record the Government's position on some of the aspects of this issue which are of more general interest and application.

Perhaps it has also given the hon. Gentleman, depending on the decisions of the electorate for the Labour party, a chance to have a say in this House before he takes a vow of silence. But that is something over which Ministers have no control; it is in the hands of the electorate of the Labour party. I shall not say anything about the hon. Gentleman either for or against him in case it damages or even enhances his chances in that election.

However, I will say that the hon. Gentleman has certainly pursued this matter with me both by meetings and by writing and now in this debate.

I think that it is first of all important to establish clearly in a case such as this what are the respective roles of, on the one hand, the Scottish Home and Health Department and, on the other hand, the Health Boards, the Lanarkshire health board and the Greater Glasgow health board. As hon. Members know, the responsibilities of health boards are many and varied, but perhaps the principal reason for their existence is to plan for and provide patient services within the resources which the Government make available to them and in the light of their local requirements and priorities. That latter point is an important one for, provided that there are no national implications, it surely makes sense for the local provision of services to be under the management of a locally-based administrative organisation.

Responsibility for the day-to-day operation and provision of health care services rests with the health boards. In fulfilling that responsibility each health board must, of course, have regard to the requirements of the national policy as laid down by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is ultimately responsible for securing the effective provision of health services, as well as to the constraints necessarily imposed by the availability of resources, whether finance, manpower or indeed fixed assets such as buildings and equipment. In effect, the Secretary of State fulfils his overall responsibility for the provision of health services through the individual health boards in respect of their designated areas.

The fact that each health board is primarily responsible for providing health services to residents within its own area does not, however, mean that boards can afford to operate entirely independently of each other. While it may be a perfectly reasonable objective in terms of long-term planning for a board to devise its services with the needs of its resident population in mind, the pattern of existing services is to a great extent set by the sizes and locations of the hospital buildings actually available, and, as the hon. Gentleman said, by the travel network in the area. That can impose a very real constraint on the day-to-day provision of services. Where one board may have a deficiency of hospital beds, a neighbouring one may have a relative excess, and the logical solution in terms of achieving the best patient care within existing resources is for patients from the former area to cross the boundary into the second area for hospital treatment.

That is recognised in the operation of the Scottish health authorities revenue equalisation mechanism, and this cross-boundary flow is compensated for in the financial allocations we make to the boards. It does not absolve the board from taking primary responsibility for all its residents, nor from devising a strategy for developing its existing services to cater for that resident population. But it does allow a practical solution to be reached where there are imbalances of supply and demand. In each case such a solution depends crucially, however, on the respective boards working together in close co-operation to achieve the best and most practicable service to meet the needs of their residents. Such co-operation is extremely important to the co-ordinated planning and provision of hospital services and I know that nearly all who work in the boards fully appreciate that.

The boundaries of a health board are therefore purely administrative in the sense that, subject to the availability of hospital resources, a patient in one area can be treated in another. It has long been held to be an essential freedom for the general practitioner to be able to decide as he thinks appropriate the best hospital to which to refer his patient. Health boards do their utmost to accommodate that, but the constraints of availability of hospital resources inevitably mean that that freedom cannot be entirely uninhibited. That is not to say that cross-boundary flow is undesirable, but that health boards, for reasons of practicality, may not in all cases be able to provide the full choice of options of hospital care which a general practitioner might ideally wish. Instead, and I am sure that the vast majority of them accept this, the options may be restricted. But the overriding principle of greatest importance is that wherever possible hospital care should be available somewhere with the minimum of delay and with the interests of the patient in mind. That must be the goal to which health boards must strive, and, although we will never be rid of waiting lists entirely, I am sure that boards are continuing to make important progress in that direction.

I turn from that general principle, which is important, on cross-boundary flow and the relationship between adjacent health boards to the particular case of Cumbernauld raised by the hon. Gentleman.

There has been a tradition for patients from Cumbernauld to be referred to Glasgow hospitals and, in particular, to the Glasgow Royal infirmary. Cumbernauld is, of course, in the area of the Lanarkshire health board and it was because of the needs of the Cumbernauld area, as well as those of the Airdrie-Coatbridge area, that a new district general hospital in Airdrie, the Monklands DGH, was built.

Whereas previously there had been substantial cross-boundary flow from Cumbernauld to greater Glasgow, the position has changed somewhat. In 1976, some 88 per cent. of non-emergency, and 73 per cent. of emergency, acute patients from Cumbernauld were treated in Glasgow hospitals mostly at Glasgow Royal infirmary. Following the opening of Monklands DGH, however, these percentages have gradually fallen. The figures for 1982 were down to 72 per cent. for non-emergency cases and only 41 per cent. for emergency cases.

Part of the reason for the trend being gradual is that it takes time for GPs and patients to adjust their referral preferences and practices in the light of new hospital developments. It is inevitable that, for a time, people will continue to rely on the older hospitals. But it appears from the figures that the reputation of Monklands DGH among the people of Cumbernauld is growing. I am glad of that, for Monklands is an extremely efficient and well-run hospital, as I found when I visited it.

The hon. Member approached me about potential problems in the referral of Cumbernauld patients to Monklands in 1983 as he mentioned. We had a useful meeting at the beginning of 1984, when he explained to me that there were fears among the general practitioners in Cumbernauld that the capacity of Monklands to absorb more patients from Cumbernauld was now very limited but that there were signs from Greater Glasgow that they might not be in a position to continue to provide the existing level of service to Cumbernauld.

There was an even more pressing problem, as the hon. Member explained, namely, that Greater Glasgow was now unable to take emergency referrals from Cumbernauld, reversing previous practice, whereas Monklands, it was claimed, could not cope with the additional demand.

As I said at the time when we met, real as these problems were, they were essentially operational matters for the two health boards involved. I remain of that view. As I said, the responsibility for the operation and provision of health services locally lies with the health boards and, provided that they are prepared to work together over common problems in providing those services, this is the best way to overcome them.

I placed emphasis earlier on the importance of co-operation and planning between health boards, and this case illustrates a good example of that. Following my meeting in January 1984 with the hon. Member, I arranged for the Lanarkshire and Greater Glasgow health boards to get together and address the two problem areas outlined, the one being the general admission of acute but non-emergency cases, the other being the specific issue of emergency cases where the situation was more difficult. I am glad to say that after the necessary discussions and consultations, a solution was found by the boards to these problems.

Before I describe those solutions, I will comment on the question of the accident and emergency department at Monklands, which the hon. Gentleman raised in passing. This department has been under some pressure because of unforeseen demand, and the Lanarkshire health board is in the advanced stages of planning the building of an extension to the outpatients' department. The problem of the capacity of the department to deal with those who

[Mr John MacKay]

attend it, largely instead of going to their general practitioners in the first instance, does not bear on the Cumbernauld problem, which is not one of self-referrals. The solution to the general question whether Greater Glasgow will be able to continue its present level of service to residents of Cumbernauld is bound up with Greater Glasgow's plans for future developments in its acute hospital services.

The Greater Glasgow health board is well aware of the financial pressures that it is likely to be under if it does not take steps to reduce its total provision of acute beds to match the rapid decline in the population of its area in recent years and the emergence of hospitals like Monklands outside the area of the Greater Glasgow health board. These hospitals are now taking up patients which traditionally went into Glasgow for their hospital care. These matters are under discussion between the board and my Department but the present assumption is that Glasgow will continue to accept and treat Cumbernauld residents.

In the discussions which followed my meeting with the hon. Member, the Greater Glasgow health board confirmed that despite the speculation to the contrary, it expected to be able to provide the present level of service to Cumbernauld for the foreseeable future. I am glad that the boards were able to clarify the situation in this way and to their mutual satisfaction.

The issue of emergency referrals was more difficult because the Greater Glasgow health board was unable to offer a return to the situation before 1980 when it accepted responsibility for emergency patients from Cumbernauld. Instead, however, Lanarkshire health board was able both to state that it now accepted this responsibility in the first instance itself and to reiterate established procedures which were designed to fulfil that responsibility. These procedures provide for Cumbernauld patients to be referred initially to Monklands DGH. Should there not be accommodation there for them, arrangements are immediately set in hand to find alternative accommodation elsewhere in Lanarkshire, which is primarily at the two large hospitals at Law and Hairmyres. Only in the unlikely event of no suitable bed being available in these main Lanarkshire hospitals is the Glasgow Royal infirmary approached when, with the full agreement of the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board, maximum help will be given. If the procedures are properly followed, the doctor who is looking for the bed should be doing a lot of telephoning. The procedure should be undertaken by the Monklands DGH by keeping a note of the availability of emergency beds — that is something that every large hospital has to do in any event — whether or not it is receiving from Cumbernauld.

Once again, I should point out that these were operational solutions to an operational problem and were sorted out by the two health boards together. I wrote to the hon. Gentleman in October 1984 to explain these solutions and, so far as I am aware, the procedures have operated to the satisfaction of both health boards and no problems have arisen.

I am aware of what the hon. Gentleman has explained, namely, that the general practitioners in Cumbernauld may not be wholly convinced that this is the best service for their patients. It is not always possible to provide every GP with the facility to refer patients to whichever hospital he wishes. There are cases where, as here, the provision of an appropriate service depends on a clearly understood procedure to be followed.

I appreciate that GPs in Cumbernauld and their patients have historically looked to Glasgow, and especially to the Glasgow Royal infirmary, for their health care. However, Cumbernauld is within the Lanarkshire health board area and with the opening of Monklands district general hospital in 1977 the situation changed. The bulk of the non-emergency admissions are still made in the Glasgow Royal, although the proportion has reduced from 88 per cent. in 1976 to 72 per cent. in 1982. For emergency admissions, the proportion has declined from 73 per cent. in 1976 to 41 per cent. in 1982. Lanarkshire health board and Greater Glasgow health board have agreed procedures for Cumbernauld and this must be matched by a willingness on the part of the doctors to follow these agreed procedures. I believe that if that is done there should be no problems for the patients in Cumbernauld, whether they are treated in Monklands district general hospital or in the Glasgow Royal infirmary.

I am happy to reiterate that it has been made clear by the Greater Glasgow health board that despite some of the rumours, which the hon. Gentleman brought to my notice with the doctors he took to see me, it is prepared to say clearly that it is able to take patients from Cumbernauld for the foreseeable future as and when the need to do so arises.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Nine o'clock am on Thursday.

House of Commons

Thursday 25 July 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

(MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*)

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HASTINGS PIER BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL

Order for consideration of motion read.

Hon. Members: Object.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): The House will wish to know that the Chairman of Ways and Means has directed that this motion should be set down for Seven o'clock on Monday 21 October.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Tuesday 22 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

1. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the range of estimates he has received from major outside forecasters for the likely rate of inflation by the end of 1985.

8. **Mrs. Rumbold** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the range of estimates by major outside forecasters available to him for the likely rate of inflation by the end of 1985.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The main outside forecasters on average estimate that inflation as measured by the retail prices index will fall from 7 per cent. now to below 6 per cent. by the end of the year and to 4½ per cent. by the middle of next year.

Mrs. Bottomley: Is this not good news for pensioners, for those looking for work, and for the low-paid, remembering that inflation fuels panic in the elderly, disrupts our competitiveness and gives rise to disputes in pay bargaining? May we be told the average rate of inflation during the past six years compared with the previous five, which included the Lib-Lab pact? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that countries with low rates of inflation also achieve low rates of unemployment?

Mr. Lawson: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend said—she put it exceptionally well. The answer to the question that my hon. Friend was kind enough to include in her supplementary is that since the Conservative Government took office in 1979 inflation has averaged 9½ per cent. as against 15½ per cent. during the lifetime of the previous Labour Government.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the light of my right hon. Friend's sensible response to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), if he were to increase public sector expenditure by putting more money into capital expenditure and the infrastructure, what response would he get from the forecasters of the rate of inflation in the short-term, medium-term and long-term?

Mr. Lawson: There would be no problem if the increased expenditure on infrastructure were on projects which brought a satisfactory rate of return and were offset by reductions in current expenditure, but those who put forward such proposals seldom, if ever, specify which expenditure should be reduced.

As for the proposals of the Labour party to which my hon. Friend may have been referring, I recall that when the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was on the same radio programme as I was some time ago he said that if a Labour Government were to be returned inflation would rise. He did not say—this is an interesting omission—how much it would rise.

Mr. Wainwright: When will the Chancellor of the Exchequer respond to the CBI's request today to come out of his bunker and attack inflation by dynamic means rather than giving the country the worst of all worlds by sticking to negative and purely defensive measures?

Mr. Lawson: I note that the director general of the CBI has temporarily recovered the use of his bare-knuckle script writer. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, as I said in my answer, the rate of inflation is coming down, and coming down well. Whether or not that is dynamic, it is certainly not static.

Mr. Skinner: If the Chancellor of the Exchequer feels it necessary to brag about the rate of inflation being lower than previously, why is it necessary for the Government to give Sir Robert Armstrong an extra £24,000?

Mr. Lawson: That matter has been fully debated in the House and has nothing whatever to do with the rate of inflation.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government's principal objective is still to reduce inflation by monetary means? Will he reassure the House that the Government have no intention of joining the fashionable cry for internationally co-ordinated reflation, justified by the desire to reduce the value of the dollar against other currencies?

Mr. Lawson: I am not quite sure about all the ins and outs of my hon. Friend's unusually convoluted question. He is normally direct and succinct. As for the question of the dollar, on which my hon. Friend ended, I think that it would be healthier for the world economy if the disequilibrium in the United States were to be corrected by some further fall in the foreign exchange parity of the dollar. Indeed, that appears to be the view of the American Government also.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Chancellor aware that his knockabout replies are no answer to the serious questions put to him by the CBI? If he really thinks that inflation is falling, why does he not, in the words of Sir Terence Beckett,

"abandon economic policies which harm our exports and encourage imports"?

Mr. Lawson: Exports are at an all-time high. Indeed, the latest figures for non-oil exports are running at 10 per cent., in real terms, above a year ago. The hon. Lady should withdraw her ill-informed question.

Company Car Tax

2. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received advocating a revision of the present limit of 1·8 litres for company car tax purposes to 2 litres.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): A number of such representations have been received from motor manufacturers and others.

Mr. King: Will my right hon. Friend accept that when the original 1800 cc cut-off point was fixed, a British manufacturer, namely, BL, had an engine which coincided with a figure just below that? BL does not have that engine now, but has engines of 1·6 and just under 2 litres. Why can we not do something thoroughly chauvinistic, nationalistic and dynamic and make it possible for the cut-off point to help our sole remaining British manufacturer by fixing the point at just under 2 litres?

Mr. Hayhoe: My hon. Friend is asking whether we will give careful consideration to the now fairly uniform view of British motor manufacturers that changes should be made. Of course consideration will be given to the request, but, as ever, when changes are made some will gain and some will lose as a result.

Public Expenditure

3. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is planning any changes in the level of public expenditure.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Rees): No, Sir. The Government have agreed to stick to the public expenditure totals of £139 billion for 1986-87 and £144 billion for 1987-88 published with the Budget.

Mr. Portillo: When the Government next publish new figures on public spending in the Autumn Statement, does my right hon. and learned Friend think that they will publish a fiscal adjustment? Does he agree that fiscal adjustment is given importance way above its merits, that it sometimes sets hares running round in all directions and that it can be damaging to confidence in the economy?

Mr. Rees: I agree with my hon. Friend's analysis. If he and the House look at the Government's response to the eighth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, they will see that we state that the published figure for fiscal adjustment is assigned a significance out of all proportion to its very limited value.

Mr. Bell: Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer recall that in his first speech from the Dispatch Box as Chancellor of the Exchequer on that bright confident morning he said:

"an essential ingredient in providing the right balance between fiscal and monetary policies"—

[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Of course I am reading. I am quoting.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not quoting, paraphrasing, please.

Mr. Bell: On that bright confident morning the right hon. Gentleman said that an essential ingredient of the economy was to keep the public sector borrowing requirement under control. Is that the reason why, year in and year out, since he became Chancellor, £3,000 million to £4,000 million worth of national assets have had to be sold? Is that why he is selling them?.

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman directed his question at my right hon. Friend, but I hope that he will allow me to answer it, because it arises from a question that I answered earlier. If the hon. Gentleman studies the public sector borrowing requirement, he will see that, apart from the impact of the miners' strike, it has fallen consistently since 1981. That is a very creditable record.

Mr. Marlow: When will the Government cut public expenditure in real terms?

Mr. Rees: Although some individual items have been cut, that is not our declared policy. Our declared policy is to maintain public expenditure broadly stable in real terms.

Mr. Hattersley: To revert to the Chief Secretary's original answer, does that not confirm—indeed, it does—that the only way in which the Government can finance future tax cuts is by selling more national assets?

Mr. Rees: It seems that the right hon. Gentleman underestimates the merits of privatisation for its own sake. Certainly it is true that the sale of public sector assets has been clearly reflected as an item in the accounts, but as I said, we have achieved significant cuts in direct taxation by other means as well.

International Monetary Fund

4. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to attend a meeting of the interim committee of the International Monetary Fund.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): In the first half of 1986.

Mr. Wainwright: Are not Treasury Ministers ashamed that they and the Chancellor of the Exchequer are not attending the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank? Why will they dally in the bunker of the Conservative party conference when the world is crying out for a lead to bring it out of financial anarchy?

Mr. Stewart: The United Kingdom will be fully represented at those meetings. Surely, the hon. Gentleman would expect the leaders of his own party to be present at his party conference. I would agree with that sentiment. Despite the rather aggressive nature of the hon. Gentleman's question, and as this may be the last time that he will appear as the economic spokesman for the Liberal party, may I say that we wish him well in his job in employment. I hope that he will take an early opportunity to say how glad he is to see the rapid rise in new jobs that has occurred during the past two years.

Mr. Merchant: When my hon. Friend—or my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—next meets his friends—or enemies—in the IMF, will he remind them that employment in Britain rose by 650,000 in the past two years—more than in the rest of the EEC put together? Will he proffer advice to other countries on how to manage their economy?

Mr. Stewart: I am sure that my right hon. Friend has noted my hon. Friend's suggestion. It is indeed true that this country's successful economic policies have generated a much more rapid rise in employment than has taken place in most other industrial countries. The proportion of people of working age at work is higher in this country than in any other industrial countries, except Japan and America.

Personal Taxation

5. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the lowest income at which a single person with only a personal allowance is currently paying less income tax than in 1978-79.

Mr. Hayhoe: With the exception of those earning between £2,720 and £5,330 a year, all single taxpayers whose earnings have increased in line with the national average are currently paying less income tax as a proportion of their earnings than in 1978-79.

Mr. Meadowcroft: But is it not the case that a person has to earn over £22,000 a year before he pays a smaller proportion of his salary in tax and national insurance? Why do the Government give benefits to people who earn more than that amount, instead of giving benefits to those who earn less than that? Surely that is highly objectionable when we are trying to make people conform with policies to control the serious economic problems of this country?

Mr. Hayhoe: I think that most people are concerned about their real take-home pay. There has been a real increase in take-home pay for all those whose pay has risen in line with national average earnings since 1978-79.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Notwithstanding the increase in income tax thresholds that the Government have achieved, does my hon. Friend agree that the burden of taxation still rests heavily on the lowest paid? Does he further agree that people—for example, members of the alliance parties—who call for higher public expenditure on a cause—however worthy it may be—are calling for an increase in taxation of the poorest members of our society?

Mr. Hayhoe: I endorse what my hon. Friend says. In reply to what he said about the burden on the low-paid, may I point out that, as a result of the changes in recent Budgets, personal allowances have been increased by 20 per cent. in real terms. Moreover, the changes in the national insurance regime announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his last Budget were of particular help to the low-paid.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

6. **Mr. Alton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further discussions he has had with the Bank of England concerning Johnson Matthey Bankers.

14. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement regarding Johnson Matthey Bankers.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend discussed with the Governor the terms of his statement of 17 July, to which I refer the hon. Members.

Mr. Alton: Will the Economic Secretary tell the House how many heads have rolled at the Bank of England as a result of the Johnson Matthey fiasco? As his right hon. Friend told the House that the Bank was too busy to investigate the gaps in the Johnson Matthey records, will he tell us why he did not call in outside assistance?

Mr. Stewart: Staff appointments at the Bank of England are a matter for the Governor of the bank. My right hon. Friend did not say that the present management of JMB was too busy. He said that the affairs of the bank were in a chaotic state and that it took a long time to establish that there were gaps in the documentation.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, in view of the dilatoriness shown by the Chancellor, the Governor of the Bank of England and all the others in this affair, it would not be taken well if the taxpayer had to foot the legal bill incurred by the Chancellor because of recent events? If the Chancellor is prepared to use more than £100 million of taxpayers' money for this rescue, is it not wrong for the taxpayer also to have to foot the bill for the legal expenses arising out of the writ?

Mr. Stewart: Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman suggests, my right hon. Friend has been punctilious in reporting to the House on the JMB affair. Indeed, last week he made a statement as soon as it became clear that the JMB management wished to invite the City of London police to conduct a preliminary inquiry. As to the writ, I should point out that a writ was served on the auditors on Tuesday, and in response a writ was served by the auditors on my right hon. Friend. That writ will be vigorously contested.

Mr. Marlow: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most important aspect of this affair is the confidence of the City of London and that it was right for the Bank of England to intervene? Is it not also right for the Government to uncover what went wrong so that it does not recur? Is it not least important to make political capital?

Mr. Stewart: There is a lot to be said for my hon. Friend's remarks. Clearly, important lessons have been learnt about banking supervision, and that was the subject of my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 20 June.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister accept that some of us do not think that the technical officers of the Bank of England were at fault? Will he confirm his total confidence in Mr. Walker and Mr. McMahon?

Mr. Stewart: I do not propose to be led into making comments from the Dispatch Box on any individual official.

Customs and Excise Office, Wick

7. **Mr. Robert Maclennan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the future of the present Customs and Excise area office at Wick.

Mr. Hayhoe: As I told the hon. Member in my letter of 15 July, the Wick office is to remain fully operational.

Mr. Maclennan: In view of the excellent facilities at Wick airport and the desire of local development agencies, local authorities and business men to develop links with Scandinavia to promote commerce and tourism, will the Minister view with favour any request to increase customs services at the airport to meet those desirable objectives?

Mr. Hayhoe: The question of customs facilities at the airport is rather different from the question that the hon. Gentleman placed on the Order Paper. When I last reviewed the position at the airport, the amount of traffic did not meet the criteria laid down for customs attendance.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister aware that during a recent Transport Question Time the Minister with responsibility for aviation said that he would be willing to look at the position at Wick and Inverness airports? Is he also aware that in a letter to me of this week he confirmed that the 12 per cent. cut in the number of customs officials since 1979 is only now beginning to be reversed? Is not one of the difficulties the fact that the Government, even if the Treasury makes that welcome facility available, will only be beginning to reverse the problems generated by their policies?

Mr. Hayhoe: Discussions have been going on for a long time about customs attendance at both Wick and Inverness airports. If the criteria for attendance are met, the customs will be in attendance.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that proper customs facilities for a wide range of airports in the United Kingdom, including Wick, are necessary for the good conduct of business? Will he make it a Government priority to maximise the use of provincial airports, including those in the Highlands, to which this question refers?

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes. I am all for maximising the use of airports and of resources. Because I am concerned with the maximisation and utilisation of customs resources, I do not want to see them deployed where they will not be fully efficient.

Black Economy

9. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent estimate of the percentage of national income represented by the black economy.

Mr. Peter Rees: Recent estimates of the size of the black economy have varied from 2 to 16 per cent. of gross domestic product. This very wide range tends to confirm the Government's view that it is not possible to form any reliable estimate of its size.

Mr. Atkinson: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the long overdue bonfire controls on small businesses, recommended by the recent White Paper, "Lifting the Burden", will do much to reduce the size of the black economy? Will he give some thought now to introducing a two-year honeymoon, free of corporation tax, to encourage all new business to become better established?

Mr. Rees: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion about a two-year honeymoon. I doubt whether it would be the most effective way of helping small businesses. Indeed, many new businesses do not make much profit in the first two years. The most positive assistance that the Government can give to the smaller end of the economy, as my hon. Friend has perceptively pointed out, is our firm determination to lift the burden on it. As the House will know, measures will be co-ordinated by a committee presided over by my noble Friend the Minister without Portfolio.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that because of the Government's enthusiasm to tackle the informal economy many reputable small firms are being unfairly victimised? Is he not aware that those people are the real wealth creators? Will he ensure that before their accounts are investigated someone very senior satisfies himself that there are reasonable grounds for suspicion?

Mr. Rees: If my hon. Friend will draw our attention to any cases where there has been victimisation, I am sure that we shall make the fullest possible investigation. As he will see from the latest report of the Board of Inland Revenue, the board has concentrated on the larger, rather than the smaller, accounts.

Exchange Rate

10. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the exchange rate.

Mr. Lawson: At noon today the sterling index stood at 84·3.

Mr. Weetch: Has the Chancellor of the Exchequer read in today's press the criticism by the director general of the CBI, Sir Terence Beckett, of the rise in the exchange rate? He says that if the exchange rate goes any higher it will unfairly threaten the competitive position of British firms in foreign markets. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that a few years ago, because of a sharp rise in the exchange rate, which was totally artificial, many soundly based firms in this country ran into serious difficulties? Will the Chancellor tell the House whether he has an exchange rate policy and what it is?

Mr. Lawson: I recall that when sterling was temporarily falling during the early part of this year I was called to the House to answer a private notice question tabled by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who was complaining about the fall. Now I see that the Labour party is complaining about the subsequent recovery.

Mr. Maples: In retrospect, does my right hon. Friend not think that a good time to have joined the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS might have been around the end of January, when the pound-deutschmark exchange rate was about 3·5?

Mr. Lawson: The fundamental question about the EMS is not particularly the exchange rate at which one joins, although that is obviously a matter of significance, but whether it is in the interests of this country to join at all. As my hon. Friend will know, we keep that matter constantly under review, but at the present time we do not think that it is in this country's interests to join.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The Chancellor seems intent on using the rising pound and record real interest rates to recreate the economic disaster of 1979 to 1981. Is he aware

that the pound is now more than 50 per cent. undervalued in real terms against the deutschmark compared to the average of 1973 to 1976, and that our deficit in manufactured trade with the EEC is now higher than the entire EEC deficit in manufactured trade with Japan? How can we improve the situation with the pound at that valuation?

Mr. Lawson: The plain fact is that our exports, including our non-oil exports, are at records levels and that our balance of payments on current account is in surplus for the fifth or sixth — I think the fifth — year in succession. We are also in our fifth year of steady growth. We have the highest expected growth rate of any country in the Common Market, and it is also higher than that of the United States. If that is a disaster, it is the sort of disaster which the previous Labour Government would have given their eye teeth to get.

Mr. Eggar: Given the present monetary conditions, as measured by MO, what possible reason is there for not reducing interest rates and thus influencing exchange rates?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend will be aware that interest rates have already fallen by 2 per cent. from their peak earlier this year, and the future course of interest rates will be affected by what happens on the foreign exchange markets.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the Chancellor tell us whether the value of the pound is the result of a deliberate policy decision by the Government, or whether it is simply due to drift?

Mr. Lawson: This is the first time that I have heard of such a recovery being attributed to drift. Although I am happy to accept the Government's responsibility for taking the exchange rate into account in their monetary and financial policy, as they must, they do not have the power to set a particular exchange rate. That is set by the foreign exchange markets.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Chancellor accept that the levels of domestic interest rates are influencing the exchange rate? Will he listen to the widespread anxieties of industry about increased levels of unemployment and about liquidations later this year if the present levels of interest rates and the present exchange rate continue?

Mr. Lawson: The present exchange rate is almost exactly what it was at the time of the last general election in 1983. Had we taken the advice given during the election campaign by the Social Democratic party and joined the EMS at the then rate, that would have been a fixed rate and we should have remained at it until now. I fail to see what the hon. Gentleman is complaining about.

Interest Rates

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the impact of the current levels of interest rates on inflation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The current level of interest rates is maintaining downward pressure on the rate of inflation.

Mr. Powell: Is it not time that the Minister tried to examine yet again the economic policies that the Government are pursuing? Is he aware that hon. Members on both sides of the House are expressing the alarm and concern that was expressed earlier this week in the Division on the top salary increases? What effect will the top salary increases have on demands by the trade union movement for an increase in wages and salaries? When will the Minister try to get his calculations right and get his predictions out of a twist? Is it not time that the Minister seriously considered the effect of the Budget, which his right hon. Friend called a Budget for employment, but which, especially in my constituency, turned out to be a Budget for unemployment?

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman underestimates the importance of the changes in the tax threshold and in national insurance contributions which my right hon. Friend announced in the Budget. They have important implications for jobs and, as I remarked earlier this afternoon, the numbers of people in employment are rising rapidly.

If I may be permitted to come back to the subject of the question, I point out to the hon. Gentleman that it is the Government's policy to maintain interest rates at whatever level — but not above that level — is needed to exert downward pressure on inflation. *[Interruption.]* In loosening monetary conditions today we do not want to encourage further inflation tomorrow.

Mr. Dickens: Following his royal highness' remarks on the ITN news at lunchtime, does my hon. Friend accept that we are moving towards a home-ownership democracy in this country and that, as such——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must be related to inflation.

Mr. Dickens: It is. Does my hon. Friend agree that the tax relief on mortgage interest payments is an important part of the encouragement given to people to stand on their own feet and to own the house in which they live? That being so, will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to tell people today——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should have thought about his question before he asked it.

Mr. Blair: What price does the Economic Secretary say that we shall have to pay for this high interest rate policy in terms of mortgage costs, company liquidations and the cost to industry? As Treasury forces, not market forces, are keeping interest rates at their present artificially high levels, can the hon. Gentleman tell us when they will be reduced to the levels enjoyed by our main competitors?

Mr. Stewart: I remind the hon. Gentleman that interest rates have already been reduced by 2 per cent. from their level at the time of the Budget. There are always difficulties that raising interest rates cause in the short run, but the difficulties caused in the long run by a failure to take appropriate action on monetary conditions are far greater.

National Wealth

12. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the overall change in the level of the nation's wealth since 1979.

Mr. Lawson: By the time of the Budget, the nation's real output was 6 per cent. higher than in 1979, and growth this year is expected to be the fastest in the European Community and to exceed that of the United States as well.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on those substantial achievements. Is it not a fact that more schools, hospitals and nurses, and higher pay for everyone, are best achieved by increased wealth, rather than by much higher personal taxation and the punitive taxation of ordinary people's pension funds which have been earned through a lifetime of work, which is proposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Lawson: The Labour party's proposals on pension funds are as obscure as its proposals on a number of other policies, such as the compulsory repurchase of shares in privatisation issues and the unfettered right to buy council homes. No doubt they will be made clear in due course.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the only way in which we can have social services of the kind that we would all like to see in this country is by first generating the wealth that will pay for them.

Mr. Dubs: How much of the increase in our wealth since 1979 has been due to North sea oil?

Mr. Lawson: A very small part. Of the rate of growth of about 3 per cent. a year that we have seen since the trough of the recession, about ½ per cent. has been due to North sea oil. The other 2½ per cent. has been due to the onshore economy.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the growth rate in this country would have been greater if the tax burden had been lower, but that that could have been achieved only if the burden of public spending had been lower? Does he therefore agree that it would be a jolly good thing if our right hon. Friend the Chief Whip were to call the spending Ministers into his office in groups of six and give them a good talking to about loyalty to the Government's objectives?

Mr. Lawson: I note that that particular tactic by my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip did not have much effect on my hon. Friend.

Interest Rates

13. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next be having discussions with the Governor of the Bank of England about interest rates; and if he will make a statement.

15. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Lawson: The Governor and I regularly discuss interest rates in the context of the monetary policy and conditions. Short-term interest rates have fallen by around 2 per cent. since January. Rates will continue to be held at whatever level is needed to maintain monetary conditions that will keep steady downward pressure on inflation, but no higher than that.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that an attitude of excessive caution towards interest rates can only damage prospects for employment and economic recovery? Does he further agree that a 2 per cent. cut in mortgage rates would cut inflation by 0·6 per cent. and help industry to contain its costs?

Mr. Lawson: It is the responsibility of industry to contain its own costs. It must accept that responsibility, and it cannot look to advantageous reductions in mortgage rates—much as we would wish to see those—to do the job for it.

Mr. Hirst: While I welcome the recent reduction in interest rates, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees that real interest rates are still too high and constitute a severe disincentive to businesses and home buyers? In view of the more encouraging predictions about inflation and the recovery of sterling, what hope does he hold out for a reduction in interest rates later this year?

Mr. Lawson: I hold out hope that there will be a reduction in interest rates at the appropriate time. However, if there is one thing substantially worse than the present, relatively high real rates of interest—although they are not so very much higher than in other countries—it is the negative real rates of interest that obtained during the inflationary 1970s. No capitalist society or economy can survive with rates such as those.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the Chancellor explain why our interest rates are not only at record real levels but are one third higher than those in the EEC and double those in Japan? Will he further explain why every mortgage, hire purchase contract, overdraft and unit of local government is being crippled by high interest rates just to keep the pound at an overvalued level?

Mr. Lawson: There is no way of controlling monetary policy without holding interest rates at a level high enough to keep that control; and there is no way of controlling inflation without having proper control of monetary conditions.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a 1 per cent. cut in interest rates would improve the competitiveness of British industry to the extent of £250 million in a year? Does he further agree that if we could achieve a 1 per cent. cut in labour costs the benefits to British industry would exceed £1,000 million a year?

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend's comparison. Indeed, I recall drawing that comparison myself on an earlier occasion, but it certainly bears repetition. His remarks point to an important problem in our economy— the high rate of growth in labour costs per unit of output in this country compared with that of our main competitors overseas.

National Economic Development Council

16. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet the National Economic Development Council to discuss the management of the economy.

Mr. Peter Rees: My right hon. Friend will chair the meeting of the NEDC on 25 September next.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Chancellor tell the National Economic Development Council that the Government have abandoned manufacturing industry, thereby abandoning regions such as the north of England, Scotland, the midlands, Wales and Northern Ireland, all of which have traditionally depended on that industry? When will the Government take seriously the plight of the unemployed in those areas?

Mr. Rees: My right hon. Friend will give no such message to the NEDC, because it would be totally

inaccurate. For example, I remind the House that the investment survey of the Department of Trade and Industry shows that there will be a 10 per cent. increase in manufacturing investment in 1985.

Sir Peter Tapsell: A central feature of economic management that has always been required by the medium-term financial strategy has been that the PSBR should represent an ever-falling proportion of GDP. When our right hon. Friend the Chancellor next meets the National Economic Development Council, will he explain both to it and to the country why we now have a PSBR that is proportionately among the lowest of any industrial country, combined with an interest rate structure that is double that of most of our industrial competitors?

Mr. Rees: As a matter of fact, my hon. Friend should note that the German deficit as a proportion of GDP is lower than ours. Their industrial performance—and it gives me no pleasure to say so—is also rather better than ours.

European Monetary System

17. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry in 1985 on the United Kingdom joining the European exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The CBI has stated that its present view is that the United Kingdom should join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Freeman: Does my hon. Friend agree that our excellent export performance can be improved only if business men believe that we have stable interest rates, particularly in relation to our European partners? Does he also agree that one way of achieving stable exchange rates is for Britain to announce at an early moment that we will join the exchange rate mechanism?

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor explained a while ago that the Government's policy is to keep the question of membership of the EMS under review and that we have not judged that circumstances are right for us to join. My hon. Friend referred to both interest and exchange rates. The greater the stability with one, the greater the likelihood of instability with the other.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Allen Mckay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. Following my duties in the House, I shall be leaving for a brief visit to Washington.

Mr. McKay: In view of what happened at the trials of mineworkers in Sheffield recently, and in view of the right hon. Lady's statement that it would be better to go down in history as a compassionate lady rather than as the iron lady, should she not use her good offices now to persuade the National Coal Board to use the board's time-tested, time-tried and time-trusted conciliation and consultation machinery, which dealt with similar cases prior to the

The Prime Minister: I believe that we have plenty of machinery for the Coal Board to deal with colliery closures or with appeals against dismissals, as the hon. Gentleman is well aware. With regard to his earlier remark, one sometimes needs a touch of steel. There is nothing wrong with that. Sometimes one needs a good deal of compassion, and there is nothing wrong with that either.

Mr. Wiggin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that tomorrow, while the media of Bristol are occupied with the Queen's visit, the Secretary of State for the Environment will be announcing his decision on the Avon county structure plan? This decision is not likely to be acceptable to the people of the county of Avon, and especially to my constituents. Will my right hon. Friend instruct her Ministers to listen, and perhaps set an example herself by listening, with much greater care to the views of her supporters? Otherwise, she will not have so many of them.

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about the Avon structure plan, and also about certain matters of planning and development. I think that he and my colleagues will be the first to understand that it is difficult to strike a balance between those who do not wish there to be much more planning permission in a particular area, and those who wish to make provision for more jobs and more housing for certain purposes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have to strike that balance, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be satisfied with what he does when the announcement is made.

Mr. Hattersley: While the Prime Minister is in America, will she tell Vice President Bush why we, unlike the United States, have not withdrawn our ambassador from South Africa? Will she tell him why we, unlike the Congress and Senate of the United States, have not attempted to ban new investment in that apartheid regime?

The Prime Minister: While these events are taking place in South Africa, it is important that we have first hand reviews of them from our ambassador there. We can carry out a considerable duty in doing that.

I believe that the US Administration is against sanctions and disinvestment, and the right hon. Gentleman will be aware of what Helen Suzman recently said about them:

> "Many are presently under consideration with disinvestment and sanctions much to the fore. Campaigns and such actions have indeed reached tidal wave proportions in the United States of America. If I thought that these would work, they would have my unconditional support."

Mrs. Suzman went on:

> "Not only do I not believe these campaigns would be effective; I believe they would be counter-productive."

Mr. Hattersley: At first hearing that seems like the feeblest sort of excuse, but I have no doubt that the Prime Minister believes her answer, because she is wholly incapable of understanding the importance of giving a moral lead on this or any other matter.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman could, likewise, accuse Mrs. Helen Suzman of failing to give a moral lead. She was very clear in the advice that she gave. The Government believe that it is correct, and that sanctions would hit the black population of South Africa very badly and, as Mrs. Suzman said, be counter-productive. That is the view that we shall continue to hold.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Will my right hon. Friend note with satisfaction that last year this country gave £95 million for famine relief aid, without reducing other aid programmes? Nevertheless, does she agree that our long-term aid programme is for development, and will she say that she will not allow that programme to suffer?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. The greater part of the aid programme goes to capital development and is tied to jobs in this country. I believe that most people in the House would agree with that. We also give a considerable amount to the poorer countries. Nevertheless, a considerable fund is set aside for disaster relief, and there is a contingency fund. I believe that we have very good arrangements for aid. The amount of aid that we give, coupled with the amount that goes privately and with private investment, gives this country an excellent record on its all-round aid programme.

Mr. Steel: When the Government Chief Whip on Tuesday night offered the prospect of the Prime Minister's resignation, did he do so with, or without, her authority?

The Prime Minister: I have to disappoint the right hon. Gentleman. I am here, and will remain here. I am delighted to suffer attacks from the right hon. Gentleman. It means that I am usually right.

Q2. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Before the Prime Minister leaves this afternoon to address the Capitalist Internationale, will she comment on today's report on the inquiry into British housing, which specifically criticises the Government's single-minded emphasis on owner-occupation as having certain dangers? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] Does she not recognise that it is at least true for working-class families in areas such as Coventry and Liverpool, and for others whose councils' funding will be cut later this afternoon? Before the Prime Minister leaves the country, will she give a guarantee that she will meet the wives and families of Liverpool councillors, who are in the House this afternoon and who handed in such a request to No. 10 Downing street at 2 o'clock?

The Prime Minister: Before I leave this afternoon I shall be happy to respond to the hon. Gentleman by giving some of our record on housing. Since May 1979, more than 450,000 local authority and new town dwellings have been renovated — a higher number than in previous years. Secondly, 50 per cent. more homes were renovated with the help of grants between 1979 and 1984 than in the previous five years. Thirdly, during our time the dwelling stock has risen by 1·1 million houses, and 1·25 million new homes have been built since 1979. I can go on longer if the hon. Gentleman wishes me to do so.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to confirm that the Government have no intention of tampering with the tax relief given on mortgage interest payments?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to repeat what I have frequently said from this Dispatch Box and shall be saying many times in the future. So long as I am here, tax relief on mortgages will continue.

Q3. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stewart: In view of the opposition in Scotland to the sale of the Trustee Savings bank in Scotland, and in the light of the litigation before the Court of Session, will the Prime Minister give a categorical undertaking to the House that no legislation in this place will pre-empt or stultify the findings of the Scottish court?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the findings of the Scottish court must be obeyed. If the House wished to bring forward any further legislation, that would be a matter for the House.

Mr. Watts: Is my right hon. Friend aware that out of about 4,500 people in my constituency who are claiming unemployment benefit, only 418, fewer than one in 10, have bothered to register their skills with the jobcentre, where more than 800 vacancies are available? Will she discuss with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment the advisability of reintroducing the registration of the unemployed at jobcentres, especially in areas such as my constituency of Slough, where there are serious skill shortages?

The Prime Minister: I am very much aware of the position in my hon. Friend's constituency, where, although there are considerable numbers of unemployed, there are, nevertheless, considerable skill shortages. We are considering how best to deal with this matter and at present it is not our intention to require registration at jobcentres. One of the problems is that many of the jobs which are available are not registered at jobcentres, as employers prefer to fill them direct. However, we are reviewing the whole matter and I am grateful for my hon. Friend's views.

Q4. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Clwyd: Before the Prime Minister leaves the country today, will she reflect on the fact that the majority of my constituents hope that she will never come back?

The Prime Minister: I hope that they will be disappointed, but I cannot believe that the hon. Lady would necessarily say that of the majority of her constituents, who, I believe, would relish political debate.

Q5. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: With regard to the United Kingdom's relationship with the Turkish Government, I wonder whether my right hon. Friend, notwithstanding the disappointment that we had when we failed to get the contract for the Bosphoros bridge, will acknowledge that a letter sent to her by the Prime Minister of Turkey shows that there is tremendous trade potential over a number of projects? Would my right hon. Friend care to share with the House the view that tremendous business opportunities exist between this country and Turkey?

The Prime Minister: As I think my hon. Friend is aware, exports to Turkey rose last year and continued to rise in the first five to six months of this year. We believe that there are good export opportunities and we are, therefore, keeping under review the amount of medium-term credit.

Mr. Spearing: Is the Prime Minister aware that the minutes of the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee yesterday, and the events surrounding the weekend of 1 and 2 May 1982, show that some members of the Committee prevented others from putting questions to her in writing? Will she now answer one of them, namely, what was the purpose and object of the second visit of the then Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), to Washington and New York over the period of that second fateful weekend?

The Prime Minister: I have given very full answers on this matter in the past. I have nothing more to add except to say that we debated the matter on 18 February 1985 when the House voted by 351 votes to nil

"That this House recognises that the sinking of the General Belgrano was a necessary and legitimate action in the Falklands Campaign; and agrees that the protection of our Armed Forces must be the prime consideration in determining how far matters involving national security and the conduct of military operations can be disclosed."—[*Official Report*, 18 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 737.]

None of the four hon. Members who signed the minority report of the Select Committee voted against that motion.

Business of the House

3.32 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for the first week after the summer Adjournment?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The business for the first week after the summer Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 21 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on industrial innovation and design on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Second Reading of the Housing Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing Associations Bill *[Lords]*, the Housing (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]* and the Landlord and Tenant Bill *[Lords]* which are all consolidation measures.

Proceedings on the Weights and Measures Bill *[Lords]* which is also a consolidation measure.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER — Remaining stages of the European Communities (Finance) Bill.

Motion on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 3) Order.

WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER — Opposition Day (20th Allotted Day). The subject of debate is to be announced.

Motion on the Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion on the Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Committee on Public Accounts to which the Government have replied.

Motion on the European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation) Order and the European Communities (Immunities and Privileges of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation) Order.

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER — There will be a debate on alternative sources of energy on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

The House may also be asked to consider any other Lords amendments and messages which may be received.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that Government business will also be taken in the week beginning 28 October. It is expected that the new Session will be opened on Wednesday 6 November.

Mr. Hattersley: After yesterday's report by Mr. Justice Popplewell on the safety and security of football grounds, will the Government make a statement, later today or tomorrow, on what further action they propose to enhance safety and security? The football season is barely a month away and funds are not available to meet the suggestions in the Popplewell report.

Secondly, presumably between now and our return, the Foreign Office will be preparing its reply to the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs into the sinking of the General Belgrano. Is it the intention of the Foreign Secretary to prepare comments on the minority as well as the majority report?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the Popplewell statement yesterday was very comprehensive and enabled the House to consider the topic. I will draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department to the right hon. Gentleman's point.

I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to any observations that the right hon. Gentleman may make on the Select Committee's report.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are laws in this country on discrimination against blacks, women and the disabled? That is quite right. Does my right hon. Friend think that it is time that, given the problem of unemployment, there was a debate in the House on discrimination against those who are over 50, who are able but who do not get jobs because of the system?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises a point that may well be considered in the new Session. No doubt he realises that, at the beginning of the new Session especially, there will be ample opportunity to make many speeches on these topics without there necessarily being a specific debate.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): When we return, may we have a debate on pay comparability in the public sector, as by then the implications of the Government's decision on top salaries will have fed into all the negotiations taking place in the public sector, including the teachers' negotiations, and we shall need to discuss the subject?

Mr. Biffen: I have no doubt that the topic referred to by the hon. Gentleman will very much feature in the political debate come October, but no doubt he realises that no specific provision has been made for it during the first week of the new Session.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is it the Government's intention to continue sittings of the House throughout the week of 28 October until such time as the Water (Fluoridation) Bill is secure, or do they intend to drop the beastly and unpopular measure?

Mr. Biffen: I think that it was Asquith who said, "Wait and see", but, even if it was not, it is a very good answer.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): In her speech to the American Bar Association, the Prime Minister said that this country must provide no haven or escape for terrorists. Is the Leader of the House aware that five Italian Right-wing terrorists who were convicted in Italian courts are living in this country, and that there appears to be no desire by the Government to deport them or remove them? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that, in a letter to me, the Home Secretary gave as one of the reasons for inaction the fact that EC law makes their removal difficult? If that is so, may we have an early report on the implications of this matter, because I find it astonishing, as do many hon. Members, that EC law should make it impossible for us to remove convicted Fascist terrorists from this country?

Mr. Biffen: I am aware of the facts that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, not least because of press coverage. I will certainly draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to the point that the hon. Gentleman raises.

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): As we have begun this afternoon to look once again down the long vista of a new Session, in which, if nothing is done, we shall no doubt again suspend our Ten o'clock rule on three nights out of four, and as the Procedure Committee has suggested some very important measures which would enable the House to conduct its business in a somewhat more civilised and no less effective manner, may we have an early opportunity of discussing that debate and of the House expressing its views on the recommendations?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of the point that my hon. Friend has made, but no provision has been made for it in the business announced today.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): As the Government are in a state of complete disarray, instead of working out the programme for after the recess, surely they ought to call it a day before the whole nation finishes up in the knacker's yard.

Mr. Biffen: Life must look very jaundiced from where the hon. Gentleman sits; when I look across the House, I understand why.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Is it the Government"s intention, either in the tail end of this Session or early in the next, to give the House an opportunity to discuss the possibility of televising its proceedings?

Mr. Biffen: I have already given what I considered to be a clear indication of what I hope the progress will be in this matter. I do not think that I can helpfully add to it.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Has the right hon. Gentleman had time to read early day motion 915 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell)?

[That this House calls upon the Government to honour their legal obligation as signatories of the 1960 Treaty of Establishment which guaranteed the Sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, recognising that on 20 July 11 years will have lapsed since the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish military forces that still occupy 40 per cent. of the island despite repeated resolutions from the United Nations with the unanimous support of the Security Council demanding their withdrawal; further expresses grave concern regarding the 200,000 Greek Cypriots who are deprived of their homes, land and property and made refugees in their own country; regards this unique situation in the 20th century as most intolerable; urges positive action to find an equitable solution to the problem for the people of Cyprus; and demands further stronger international pressure so that justice and freedom can prevail.]

Will the Government find time to debate the situation in Cyprus? It is now more than 11 years since Turkish troops invaded the island. Is it not time that the House debated the situation there?

Mr. Biffen: The situation in Cyprus and all that derives from the invasion is certainly a matter which constantly demands the attention of the House. However, no Government time is available for a debate in the week when we come back.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My right hon. Friend is aware of the growing concern in British manufacturing industry about the increasing difficulties of winning competitive contracts owing to the concessionary credit being accorded by foreign Governments. Will there be an early statement on the Government's intentions about taking better initiatives on aid packages?

Mr. Biffen: I will certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the point made by my hon. Friend about the widespread use of soft credit by our competitors. My hon. Friend will also have noted that the Department of Trade and Industry is top for questions on Wednesday 23 October.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is the Leader of the House aware that the prison population is now at its highest and that the cost of keeping people in prison is well over £200 a week? Against that background, when will the House have an opportunity to discuss conditions within our prisons? It is a long time since we had such a debate.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises a valid point of general public concern. He will be aware that the Home Office is top for questions in the week that we return after the recess. In the meantime, I shall refer his point to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Two weeks ago, I invited my right hon. Friend to ask the Home Secretary whether he would make a statement to the House on possible legislation in the next Session of Parliament to withdraw from drug traffickers their ill-gotten gains? As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has not felt able to make such a statement, does my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House know whether any legislation on this subject will be introduced in the next Session of Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises a very important point which will command assent in all parts of the House. He will appreciate that I cannot anticipate what will be contained in the Queen's Speech. I hope that my hon. Friend will not be too pessimistic.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Has the Leader of the House considered whether he can find time to debate the collapse of Kestrel Communications Ltd. and its implications, as recently reported on the BBC's "Watchdog" programme? Does he agree that it is extraordinary that pensions broker can, by devising a scheme to employ people for one day, unlock people's frozen pensions at the same time as conning major pensions funds, the Inland Revenue, the Occupational Pensions Board and the Manpower Services Commission into approving the scheme to the extent that 270 people lost most of their life savings? Should there not be a more effective watchdog with effective teeth in some of the bodies available to protect people against such abuses?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will excuse me if I do not comment upon the details of that instance. No Government time has been made available for such a debate in the first week when we return after the recess. I wish the hon. Gentleman every success in whatever initiatives he may try to undertake on his own account.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): In view of the fact that the cost of running the House has escalated from £56·2 million in 1981-82 to £77·5 million in 1984-85, what proposals will my right hon. Friend introduce in the next Session to trim the appalling costs, bearing in mind

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

that it is suggested that our debates will be broadcast into our own offices and that Parliament will be televised? That will cost a lot of additional money for something which most people do not want. Can my right hon. Friend give us some ideas?

Mr. Biffen: I must say that over the last 48 hours I have had some dark thoughts about weed killer, but I require notice of such a question so that I can give a proper and measured reply.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to read Amnesty International's latest report on Turkey? The report states that torture of political detainees in Turkey remains widespread and systematical. Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in condemning torture in Turkey? Will he oppose any integration of Turkey into the EEC and other European Community institutions? Will he arrange for an early statement to be made on the Government's policy and attitude towards Turkey?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the hon. Gentleman says. I will draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the point that the hon. Gentleman makes.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Between now and when we return in October, it is likely that a decision will be taken on the European fighter aircraft. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that we shall have the opportunity to debate that matter as soon as we return? In the meantime, can he assure all hon. Members that he will represent to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence the grave anxiety felt by hon. Members that a compromise might be reached that will produce an aeroplane that does not meet the requirements of the Royal Air Force?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot anticipate when a decision will be reached on the project, but I recognise that it is of great interest to hon. Members and, indeed, to the country generally. I shall be in close touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence about how the matter should be handled.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In view of the report published today about the formidable housing crisis in the country, will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind the need for an early debate on housing? With regard to the remarks made by the Prime Minister, is the Leader of the House aware that since 1979 there has been a cut in real terms of 68 per cent. in public expenditure on housing? Does not that explain the sort of conditions in which so many people are forced to live because they have no means of obtaining adequate rented accommodation?

Mr. Biffen: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman has chosen a statistic that is only one component of the housing situation.

Mr. Winnick: A true one.

Mr. Biffen: That may be so, but it may not truly reflect the full range of housing expenditure. We should be delighted to debate the housing record of the Government. There will soon be a Gracious Speech and the debates that follow will provide an early opportunity to discuss housing.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): If a week is a long time in politics, surely three months is an age in the affairs of the European Community. Will my right hon. Friend explain to those of us who are less knowledgeable about procedures in the House precisely how long we shall have after the House resumes to table amendments to the European Communities (Finance) Bill?

Mr. Biffen: I shall be happy to contact my hon. Friend to give him the most accurate answer that I can, based on the most qualified advice. I am sure that my hon. Friend will spend most of the holiday, after its initial joy has worn off, by returning to his first love of Brussels bashing. I cannot believe that he will come back without a fistful of amendments.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Leader of the House recollect that one of the most considerable of his predecessors, the late Mr. Iain Macleod, used the phrase "parliamentary sleight of hand"? Did not the Prime Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) come into that category? Although there was a debate on 18 February, many of us were asked, rightly, not to vote until our parliamentary colleagues had reached an informed decision. That has now happened, so is it not important that the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), for example, should give his view of events?

When was the last time that four Members of the House of Commons, using their own resources and without the help of Clerks of the House, produced a massive and serious report? This is a House of Commons rather than a party political matter. It is important that a minority report that has been produced in such a way for the first time should be seriously debated. It is not sufficient to say, in answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), "I will consult the Foreign Secretary." Ought not there to be a debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: I say at once that the hon. Gentleman has a well-documented commitment and enthusiasm for the subject, but he must not suppose that it is rare to have a minority report on a Select Committee recommendation, because it has happened frequently in the past. However, I agree that it is a matter of continuing parliamentary interest, and I shall take account of the hon. Gentleman's remarks when considering how the matter should be handled in the future.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to early-day motion 796 which is in my name and that of 151 right hon. and hon. Members.

[That this House calls upon the Government to re-affirm its commitment to conservation of the environment and open space and to the sanctity of national parks as enshrined in Department of the Environment Circular 4 of 1976 that no new route for long distance traffic should be constructed through a national park, or existing road upgraded, unless it has been demonstrated there is a compelling need which could not be met by any reasonable alternative means; and applauds the decision of the Joint Select Committee of Peers and honourable Members which refused to permit the violation of the Dartmoor

National Park by the building of a dual-carriageway through the open spaces of Bluebell Woods and East Hill, and which affirmed that a northern route outside the Dartmoor National Park offered a reasonable alternative means of bypassing Okehampton.]

Will my hon. Friend explain to the House why at 11 o'clock this morning there appeared on the television screens notification to the effect that a statement would be made this afternoon, presumably by the Secretary of State for the Environment, about whether the Okehampton bypass should go south or north and then at 1 o'clock that notification disappeared from the screen? Will my right hon. Friend explain why that happened and when a statement will be made, bearing in mind that the southern route can be built by 1998 and the northern route by 1990 if he got on with it?

Mr. Biffen: It is the first I have heard about a statement on the screen at 11 o'clock this morning. I will look into the matter.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): When the House returns towards the end of October, could the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on law and order? We could then compare the 10,000 arrests and 600 sackings of miners during 1984-85 with the 9,000 employers in 1984 who were guilty of illegally under-paying workers—particularly young workers—of whom two were prosecuted and average fines imposed were £107. Would not that debate reveal the hyprocrisy of his so-called party of law and order?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot undertake that there will be such a debate in the first week after the recess. However, I am certain that that topic will feature in the political controversies that will follow the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on arranging a debate on clean, renewable alternative energy sources—the first for many a long day in this House—and say how much some of us appreciate the interest shown in the less popular sources of entertainment in this place?

Mr. Biffen: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I wonder whether the Leader of the House can tell us today whether he expects to have the same job when we come back on 21 October? Can he give us——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman asking for a debate on that? We are concerned here with the business of the House.

Mr. Skinner: I wonder whether the Leader of the House can make a short statement to give us an idea of whether he will be coming back to the House in the same job, or whether the changes will apply only to some of his mates?

Mr. Biffen: I have given no thought to that, but now that the matter has been raised I shall consult the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo).

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is my right hon. Friend aware that set down on the Order Paper for Friday 25 October is the Second Reading of the Prevention of Political Corruption Bill which I was given leave to introduce on Tuesday? Does my right hon. Friend think that that is surprising, and does he think that the House will have time to debate the fact that no fewer than 129 hon. Members of the parliamentary Labour party and two hon. Members of the parliamentary Liberal party voted against this worthy and sensible measure and therefore, presumably, showed themselves to be in favour of such politically corrupt acts as the GLC giving £1·5 million for anti-police work? If my right hon. Friend cannot ensure a Second Reading on 25 October, will he ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to put such a measure in the Queen's Speech?

Mr. Biffen: I certainly cannot give the guarantee and undertaking that is sought and I think that it would be presumptuous of me to turn to my right hon. Friend and ask him. However, my hon. Friend is doing a signal public duty in giving the maximum publicity that he has to that issue.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): The House recently had the opportunity to discuss the nurses' pay award, but is the Leader of the House aware that in the last 10 days a new injustice has emerged which has been met with a wave of indignation throughout the profession? Will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Social Services to make a statement after the recess on the pension problem of a ward sister who was awarded 14 per cent. by the review body and for 1985-86 will receive only 5·6 per cent.? In consequence, when she retires in the next 18 months she will lose £6,000 of pension.

Mr. Biffen: It is the first time that I have heard of this case, and I will certainly draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services so that he may consider the appropriate action to take.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has gained enormous media coverage through the publication of the Common Ownership of Land Bill? Is he aware that the Public Bill Office has no knowledge of that publication? So that we may know his proposals which cause concern and consternation to my constituents and to many others throughout the country, no doubt, and so that we may know the Opposition's position, will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: No. We must keep all these matters in very strict perspective. What has happened just shows that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is adept at dropping bricks without straw.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Would the Leader of the House consider making a statement in the week after the summer recess about the issue of reports and written answers, whether or not they are embargoed, to members of the press and the rest of the media before they are made available to Members of the House? The Leader of the House surely recognises that it is wrong for hon. Members to be asked for views on a report which they are unable to secure? Surely the convenience of Members of the House is more important than the convenience of the media?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman touches on a point which has exercised the House for decades. If he has evidence to put to me, I shall see what can be done.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to see the all-party early-day motion

[Mr. Keith Best]

816 standing in my name and that of 50 other hon. Members calling for an early debate on the strategic defence initiative?

[That this House notes the visit of Vice President Bush to Europe to urge European participation in the Strategic Defence Initiative programme; expresses deep concern that there has not been a full debate on the subject in the House; notes that the Strategic Defence Inititative calls into question the current philosophy of deterrence on which North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy is based; and calls for such a debate in the House as a matter of urgency, since a debate has been held in all other European Parliaments.]

Bearing in mind that similar debates have taken place in other European Parliaments, and bearing in mind the implications for the whole concept of NATO's deterrent policy as well as the importance to British industry, will he ensure that we have a debate at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Biffen: That the topic is important is self-evident, but in the first week after the recess no Government time will be available for such a debate. However, the hon. Gentleman might like to make some of his points at Question Time on Tuesday of the first week when defence is top of the list.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does not the Leader of the House believe that a debate is urgently needed on the behaviour of British companies and British investors in South Africa, particularly in view of the behaviour of SARMCOL, a subsidiary of the British Tyre and Rubber Company, which for 13 years has refused to recognise the Metal and Allied Workers Union in South Africa?

It is reported that the company pays poverty wages and that there has been a strike there for over three months by 1,000 workers demanding trade union recognition. Does he not agree that the company's behaviour is unfortunately typical of the behaviour of many foreign companies which invest in South Africa, and is yet another reason for having a policy of disinvestment in South Africa?

Mr. Biffen: No provision has been made for a debate on South Africa in the first week after the recess, but there are foreboding signs that that country's problems will intensify rather than ease, and I have an uneasy feeling that it will feature very much in our political discussions as the autumn progresses.

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Before the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) rose in his place to accuse my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of a parliamentary sleight of hand in her reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), I had sought your permission, Mr. Speaker, to raise a point of order in relation to the question put by the hon. Member for Newham, South.

I think that the accusation of parliamentary sleight of hand might more appropriately be put to the hon. Member for Newham, South. He and many of his hon. Friends are trying to perpetrate the myth that there was something ungenuine about my visit to Washington and New York on 1 and 2 May 1982. I have given the full story to the Select Committee, which knows all the details. I have described exactly what happened during my visit. What does not seem to be understood, and has not been fully brought out in the Select Committee's conclusions, I think, is that the Peruvian plans which were in a very early, tentative stage on 2 May were developed in the succeeding four or five days after the Belgrano was sunk. I made a statement about those proposals in the House on Friday—I speak from memory—7 May 1982.

When those proposals were turned down by Argentina, it was not the end of our search for a peaceful solution. It was my responsibility at that time, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, to leave no stone unturned to find a peaceful way in which to resolve the dispute. I remind the House that after the second set of proposals was turned down we drafted a peace initiative to which we would have been prepared to agree. We put that before the United Nations on 17 May. This country and the world were surprised to discover the lengths to which we were prepared to go to reach a peaceful settlement. Many Opposition Members try to allege that our search for a peaceful settlement was not genuine. That is an absolute lie, and it ought to be laid.

Mr. Dalyell: I am not arguing the case but the right hon. Gentleman's remarks proves the need for a debate. The former Foreign Secretary has referred to proposals. Yet the Prime Minister said that no news of the proposals had reached London until three hours after the Belgrano had been sunk. In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), the right hon. Lady said that the first indications of the Peruvian peace proposals had reached London at 11.15 pm on Sunday 2 May. Right or wrong, that is not the former Foreign Secretary's story.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is going beyond business questions. If this is a matter which may be debated at another time, that is the time at which the hon. Gentleman should make his remarks.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is just over a year since legislation was passed creating the six free trading zones, sometimes called free ports, but that little or no progress has been made? Does he agree, therefore, that it would be appropriate to have a debate on the progress of the legislation as soon as we return after the recess?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend made a contribution of considerable force and persuasiveness in the recess Adjournment debate last night. Will not that coast him through until the Queen's Speech?

Mr. Steen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am told that at about 11 o'clock this morning members of the Press Gallery were told that the Secretary of State for the Environment would make a statement on the Okehampton bypass this afternoon. At 12.45 Downing street indicated that no statement would be made. Can you, Mr. Speaker, tell us whether there will be a statement, or how that arrangement came about?

Mr. Speaker: I have no idea. All I know is that there is to be no statement today.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During business questions the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) raised a matter concerning my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I have been in the House for a

long time. When I first came here it was a matter of courtesy for hon. Members, irrespective of their party, who wished to raise a matter affecting another hon. Member to notify him. I regarded that as civilised behaviour.

Am I to understand that with the arrival of new Members, especially over the past few years, that civilised behaviour has come to an end? I know that the matter does not fall within your prerogative, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps you could ask Members to behave in a civilised way and to adopt the procedure that was used when I first came to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I am glad of the opportunity to confirm that that has been our civilised convention over the years, and I hope that it will continue.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I understand——

Mr. Heddle *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: He wants to apologise.

Mr. Dobson: They never apologise.

Mr. Heddle: I fully intended to notify the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) but on this occasion I did not. I apologise wholeheartedly to the House for not doing so. I want to make two points——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That might spoil it.

Mr. Dobson: I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible under the rules of the House for a Minister to make a statement tomorrow in the midst of the Adjournment debates? I understand that the Secretary of State for the Environment intends to make a statement now about the level of the rate support grant and rate capping of local authorities but that no statement is to be made about the rate capping and expenditure of the Inner London education authority. As it affects tens of thousands of children, and as it is the largest and biggest spending authority, it seems appropriate that a Minister should come to the House to justify the levels being set.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that the Royal Assent has been given to the Local Government Bill which sets up new means of controlling services in the GLC and the metropolitan areas. Will a further statement be made today or tomorrow on the setting of budgets and expenditure levels for services such as transport and waste disposal, or will that be done during the recess when Labour Members cannot question it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows perfectly well that I have no foreknowledge of such matters, any more than any other hon. Member. Statements are announced at noon. That was when I first heard about it.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me; it is a matter for the Government. If it is a matter for me, I will hear it, but only if it is a matter for me.

Mr. Dobson: I think that it is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker.

I was asking whether it was possible under the rules of order for a statement to be made tomorrow in the midst of the Adjournment debates. I do not know the answer to that question, but I do not think that it is a matter for Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: It might have been more appropriate if the hon. Gentleman had put that question to the Leader of the House during business questions.

Rate Support Grant (England)

4.8 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about local government finance for 1986-87. It contains my proposals for the rate support grant settlement for England, and my decisions on selective rate limitation.

First, I deal with rate limitation. This year's round has gone well. It has saved ratepayers over £300 million. We have begun to curb the worst overspending of the most profligate authorities. Despite the disgraceful scenes of violence and intimidation in several town halls, there were majorities in every rate-capped council for complying with the law and the will of this House.

I am today laying before the House a report setting out how authorities will be selected for rate limitation next year. For authorities not previously selected, I am proposing the same criteria as I used this year: I am selecting authorities whose budgets this year are more than 20 per cent. above grant-related expenditure and more than 4 per cent. above target. For authorities which were selected this year, I am reselecting them if their budgeted expenditure is more than 20 per cent. above GRE and either more than 1 per cent. above target or more than 30 per cent. over their expenditure in 1981-82.

On these criteria, two authorities, Liverpool and Newcastle, are selected for the first time, and 10 authorities are reselected. They are Basildon, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Thamesdown. Next year new authorities will come into existence under the Local Government Act 1985 and will be affected by the automatic precept control provided by that Act. Under that provision the Government will set expenditure levels and precept limits for three years. In all, the Government will next year be limiting the rates or precepts of 32 authorities with expenditure totalling some £3·5 billion. That demonstrates the Government's continued determination to rein back the profligacy of the largest overspenders and to prevent extravagance in the initial years of the new authorities.

I am setting expenditure levels for the 12 rate-capped authorities. In most cases there will again be a cash standstill on budgeted total expenditure in the current year. In three cases where budgets this year show an exceptionally sharp increase in spending, I am setting lower spending levels.

I am open to representations for redetermination of expenditure levels. Where an existing authority applies mainly because it considers we have made inadequate allowance for functions inherited from the GLC and metropolitan counties, or mainly because special accounting arrangements in its view imply unachievable economies, I shall not use my powers to reduce expenditure levels or impose conditions. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education, the Home Department and Transport will be making separate announcements about expenditure levels for ILEA and the new joint authorities.

The success of rate capping in curbing the worst excesses of the highest spenders means that for the generality of authorities we can now do without targets and penalties next year. That brings me to the rate support grant settlement as a whole. I am today issuing to local authorities proposals for the main features of the settlement for next year. Copies are in the Library and the Vote Office.

The target system has operated since 1981-82 in order to put pressure on councils to restrain spending. Many of my hon. and right hon. Friends have in the past made the point that the system operates unfairly on low-spending councils, especially those spending below their GRE. Last January in the RSG debate I expressed the hope that for 1986-87 we could do without targets if there was a satisfactory alternative means of restraining spending. I believe that the block grant system can be modified to provide a sufficient deterrent to overspending and accordingly I can tell the House today that the system of targets and penalties will not apply next year.

Instead, expenditure restraint will be achieved by much stronger block grant pressures. I am proposing sharply to increase the rate at which a council's grant will be reduced as its spending rises in relation to GRE. The system will thus put more weight on the comparison of a council's spending with its GRE which is what my right hon. and hon. Friends have sought. Powerful pressures will remain on those councils which spend well above GRE. I am consulting local government on the details.

I am proposing that aggregate Exchequer grant should be the same cash sum as in this year's settlement, £11·8 billion, which is likely to be just under 47 per cent. of relevant expenditure next year. I am proposing to increase the sum provided for local authority current expenditure for 1986-87, as shown in this year's public expenditure White Paper, by £500 million, to £22·250 billion. That is less than local authorities would like but the Audit Commission's reports are showing how councils could save hundreds of millions of pounds without reducing services, simply by getting better value for money.

The RSG settlement that I am proposing will be less complex than in past years; it will be fairer to responsible, low-spending authorities; it will maintain pressure on higher-spending authorities to find savings; and it will place firm control on the most extravagant authorities. If local government responds sensibly, average rate increases next year should be in low single figures.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is the Secretary of State aware—clearly some of his hon. Friends are not—that he has just announced a massive increase in authoritarian central control of local authority expenditure and budgets? He has done so on two counts: first, on the implications of his statements on the Rates Act and, secondly, on his proposals for the rate support grant settlement. Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that the reality of his statement is that more than 20 million people, under more than 30 authorities, will now have the level of their services and the budgets of their authorities dictated and controlled from Whitehall? That is what the Secretary of State has been telling the House this afternoon.

Why do his right hon. Friends who are responsible for the Inner London education authority, the police service, the fire service and transport, apparently intend to slip out in written answers, either today or tomorrow, their decisions on budgets for those authorities, instead of telling the House of Commons in this or other statements this afternoon? It is a scandalous abuse of Parliament.

Why do transport authorities such as South Yorkshire have to wait to be told by how much the Government intend to force up fares for public transport users in those areas?

Will the Secretary of State explain why the city of Newcastle upon Tyne is to be designated under the Rates Act? That city's expenditure has increased by 91·5 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. For example, expenditure in Buckinghamshire in the same period increased by more than 112 per cent., in Somerset by more than 103 per cent., in West Sussex by 99 per cent., and in Cornwall by 98 per cent. Is the Secretary of State aware that the net expenditure of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne has fallen in real terms over that period? Is the Secretary of State also aware that if the penalty system that he imposed had not applied there would have been no need for rates increases in that city in the current financial year?

Why should the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends take any pride in increasing the problems facing the people of Liverpool and its city council by further designating that authority under the Rates Act?

The Secretary of State said that he wanted to encourage negotiations in the coming financial year. I welcome at least that part of his statement. So will he give a categorical assurance now, without equivocation, that if authorities approach him on that basis he will not use his severe reserve powers to make the situation worse for them?

On the rate support grant settlement, is the Secretary of State aware that this is the sixth successive year in which the Government have deliberately reduced the rate support grant—in this case, from 48·7 per cent. to just under 47 per cent. of local authority current expenditure? The figure of £11·8 billion that he announced will be a cut in real terms of 7 per cent., bearing in mind the current rate of inflation, because it is a cash freeze. Hon. Gentlemen need not shake their heads. That is the reality of the announcement.

Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be a shortfall in what councils — including Conservative councils — need to maintain their existing services, of almost £1 billion next year, as a result of this statement?

As Conservative Members appear to be welcoming this statement—based on the use of the GRE in a way that was never intended — will the right hon. Gentleman explain to them what will happen in the Tory borough of Brent, with an expenditure of 18·3 per cent. over GRE? What is to happen in the City of London, with a staggering excess of expenditure over GRE of 252 per cent.? What is to happen in Hammersmith and Fulham, where expenditure over GRE is more than 12 per cent., or Hillingdon, where it is more than 9 per cent., or Harrow or Enfield or Havering or Bexley or even — dare I remind the right hon. Gentleman? — Barnet, where expenditure is also in excess of GRE? What about Conservative Harrogate, Conservative Dartford, Conservative Adur or Conservative Ribble Valley or Hertsmere? The list goes on and on. Having engineered a debacle for the Conservative party in the shire counties this year, the right hon. Gentleman is about to do the same for the district authorities. Or does he, through some political fix or manipulation of figures, intend to bail out the outer London Tory boroughs and others in a political gerrymander?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the £1 billion gap will inevitably increase if a settlement of the teachers dispute exceeds the 5 per cent. budgeted for, as is inevitable if there is to be a settlement? What impact does the right hon. Gentleman expect that to have on his proposals?

In using GRE in this way, the right hon. Gentleman again casts aside promises made to the House by his predecessors about its use. I refer principally to pledges given to the House by the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, now Secretary of State for Employment. He said of GREAs:

"It is not suggested that it prescribes a specific level to which an authority ought to spend . . . I want to make it clear that that was not the purpose."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 1 April 1980, c. 941.]

The Secretary of State is totally casting that promise aside. He knows that the Audit Commission and all local authority associations reject this approach to local authority expenditure.

Finally, what now of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's claims that the Government want to increase expenditure on local authority services, as the only way that that can be done is by all authorities—Tory as well as Labour—spending in excess of their GREA?

Mr. Jenkin: I can well understand the wish of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to redeem himself. His questions were certainly numerous and long.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary have today answered written questions setting out the expenditure levels for ILEA and the police and fire authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said that he does not yet have the information to enable him to set the expenditure levels for the transport joint boards and that he will make anouncements later.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that my statement constitutes an increase in authoritarian control. He is absolutely wrong. The abolition of targets means that we can leave local authorities a greater measure of control over their spending than has existed in the past three or four years.

He asked why we had selected Newcastle for rate capping. Newscastle is overspending its target this year by 7 per cent. and overspending its GRE by 31 per cent. It therefore qualifies under the criteria that I announced. Newcastle's rate is one of the highest in the country—70 per cent. over the past average. It employs one third more staff per thousand than the average of metropolitan districts, and its rates have risen by 66 per cent. in the past four years, compared with the rise in general price index of 23 per cent. I have no doubt that most of the ratepayers in Newcastle will be delighted that I have capped the authority.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Liverpool. He will be as aware as I am of the refusal of Liverpool city council this year to strike a budget in line with the rate that it has voted. No doubt it has that matter under consideration. It is quite clear that, on the budget that it has published, it is well above the target limit that we have set and well above the GRE and therefore qualifies for ratecapping next year. I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about my assurances about redetermination and I stand by the words of my statement. Doubtless he will wish to read it carefully. In those terms they were unqualified.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that there was a £1 billion shortfall to maintain services. He takes the figure

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which the local authorities identified in the expenditure groups of the consultative council. We have increased the amount to be provided in the public expenditure White Paper by £0·5 billion. That represents a significant move towards what the local authorities are requesting, but it would be foolish for the Government to fail to indicate to local authorities that this rate support grant settlement is intended to sustain the pressure for economies and savings.

The hon. Gentleman asked about what would happen, if a teachers' settlement were made, if the teachers' unions and the employers were to agree by October, in the terms of my right hon. Friend's statement, a settlement that would raise the level above that accounted for in this settlement. There would obviously be time to make the necessary adjustments in the final rate support grant settlement for next year.

The hon. Gentleman asked about GREs and quoted my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. GREs are not targets. They are not prescriptive and in no sense do we regard them as a substitute or surrogate for targets. That has always been the case. There will be no holdback of grant to the Treasury next year for overspending GRE. We are proposing to use the GRE and the block grant mechanisms to a greater extent than before to exert pressure on high-spending authorities to find savings. We have no intention of forcing authorities to spend at the GRE level. They can spend at other levels. It is up to them and what they can justify to their ratepayers. As for the string of local authorities which the hon. Gentleman mentioned in the course of his question, I can only imagine that he was recounting his journey on Tuesday night. Individual authorities will need to study the consultative document to see how the settlement applies to them.

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): My right hon. Friend will know with what relief his announcement today of the abandonment of targets and penalties for the generality of authorities will be greeted. Hon. Members who have been campaigning for that will wish to thank him for that, and no one more than I. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, when my right hon. Friend makes another benevolent announcement, I hope that he can do so before the local elections rather than after. I should like to put two questions to him. First, will he assure me that he will not invent any device remotely comparable to targets and penalties and that the low-spending authorities can in future receive that fair treatment to which he referred in his statement? Secondly, in considering local government financial reform and local government generally in future, will he reject the false notion that Whitehall knows best and give local electorates the greatest degree of local responsibility and accountability possible?

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my right hon. Friend for his remarks. I can certainly give him the assurance that low-spending authorities, spending below or close to GRE will, on average, stand to gain grant, but of course will continue to face grant pressures against increased spending. On his second point, those two propositions of greater accountability and greater responsibility are the two principles which underpin the local government finance studies on which my hon. Friends are currently engaged.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he is being wholly illogical today? Is he aware that, although he says that he is abolishing penalties, he is reintroducing them by another name? The right hon. Gentleman is suggesting that, with all its problems, Liverpool city council is profligate, yet he went to Liverpool and was shocked at the housing conditions and recognised the terrible housing problems and high levels of unemployment. Is what the Government are doing to Liverpool under the right hon. Gentleman's announcement this afternoon not sheer vindictiveness? If the right hon. Gentleman is serious about negotiations, he should for God's sake open discussions with the councillors to try to reach a sensible settlement instead of pushing them over the brink so that there will be a glorious smash-up for which the right hon. Gentleman, if he continues, will be responsible.

Mr. Jenkin: I utterly refute the hon. Gentleman's allegations. There is no vindictiveness. The council has made its rate and budget decisions this year in full knowledge of the conditions voted and approved by the House as long ago as last January. I assure the hon. Gentleman that Liverpool city council is perfectly capable of managing its affairs if it chooses to do so. I fear that a number of its councillors do not seriously wish to live within the rules that apply to everyone else, but no doubt there is still time.

On Liverpool's housing, the city has 8 per cent. arrears on council house rent income and 10 per cent. of its total housing stock is lying empty. Liverpool is perfectly capable of finding economies in managing its service and it is time that it started to do so.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on making the block grant system less incomprehensible and for responding so warmly to requests from local authorities and from so many of his right hon. and hon. Friends to abolish targets and penalties. However, will the new arrangements allow low-spending counties complete discretion to spend up to GRE without running into block grant pressures? Will my right hon. Friend also take account of the fact that the savings suggested by the Audit Commissioner, to which he rightly referred, cannot be made equally by all local authorities? Some are more efficient than others and so have not the same scope for savings.

Mr. Jenkin: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's last point.

The revised block grant schedules are spelled out in the consultation document and the House will wish to study the details. Low-spending authorities will start with a higher entitlement to grant than hitherto but the steeper slopes of the block grant schedules will mean that authorities will face grant pressures against increased spending, albeit with greater flexibility than under targets and holdback. Correspondingly, high-spending authorities can achieve considerable savings for their ratepayers if they restrain the growth of their spending and begin to cut back. In that way the block grant system will achieve what was intended when it was introduced in 1980.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Will the Secretary of State accept that if GRE is to be used to control local

authority spending it must reflect much more accurately than it does today the social problems of the inner cities? How does the Secretary of State expect local authorities to plan sensibly when every year they have to face a major upheaval in the administration of the block grant system? How does the Secretary of State equate the centralised control of 32 authorities' expenditure with the principles of local government?

Mr. Jenkin: The GREs have been in existence for five years and have been subject to repeated refinement in a process that is carried out jointly by local authority associations in the grants working group of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. There is always room for further refinements and improvements, but they are achieved year by year.

Between now and the final announcement of the rate support grant settlement, which I hope will be in December, we shall continue that process so that the GREs can increasingly reflect the reality of local authorities' spending needs.

We are not making this an alternative to targets. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) will see that the revised block grant schedules—the slopes that will result in the reduction of grant as spending rises—do not hinge on the GRE. There is a margin 5 per cent. above and 10 per cent. above, so there is scope for flexibility. I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, but these are matters which can be discussed with the local authority associations.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Despite the attacks which have been made on him over the past 18 months or so, my right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on his tough and resolute approach towards the whole vexed question of rates. Will he reiterate the fact that only a minority of individuals in this country pay direct rates? Is he aware that two or three days ago I learned quite unexpectedly that I, as a humble ratepayer in Lambeth, should be paying about £30 a year less than previously, and that—far more important—many hundreds of other people will be paying far less? In those circumstances, my right hon. Friend must be justified in his actions.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's words. It is the limited number of those who pay rates which has given rise to the mismatch between those who vote and those who receive services. That, too, is one of the issues at the heart of the local government finance studies in which my hon. Friends are engaged.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that he makes Tammany hall politicians look like amateurs? Is it not monstrous that he should make this rate-capping statement today without giving hon. Members from Newcastle upon Tyne, which it affects, any details or any opportunity to go into the Library to look up the details and then savage him as we would have a right to do? Is it fair for the right hon. Gentleman to prattle on about rate increases of 91 per cent. in Newcastle upon Tyne since 1978-79, when he knows well enough that the reason for 91 per cent. rate increases is the savage reduction in the rate support grant that he has inflicted on Newcastle upon Tyne and on every other major city?

The Secretary of State went on to berate Newcastle for being 7 per cent. above target, spending 31 per cent. more than the GRE. He knows quite well that the GRE for Newcastle is much less than the target. This year, Newcastle city council has very responsibly set a standstill budget of £146 million. The right hon. Gentleman said nothing about the price that will have to be paid for the abolition of Tyne and Wear county council, although I concede that he said he was prepared to have discussions. That should have been in his statement, and we should have been allowed time to consider it and debate the issue.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman may have lost sight of the fact that this is a provisional announcement, in accordance with the pattern followed by Governments in recent years. The final rate support grant settlement will be announced in December and will be debated soon after Christmas. I can promise the hon. Gentleman — no, perhaps I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman. He will have plenty of opportunities to savage whoever will be standing at this Dispatch Box then.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The right hon. Gentleman is to be reshuffled.

Mr. John Cunningham: It will be the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's assurance. However, I must point out that Newcastle has been a high-spending authority for years. Its rate has been one of the highest, if not the highest, in the country. Its expenditure per head last year was nearly a quarter as high again as the average for metropolitan district councils. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) will be well aware of the outcry which greeted this year's rate increase, which I believe was about 23 per cent. I think that there would have been great disappointment in Newcastle if I had not included its name among those to be rate-capped next year.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that through his statement, far from reducing penalties and lifting the burden from local authorities, he is ensuring that a local authority does not have to reach a target to be penalised but must merely exceed its GRE?

Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that his remarks today — during what is, apparently, his swansong—on the subject of Liverpool will be regarded there as a gross betrayal of the citizens of that city after the visits paid to it last year by him and his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction? On that visit, he promised to devote his best endeavours to assisting the city with its serious housing problems. The only way in which he can now show that he is not being vindictive is by agreeing to meet the democratically elected councillors of Liverpool.

Mr. Jenkin: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the chief executive of the city council recently wrote to my Department setting out two or three matters about which he thought it would be useful to have a meeting.

As I explained to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends when they met me to discuss the matter, in view of the situation in Liverpool there seems to be no purpose in our meeting now to discuss those matters.

The trouble with Liverpool city council is that its demands are always so extravagant and unreasonable that any discussion of them is bound to end in tears. There is, therefore, no purpose in embarking on that course.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): I join many of my right hon. and hon. Friends in saying how pleased my authority of Sefton will be with the Secretary of State's announcement that targets and penalties are to be abandoned.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, contrary to what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunninghan) said about him adding to the problems of Liverpool, since he took office in Marsham street in 1983 he has devoted more of his time and made more offers of co-operation to Liverpool council in an attempt to sort out its problems than to any other council in the country?

Will he also agree that the refusal over many months of the leaders of Liverpool city council to co-operate with his Department is a major contributing factor in the problems that Liverpool faces in determining its rate and budget?

Mr. Jenkin: I agree with every word of what my hon. Friend said. I add only that last year, at the end of lengthy discussions with Liverpool, we agreed to an addition to its urban programme of £2·5 million if it could identify suitable projects. Now, over a year later, the council has put forward projects amounting to only £1·7 million; and as I told the hon. Members for Liverpool constituencies who came to see me, the balance remains on offer and the undertaking that I gave will be honoured. If the council wants the benefits of that money, it should put in the necessary applications.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I warmly welcome the fact that he has at last recognised the unfair way in which the target system bore upon responsible authorities such as Cambridgeshire?

To clarify the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), will my right hon. Friend confirm that if, in future, the authorities in Cambridgeshire pursue the same financial disciplines and prudent policies of their predecessors, the ratepayers will benefit from his announcement today?

Mr. Jenkin: That is quite right. Conversely, if those authorities now choose to raise their spending sharply they will find that that will impose considerable penalties on their ratepayers.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Secretary of State accept——

Mr. Jenkin: If I may correct myself, I did not mean penalties in the sense of the targets, but that the ratepayers will find themselves paying higher rates.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Secretary of State accept that, while we welcome the abolition of part of the monopoly of control exercised through the target and penalties system, we do not believe that people will be deluded into thinking that the settlement as a whole is advantageous?

First, the Secretary of State should tell the House that there will be a cut in central Government money for local authority services, as that is what his announcement implies. Secondly, it would be helpful if he would state the three local authorities that will have lower spending limits, which he mentioned in his statement.

The right hon. Gentleman may not want to be wise after the event, which is the lot of all his right hon. and hon. Friends who pleaded with him to benefit the shires. On behalf of all the alliance authorities which now control those shires, I am happy to accept that benefit. However, does he now need to be wise before the event in the context of the inner city? What is apparent is that the inner city authorities, with the transitional scheme, are likely to be particularly hard hit in future. There will have to be changes if they are not to be penalised unnecessarily—Tory, Labour or alliance—in the coming year, and if the system is to be fair where the needs are clearly still greatest.

Mr. Jenkin: I should like to compare the Exchequer grant figure in my statement with what will now be paid to local authorities following the first interim supplementary report for this year. There is an increase in the percentage next year. The withholding through the penalty system of over £500 million of grant under the target and penalty system has reduced this figure to below 47 per cent. this year, and it will be above that next year. Because there will be no holdback of penalty that will go to the Treasury, any grant which is withdrawn from an authority which increases expenditure will be redistributed among the remainder of authorities, and particularly benefit low-spending authorities who have budgeted responsibly.

On the question of the consequences of abolition, I assure the hon. Gentleman that they have been taken into account in setting the expenditure levels of successor authorities which are rate-capped.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State said that there would be a debate later. I appeal to hon. Members to ask briefer questions and not to give a forecast of the speech that they may make later.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the history of financial rectitude by the county of Dorset over the past few years in contrast to other authorities, not all of them Opposition-controlled? May we look forward to an appropriate reward in years to come?

Mr. Jenkin: Dorset will find that it has its rewards in this rate support grant settlement.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Brent is very temporarily Conservative-controlled. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that it will not be rate-capped next year? His statement means that he—if he is still there—will have the same controls as he has at the moment. Has he had the opportunity of discussing with his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction the three-hour visit, for which I was most grateful, that he made to look at the squalid plight of 1,100 homeless families in sleazy hotels? The several clergymen present made some suggestions to which his hon. Friend listened with great courtesy. Does this statement mean that there will be no hope for the homeless families in Brent?

Mr. Jenkin: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, Brent is not being selected for next year because, as a result of the selection and rate capping this year, it has succeeded in restraining its expenditure to the point where it is below the criterion of 20 per cent. above GRE. It has therefore properly—I am glad of this—removed itself from rate capping.

I should like to discuss with my hon. Friend the Member for Housing and Construction what the hon. Gentleman said in the second part of his question.

Mr. Wilkinson: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. The target and penalty system which my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and I campaigned so vigorously against is to be withdrawn. Will he reassure us that our borough of Hillingdon, which had the highest percentage increase in rates in London, and was not rate-capped, will be compensated in full by central Government for those extra functions which it will have to inherit following the abolition of the GLC?

Mr. Jenkin: I understand the anxieties that many successful authorities are feeling as these matters have not been finalised. The intention is that the GREs of the abolished authorities should be distributed among the successor authorities, so that they have an adequate base from which to supply the appropriate level of services. It will be up to the successor authorities—such as my hon. Friend's London borough of Hillingdon—to decide how many extra staff, and so on, they will need to fulfil those functions. I have been greatly reassured by the number of authorities which believe that they can take on the GLC's functions in transport and planning and so on, with very few additional staff. That will redound to the benefit of their ratepayers.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): How can the Secretary of State justify what will amount to harsh and cruel cuts in the services for and living standards of the poorest people in the poorest borough in the country, Hackney, when across the road in the City of London rich, powerful and fraudulent people at a bank are being bailed out with public money to the tune of £248 million? Is there one law for the rich and one for the poor?

Mr. Jenkin: Hackney's rates, despite rate capping this year, are 124 per cent. above the average for inner London authorities. If the hon. Gentleman cannot recognise the damage that that does to Hackney's economy, he is past praying for.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): In his announcement of the abolition of targets and penalties, for which we are duly grateful, my right hon. Friend stated that they operated unfairly. Is he aware that in Buckinghamshire that unfairness has been compounded by the population problem to the point where a cut of 12·5 per cent. in capitation for schools has been precipitately made? Will my right hon. Friend look for ways to alleviate that problem before next April?

Mr. Jenkin: I am well aware of the problem, and I know that the Buckinghamshire authority will be helped by the abolition of targets. But in respect of population increase, I must remind the House that, just as there is a lag of a year or more in taking account of the most up-to-date population figures, equally there is a time lag in taking account of the latest increase in rateable value as a result of that expansion. Both those factors move in parallel. It is not right merely to look at one side of the balance sheet; both sides should be considered together. Nevertheless, I do not believe that serious harm is done to places with substantially increasing populations.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman inform rate-capped authorities such as the city of Leicester, which have been forced to cut into their already inadequate reserves, whether he proposes to provide any compensation in 1986-87 for the use of those reserves in 1985-86? Bearing in mind that the cities such as Leicester which are suffering hardship are precisely those on which there is the greates pressure to spend, will he show that the Government have some understanding of the problems that they face in trying to give service to disadvantaged people in the face of the Government's awful policy?

Mr. Jenkin: Considering that I have decided not to rate-cap Leicester next year because, according to the latest estimate, it has brought its expenditure below the level that would come within the criteria, I find the hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks astonishing. If Leicester will submit a proper return, signed by a proper officer, with an accurate estimate of what it will spend this year, perhaps the city and the Department of the Environment will get on a little better.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I agree with him that Leicester should not be rate-capped again this year? The success of the Government's policy is shown by the fact that the city has kept within its budget for the coming year; it is to be congratulated on that. However, will my right hon. Friend take careful note of whether Leicester city council misbehaves in any way, and monitor the authority throughout the year? The council is scaremongering, and alleging that it will not have enough money at the end of the year.

Mr. Jenkin: Leicester is seeking to pretend that it will spend this year something over £30 million. Despite all the efforts of my very able civil servants, we cannot conceive how it will have the resources to spend more than about £25 million. If the council ends up by spending £25 million, it will bring itself below the level of the criteria for rate capping. That shows that the system is working.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Why has the Secretary of State singled out for punishment provincial capitals such as Newcastle and Liverpool which are areas of high unemployment and social deprivation? The Minister seemed to think that his announcement would be popular in Newcastle, but is he aware that the size of the Conservative group on Newcastle city council has shrunk to just over half what it was when he first became Secretary of State for the Environment? Is he further aware that among those who will undoubtedly become unemployed as a result of his announcement will be his hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant)?

Mr. Jenkin: I had gained the impression from my recent visits that if Newcastle had not been included in the list of rate-capped authorities next year, that Conservative group might have found itself even smaller after next year's elections. As it is, I believe that it now has something to sell.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Does my right hon. Friend not agree that, as is so often the case, Leicester can teach the rest of the country a lesson? The lesson is that rate capping need last for 12 months only and can introduce financial sanity where there was madness. That quite destroys the myth that selection has been on the basis of political vindictiveness.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that comment. We have attempted to adopt

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objective criteria for the determination of the selection of authorities and expenditure levels, and that is right. In regard to selection, we have obtained stability by applying the same criteria for new authorities as we had last year.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Having refused to meet members of Liverpool city council, and obviously being convinced that his policies are justifiable and defensible, will the Secretary of State join me later and speak to the wives and families of Liverpool city councillors and seek to convince them of the legitimacy of his ideas? Perhaps he is prepared to pre-empt the Prime Minister's axe by committing political suicide because when the people of Liverpool hear what he intends to do to them next year there will be a movement that will be echoed throughout the British Isles. I warn the Secretary of State on behalf of the people of Liverpool that they will be dancing on his political grave if these policies go through.

Mr. Jenkin: The House will recognise some of the pressures that I come under from Liverpool city council.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Is my right hon. Friend aware that prudent spending councils in the shires, such as that in my constituency of Kettering, will welcome his statement about the abolition of targets? However, current and capital expenditure are closely linked, for both national and local government, and last year he made a statement about voluntary restraint on capital expenditure as part of a similar statement. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there is no prospect of calling for voluntary restraint on capital expenditure and that he will make a statement to the House as soon as possible on reorganising and recasting the system of capital expenditure allocations?

Mr. Jenkin: I am sure that my hon. Friend will have noted the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) in which I said that it was not the Government's intention at present to contemplate making a statement this year about this year's potential capital overspend, despite the fact that it might be quite considerable and any overspend will be a charge against the contingency reserve. In regard to the reform of the capital control system, we are well advanced in discussions with local authority associations. It is not a straightforward matter, but I hope that we shall be able to reach a conclusion in due course on a better system than that which we have at present.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The House realises that the Secretary of State is hoping that the rate support grant settlement will save him from the Prime Minister's award of a second ball bearing plant at Omsk. However, before he bedazzles his hon. Friends, will he tell the House how many authorities are already spending over GREA and, therefore, how many Tory authorities will come into penalty during next year? Will he also tell the House whether he intends ever to do something about the low level of services provided by many Tory authorities because that is the other side of the coin?

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman has not fully understood the system and I do not blame him for that because it is complex. GREA is not a substitute target so that those which go over GREA suffer penalties while those which are below it do not. We are seeking to increase the slope of the withdrawal of rate support grant as expenditure increases. Those authorities below GREA will start with a higher level of grant, but, as I said to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym), if they increase their expenditure sharply they will lose grant and their ratepayers will have to pay most of the excess in rates. Those whose spending is well above the level of the GREA will find that that presses more sharply. The system operates by reference to the GREAs and not by targets—that was the complaint about past expenditure patterns—and most authorities will find that it is fairer and more flexible.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in 1981, many of us keenly supported legislation designed to abolish the old rate support grant system which automatically paid more Government grant to each local authority, such as Newcastle and other profligate authorities, which spent more? It is most welcome to have returned to the original ideas for which we legislated in 1981. It will give more stability to local treasurers and benefit the more economical councils. The essence of abolishing targets and holdback means that next year more money will be distributed among councils rather than going to the Treasury. If councils wish to spend more they will lose grant progressively. There will be more money available under this system than there is for the current rate support grant in this financial year.

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend is right. If account is taken of the holdback on the first supplementary rate support grant report, which was debated last week, the percentage of grant next year will be higher than the percentage this year. The country was sick and tired of a system which rewarded extravagant authorities for their extravagance and penalised careful authorities for their care. The system of block grant taper has put that right.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): When will the Secretary of State realise that quoting arbitrary figures does not resolve the problems in many of the larger industrial conurbations? Is not it time that the Government recognised, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) said, that areas such as Liverpool and Newcastle suffer serious deprivation? The Government should turn to the needs of Liverpool, Newcastle and other places rather than bandy about arbitrary figures that are meaningless against the background of cities which are suffering as a consequence of the Government's policies.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman fails to recognise that the calculation of GREs takes account of the circumstances of the inner cities. Liverpool's GRE at £432 a head is the second highest of all the metropolitan areas. It is far higher than the average for metropolitan districts. Let us take some London figures. Camden has a GRE of £381 a head, Islington of £396 a head and Southwark £373 a head. The average for outer London boroughs on services excluding education—the figures must be on a comparable basis—is only £156 a head. The difference between those figures represents the differences in need, as measured by the GRE system.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): At what point will the block grant pressures, to which my right hon. Friend

referred, come to bear on an authority? Will it be before or after it passes its GRE? Will there be any loss of grant by a county such as Buckinghamshire which spends around GRE?

Mr. Jenkin: An authority which spends below GRE will start with an increase in its grant. As its expenditure increases, so will the local contribution, and the grant will be reduced. If an authority spends around GRE it will receive the appropriate level of grant for doing so but if its spending rises above that level on a progressively steepening schedule it will find that its grant is withdrawn and more of its extra expenditure will have to be met by its ratepayers. Unlike the system of target and penalties, as an authority decides to spend up and so loses grant, that will be to the benefit of other authorities which have kept their spending down.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Does not the Secretary of State realise that the reason that Southwark is what he describes as a high-spending council is that it is struggling desperately to meet the needs of, and provide services for, the people of Southwark? Perhaps he ought to refer to the league table of home help provision, as his Government say that they are concerned about care in the community. The councils that he calls irresponsible are those that are actually meeting the DHSS guidelines for the number of home helps per 1,000 elderly in the community —I refer to Hackney, Lambeth, Lewisham, Haringey, Camden, Greenwich, Islington and Southwark — yet those are the councils that he is penalising. The councils who fail to meet the Government's guidelines for provision for the elderly, leaving them in the lurch, are Kingston, Sutton, Croydon, Essex, Bromley, Kensington and Chelsea, and Kingston is providing less than a quarter of the home helps required by DHSS guidelines. Is it not the Tory councils, the shameful low spenders, who are the irresponsible ones, while the Labour councils, the high spenders, are the responsible councils because they try to meet the needs of their communities?

Mr. Jenkin: Southwark's rates have risen 71 per cent. above the class average. Southwark's expenditure per head is 24 per cent. higher than the class average and its GRE recognises the difficulties to which the hon. Lady referred because it is two and a half times the size of the average outer London GRE covering the same services—that is to say, excluding education for outer London.

Southwark has spent freely and rated high, and driven many businesses away from the borough, as the many letters I have had from Southwark business men establish. The result is that unemployment is high in Southwark and no doubt many of the problems that the hon. Lady mentioned are a consequence of it. If Southwark council can be persuaded to bring its expenditure under control by making sensible economies and bringing down its rates, perhaps it can have some of the prosperity of some of the other authorities that she mentioned.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): When my right hon. Friend came to Norfolk earlier this year he was given a hard time due to intense ill-feeling in Norfolk because the county council's target for this financial year was so many million pounds below its GRE, which was having a severe effect on essential services. Today's announcement about the abolition of penalties and targets will therefore come as an enormous relief to the people of Norfolk.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Norfolk will now control its own destiny and will have the finance for essential services?

Mr. Jenkin: How much finance Norfolk county council has will depend on its decisions. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. Norfolk has been a sensible, moderate, low-spending authority—the type of authority that should benefit from my announcement today.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman take it from me that his GRE system simply does not take proper account of multiple urban deprivation — the reason why there are high spenders in inner London—or of unemployment and the problems arising from it for local authorities? It also does not take account, because figures are out of date, of the rising population in my borough. Given that he places such emphasis on GREs, using them both as a penalty and to decide on those boroughs that need to be capped, he really ought to revise the whole system in order to bring some element of justice to it.

Mr. Jenkin: We do not expect the rate support grant system to recognise all the levels of deprivation in inner city areas, which is why the Government are spending well over £300 million a year on the urban programme. Various forms of urban programme support go to many of the authorities that complained.

The receipt of urban programme support should in no way relieve an authority of the obligation to run its own services efficiently and economically. Many inner city councils fail competely to do that because — in the language that they always use—it is always "jobs before services". They look after the trade unions and their employees and hang the ratepayers.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite the insinuations of the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) and Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), his announcement will be widely welcomed and warmly applauded in Newcastle where the district rates are the highest in the country, with an increase of 23 per cent. this year and spending 30 per cent. above GRE? Does he agree that Newcastle has deliberately and knowingly priced itself into rate capping by irresponsible overspending? Nevertheless, will my right hon. Friend afford every opportunity to encourage city councillors to meet him to discuss the announcement? However at the same time, my right hon. Friend should bear in mind the heavy weight of representations made to him by ratepayers in the city about the high rates.

Mr. Jenkin: As a rate-limited authority, Newcastle city council can, under the Rates Act, apply to me for a redetermination. That will give members of the council the opportunity to meet representatives of the Department of the Environment to discuss Newcastle's financial problems.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why the document that he produces year after year does nothing more than take increasing sums of money from inner urban areas which suffer from multiple deprivation? Does he agree that the document fails to take account of the needs of the people in the borough of Islington and instead seeks to make

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

enormous cuts in council services with a consequent loss of jobs? Will he say how much money he proposes to take this year from the 10 poorest inner urban areas? The document is a measure of vindictiveness against the poorest people and it tries to force local authorities to be in conflict with the right hon. Gentleman. He began the conflict; but he will suffer the political demise as a result.

Mr. Jenkin: I remind the hon. Gentleman that Islington's GRE per head is £396, 2·5 times the size of the comparable GRE per head for the average outer London boroughs. Those figures demonstrate clearly that the system takes account of the social needs of inner city authorities. If Islington had been able to maintain the 3 per cent. downward trend in the number of employees instead of increasing its full-time employees by 19 per cent. since 1981, perhaps Islington's rates would not be so high as to drive businesses out of the borough. Unemployment would have been lower. There would have been more rate income and the people of Islington would have been better off. It passes my understanding why Left-wing councils cannot understand that simple arithmetic.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the whole county of Lincoln will welcome the announcement, for which I campaigned, first, because a decreasing amount of precious resources will be drained away into the higher-spending authorities. Secondly, while Lincolnshire has cut £5 million in waste and consistently spends below GRE, it has been forced to spend above target because of the sparsity factor which entails almost £4 million for school transport costs alone.

Can my right hon. Friend now offer Lincolnshire more hope on the sparsity factor and on capital balances? May we say that we are now in the business of rewarding the friends of low spending in the shires instead of sustaining the apologists for high waste in the cities?

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. I acknowledge the part that he and others played in campaigning for the end of targets. The target system was intended to rein back the rapidly increasing local authority expenditure overall. That has succeeded. The average per year before 1980 was more than 3 per cent. in real terms while this year's spending has been static. That is a considerable achievement by local authorities. It would not have been achieved without the target system. Now we can move to a system which, I hope, will be fairer. GREs and sparsity factors will be discussed between my Department and local authority associations between now and December.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): However the right hon. Gentleman dresses it up, penalties are penalties. If the slope is increased that will obviously affect local authorities, especially the caring Labour ones. One of the problems that the Secretary of State seems to miss continually is that of the extra pressures on inner cities.

Will the Secretary of State let us know as soon as possible when he has finally decided on GREs and the effects of the transfer of services? Does he agree that those measures are likely to cause a 300 per cent. rise in bus fares in Sheffield and south Yorkshire? If not, will he state categorically that that will not happen?

Mr. Jenkin: I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that the Sheffield's budget this year has taken its spending below the figure of 20 per cent. over GRE and it, too, has taken itself out of rate capping.

We wish to ensure that successor authorities know the financial consequences of abolition as soon as possible, but that task has not been made easier by authorities such as the hon. Gentleman's which, until yesterday, refused point blank to take part in discussions. I very much welcome the decision of the national executive committee of the Labour party yesterday to end that non-compliance.

The hon. Gentleman's second point, is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. He will no doubt clarify the matter when he makes his announcement about the transport joint boards' expenditure levels later in the year.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Does the Secretary of State agree that in boroughs such as Lambeth the reduction in the level of rate support grant is only a shift in the burden of taxation from those most able to bear it to those least able to do so? Does he agree, too, that the rate capping of Lambeth for a second time cuts services for those least able to bear them? Next year, all the London boroughs will be up for election, so why does not the Secretary of State leave the choice on such matters in Lambeth and elsewhere to the electorate? The Secretary of State has already confessed that he has become redundant and is rabid about the opposition of Labour authorities.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman should hang his head in shame at the way in which Lambeth council behaved in the first three months of this financial year. The way in which Councillor Ted Knight led the mob to town halls of other London boroughs in an attempt to intimidate them not to make their rates was disgraceful. He got his comeuppance when his council decided, at long last, to make a rate. The auditors' procedures have now started and are, of course, outside my control.

I cannot possibly agree with the hon. Gentleman. Relatively few high-spending authorities have shown themselves impervious to ratepayers' pressure and have placed intolerable burdens on them. That is why the Rates Act was passed; rate capping has saved ratepayers in the capital authorities over £300 million.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): If the high rates are responsible for job losses, why has the Conservative-controlled borough of Trafford, which has adhered slavishly to Government policy, lost far more jobs per head than the city of Manchester? Will the Secretary of State also say whether he feels more sympathy for my constituents in Trafford who will be deprived of services because the council wants to follow a Government diktat; or for my constituents in the city of Manchester who will be deprived of those same services because the Government make the city council underspend?

Mr. Jenkin: The city of Manchester has the highest GRE per head of all the metropolitan districts, and so receives substantial help from the Government. No one has ever questioned that Trafford has suffered seriously in the recession, but its council recognised that its problems would have been much worse if it had increased its rates sharply. It kept its expenditure firmly under control and will benefit from the new arrangements next year.

Mr. Pike: Will the Secretary of State not recognise that most people in the country will regard the package that he announced this afternoon as a con trick? It may benefit some local authorities but it will switch the attack quite viciously to others. For instance, Lancashire county council will benefit as a result because it will be able to spend up to its GRE without being heavily penalised. It will spend that money because it needs to do so, and there will be no rate reduction for the county. By comparison, Burnley—because its target is currently 50 per cent. above GRE—will lose cash, and that is a penalty. Can the Minister not accept that if he wishes to make the GRE the main plank of his RSG settlement he needs to get the basic matter right and base it on the needs of the local authority and not on the present system, which no one can understand, and which his Department cannot explain?

Mr. Jenkin: The GRE, as the hon. Gentleman will know if he studies the Blue Book which we publish each year, is a sophisticated way of seeking to represent precisely what he said about the needs of individual authorities.

Perhaps I should say, lest the hon. Gentleman has been misled, that in order to avoid excessive grant gains or losses as a result of the changes embodied in my announcement today, for all authorities there will be safety nets on losses and limits on grant gains. That will bring a measure of stability to the system, which I know many local authorities are anxious to see.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the consultation paper, which he has published today in conjunction with this statement, says that he proposes "the steepening of the schedule at 10 per cent. above GRE as under the existing arrangements . . . these changes would significantly increase the marginal cost to authorities of additional spending"?

Does that not mean, in plain English, that authorities spending in excess of 10 per cent. over their GRE will suffer a loss of grant through a penalty?

Mr. Jenkin: The answer is that certainly they will find that as they increase their spending above GRE, above 5 per cent., above 10 per cent., a higher and higher proportion of that additional spending will have to be met by ratepayers. With respect, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Mr. Hampson) said, that is exactly what he was hoping the system would do. He recognises that this system will not let high-spending authorities off the hook. It contains a strong downward pressure for those authorities to economise and provide savings along the lines adumbrated by the Audit Commission.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support those authorities which seek to use the Audit Commission's report in order to deliver their services more economically.

Dr. Cunningham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise a point of order because it was in the hearing of the whole House that the Secretary of State, in response to a question from one of his hon. Friends, used the word "penalty" in response to a question about his proposals. The Secretary of State described that as a slip of the tongue. May I have your assurance, Mr. Speaker, that the exact words used by the Secretary of State in those exchanges will be recorded in *Hansard*?

Mr. Speaker: Certainly. *Hansard* is a verbatim report.

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Because of the statement that we have heard this afternoon, and because of the situation in Liverpool, I should like to move the Adjournment of the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman seeking to make an application under Standing Order No. 10?

Mr. Heffer: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have to do that after the next statement, please.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

5.24 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about my proposals for the 1986-87 rate support grant settlement for Wales.

Local councils have begun to plan their budgets for next year. To help them I am today circulating my proposals for the key elements of the 1986-87 settlement. Copies of the explanatory material sent to Welsh councils have been placed in the Library and in the Vote Office.

Before outlining my proposals it is important briefly to summarise the record of Welsh authorities in recent years, as this has had a major bearing on my strategy for 1986-87.

Local government spending on services in the 1960s and 1970s grew by 3 per cent. or more a year in real terms, absorbing an ever-increasing share of the national product. I am pleased to say that in Wales this damaging trend has been halted. Spending in the present year is only fractionally higher, in cost terms, than in 1979. Since 1979 the average annual increase in rates has been 30 per cent. lower than when Labour was last in office. The total rise since 1979 has been seven percentage points below the change in the RPI.

Success in reining back current spending has also enabled me to release a significant amount of resources for capital investment. Gross capital spending in Wales has grown twice as fast as inflation since 1981-82. In the RSG debate last January I told the House that I would consider whether to abandon targets for 1986-87. I have now decided to do so, but at the same time to toughen the alternative means of containing spending by raising the rate at which local authorities will lose grant as their spending rises relative to GRE. I believe that this will restrain spending in a way which is as effective as, but fairer than, targets. The local authority associations, with whom I have discussd the issue in detail, are prepared to accept this as a reasonable price to pay for moving away from selective controls and for restoring a greater measure of local accountability. The precise system of controls proposed for 1986-87 has, in fact, been strongly influenced by the views of the associations, and the Welsh Counties Committee in particular.

Under the new arrangements, the great majority of councils will now face a cash reduction in grant if they opt for an above average increase in spending. An important feature of the new scheme is that it also dramatically increases the rating benefits for below average growth in spending, and I am sure that many councils will come to recognise this in the coming months.

In order to moderate some of the large poundage increases which would otherwise have come about, I have taken up the Welsh counties' idea of limiting the aggregate of GREs to a total 10 per cent. below the actual level of provision for the year.

I deal now with the level of resources. Following discussions with the associations, I propose to add £15 million to the provision for current expenditure shown in last year's public expenditure White Paper. The adjusted total proposed is £1,368 million. If councils succeed in holding their spending to that figure, by the end of this Parliament they will have met my objective of returning spending — in cost terms — to the level recorded in 1979-80.

Taking into account the other elements of spending, total relevant expenditure for RSG purposes is provisionally estimated to be £1,598 million. This is £76 million, or 5 per cent., more than the amount that authorities have budgeted to spend in the present year.

In arriving at the relevant expenditure total I have taken account of the pressure on the resources for advanced further education. The committee of the Wales Advisory Body has told me that an early decision on the size of the AFE pool would greatly assist its annual planning exercise for this sector. I have therefore proposed to the Welsh Counties Committee that the pool should total £31 million in 1986-87, an increase of £2·5 million, or 8·8 per cent., over the figure for 1985-86.

Aggregate grant in support of relevant expenditure will be £1,067 million, giving a grant percentage of 66·8 per cent., which is virtually the same figure as for the present year. In cash terms, grant is £54 million, or 5·3 per cent., higher than the level in the supplementary report for 1985-86.

The final ingredient of my proposed package is an £11 million addition to the existing provision for local authority capital investment. This enhancement of 1986-87 resources is linked directly to Welsh authorities' efforts to contain their current expenditure in 1985-86.

When all the elements of the package are taken together, the arithmetic shows that if councils spend in line with the provision which I have set, rate rises next year should not, on average, exceed the going rate of inflation. Indeed, a good number of councils will be able to cut the rate burden while still budgeting for a moderate cash increase in spending.

The tough but more straightforward and less interventionist arrangements which I intend to introduce next year should provide authorities with sufficient incentive to budget moderately, and a firmer basis on which to plan their spending effectively. Targets and holdback have been extremely successful in Wales, and I believe that the new arrangements will be equally effective.

I commend my proposals for the 1986-87 settlement to the House.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman beats a partial retreat. The House of Commons research staff have calculated that between 1978-79 and 1985-86 the overall cut in grant, in real terms, is over 13 per cent.

The new regime poses new problems for the district councils. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Welsh districts have performed admirably and have been co-operative? Is he aware that in spite of that they now find themselves faced with an equally penal grants system to replace the system of targets and penalties? The new system will penalise up to 31 of the 37 district authorities, as opposed to a mere five in 1985-86.

Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the vital element of 90 per cent. GRE, the safety net and gain cap limiters will be retained in future years, as requested by the Welsh district councils when they accepted the change?

The Secretary of State knows that there is a 5 per cent. increase in the counties' relevant expenditure overall. This includes only 4·5 per cent. current expenditure over and above the revised figures for the current year. Bearing in mind the teachers, police and fire service pay awards, is

that adequate?. The county authorities are justifiably apprehensive. Is the right hon. Gentleman selling them short?

On the question of the block grant, will the Secretary of State recycle any grant losses below the £850 million block grant underlying the provisional statement?

The Secretary of State has attempted to paint a rosy picture on capital spending. Why are Welsh housing authorities restricted to using only 15 per cent. of the cash raised from council house sales, when the equivalent authorities in England can spend 20 per cent. of their receipts? The right hon. Gentleman has never explained why he settled for that injustice. Rhondda borough council, which faces a Herculean housing task, has had to sell £10 million-worth of its best mortgages to meet legal requirements on house renovation programmes. Would not an enlarged house building programme make major inroads into the dole queues in Wales?

Will the financial allocations not be insufficient to cope with the worst housing problems in Britain, especially those in the south Wales valleys? The allocations will not help local councils in grappling with the major unemployment crisis that has hit Wales — with more than one in five Welshmen out of work. Is it not true that the allocations are insufficient for the councils of the south Wales coalfields which face pit closures and for those coping with the closures of steel works in north Wales? Bearing in mind the previous niggardly annual settlements, this cash settlement is not at all satisfactory.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman has done his best to attack what the Welsh local authorities know to be an extremely good settlement. He talked about a partial retreat. The reason why we have been able to end the target system is that the Welsh local authorities have come so close to achieving the objective that I set them of getting their spending in real terms back to where it was when the Labour Government left office. We have not reduced it below that level. We have simply stopped the upward surge in local authority expenditure.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the penal results for the Welsh districts. I do not understand how he can suggest that the system is penal when it will mean the possibility of a substantial reduction in rates in all but a tiny handful of the Welsh districts if they spend at approximately the expected level of inflation.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the district authorities' request on 90 per cent. GRE, limiters and so on. When the authorities asked me about that at the consultative council meeting this afternoon, I referred them to our previous discussions in that council.I reminded them that over the period during which we have had a separate Welsh rate support grant system, I had met the undertakings that I had given. No one can give absolute guarantees about the exact mechanisms in the period ahead, but just as they, on the whole, have co-operated with the Government under the separate Welsh rate support grant system, so, of course, shall I endeavour to meet the commitments that I have made.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the problems of current expenditure. The provision that we have made is certainly attainable by Welsh local authorities. The Audit Commission has shown the substantial scope that exists for improvements in efficiency and the local authority associations accept that there is room for further savings through efficiency.

I come now to the issue of teachers' pay. If only we could have a settlement and get the NUT to accept the Government's proposals before October, we could make an adjustment in the additional resources which the Government have said could be available for next year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment made that point. In any case, the level of the settlement does not alter the fact that the Audit Commission's figures and pupil numbers show that scope for reductions exist, as there has been a substantial fall in pupil numbers over recent years.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned recycling. We intend that resources should be retained by Welsh local authorities. I have told local authorities that I intend to discuss with them in the coming months a system that will mean that those resources will return to the low-spending authorities and not to those which have spent at a high level and have therefore incurred reduced grant.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about capital allocations and housing. Decisions on those matters will be taken in the normal way in the autumn. They have not yet been taken. The £15 million to which I referred is a capital allocation which relates solely to the current expenditure performance of local authorities. The hon. Gentleman's argument on the need for capital expenditure in Wales will be considered in the normal way in the public expenditure round and will be announced in the autumn.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement today will give general satisfaction throughout Wales and will be regarded as a result of the firm and clear leadership that he has given in this matter?

Am I right in thinking that this marks the beginning of a move towards a more rational system of lcoal government financing in which local authorities will have a real incentive to provde the best services that they can at the lowest possible cost, and that it also marks the beginning of the end of the unhealthy situation in which local authorities seek to shift the blame on to the Government for their difficulties, and the Government in their turn blame local authorities for everything that goes wrong?

Mr. Edwards: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that. He is absolutely right about the incentives provided under the present arrangements. There is a direct incentive for authorities to contain their expenditure, because it enables them to reduce the burden on those who pay rates.

In Clwyd the county precept is projected to rise by only about 2·8 per cent. if the council can limit the year-to-year growth in its spending to 5 per cent. Among the districts, only Colwyn is projected to require a rate increase for spending 5 per cent. more in 1986-87, and even then it is only a tiny percentage increase. Substantial rate reductions are in prospect for several district authorities in Clwyd.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I welcome the Secretary of State's retreat from targets, and also the recent increase in consultation with local authorities, but I wonder whether the new estimated figure for total relevant expenditure for RSG purposes reveals the fact that there will continue to be a decline, in real terms, in the level of housing, planning services and environmental health services provided by district councils. Equally, will

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

there not be a decline in education and in social, fire and consumer protection services provided by county councils?

Is it not unseemly for the Secretary of State to continue to play the role of the miserly Mr. Bumble, making the Welsh local authorities come to him, month after month, like Oliver Twist, asking for more?

Mr. Edwards: At the start of his question the hon. and learned Gentleman congratulated me on the increased consultation, and in fact I have consulted frequently. At the end of his question he appeared to be complaining because the local authorities discuss these matters with me every month.

The truth is that there is no basis whatever for the hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion that there need be the cuts in services of which he spoke. We are increasing relevant expenditure by about 5 per cent. — which is more than the expected rate of inflation. Although current expenditure provision is increased by rather less than the expected rate of inflation, it takes account of the fact that the Audit Commission has shown that substantial savings are still possible through greater efficiency.

Local authorities themselves have in the past year or two begun to show that they can make improvements in efficiency without cutting services. Anyone who thinks that there is no further room for improvement knows nothing about local government — either in Wales or anywhere else. That may well be the case with the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the responsible role played by local authorities in Wales, which has enabled him to make the increases in both capital and current expenditure for which so many of us have campaigned?

I acknowledge my right hon. Friend's helpful leadership, and he will know that I welcome the abolition of targets, which I have for long told him were an unfortunate, and, I hope, temporary, measure. We can now get back to greater local authority autonomy over expenditure?

On my reckoning, should Ynys Môn borough council budget in line with an inflation rate of 5 per cent. next year, it will lead to a rate reduction of 11 per cent. for its people. Will my right hon. Friend confirm those figures? I estimate that that is the seventh largest reduction of any local authority in Wales. That must be good for business locally, and on that so much of our future employment depends.

Finally, will my right hon. Friend confirm that when he comes to take his decisions this autumn he will take into account the large backlog of home improvement grants waiting to be processed?

Mr. Edwards: I certainly acknowledge that my hon. Friend has campaigned relentlessly on the subject of targets. His is one of the many voices to which I have listened on the subject.

I can also confirm the figures that my hon. Friend gave for the Government's projections about possible rate reductions. The actual rate set by any district will depend upon the decisions that the district council takes. When we make our assumptions, we are saying that if councils spend broadly 5 per cent. more than they did in the same budgets last year, and if they achieve the same balances, figures of this order will be achieved. There is scope for reduction in the rate burden.

I confirm that we shall, of course, consider the backlog of improvement grants when we come to take our decisions on capital in the autumn. I remind my hon. Friend that, as a result of the good behaviour of Welsh local authorities and even before my announcement today, capital expenditure in Wales is twice the level per head of that in England.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is not the only extra freedom announced the freedom to choose between the rack and the thumbscrew? Is not the reality of the Secretary of State's so-called success story today that after his six years in office, and after an extra £40,000 million has gone from the North sea into the Government's coffers, our local authorities are expected to manage on real resources which are no greater than they were when the Government came to office?

Moreover, with the same resources—fewer of which now come from the Government—councils are expected to meet the extra social costs of having an extra 2 million people unemployed and of the essential social costs of services, such as housing benefit, which previously were met by the Government. Is it not a recipe, inevitably, for further cuts? Will the Secretary of State confirm that, of all the Welsh counties, West Glamorgan will lose the most as a result of this so-called improvement?

Mr. Edwards: Welsh local authorities do not share the right hon. Gentleman's view about the proposed change. The Welsh counties, including the representative from West Glamorgan, advocated the change as a great improvement on the previous arrangement.

I acknowledge, of course, that, of all the counties, West Glamorgan will have the greatest difficulty with this change. It will have the largest prospective rate increases, although that is because its expenditure is higher in relation to GRE than that of any other Welsh local authority, and its spending record is greater. That is the explanation.

I am grateful to have the right hon. Gentleman's acknowledgement that we have not cut local government expenditure in real terms, but merely sought to get it back to what it was when his Government left office. I am sorry that he of all people has not yet learned the direct relationship between the level of local authority expenditure and the rate burden and job creation and the viability of businesses in the area. There is no doubt that the local authorities which spend most and rate highest are those which drive away prospective employers.

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the synthetic indignation displayed by the Opposition will not be echoed by local authority treasurers, who know that high rates drive away business and cause misery to countless people, that the rate burden counts towards the retail prices index, and that that in turn has an affect on wage settlements and the economy of the whole country? My right hon. Friend is to be warmly congratulated on the leadership that he has given in Wales in this respect.

Mr. Edwards: I am not sure that it is right to talk about synthetic indignation, when only a tiny handful of Welsh

Labour Members have bothered to turn up for this debate. Perhaps they knew that it was not necessary to attack the rate settlement, and that is why they kept away.

I have a word of caution about possible rate effects in South Glamorgan, because that county has made heavy use of reserves in the current year, and I suspect that that may have to be paid for subsequently.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): When the right hon. Gentleman talks about 1979 and the extent of the rates in Ogwr borough and Mid-Glamorgan county, is he aware of the difference between the situation then and now? When he talks about rating and attracting industrialists to place such as Ogmore and Maesteg, does he realise that his Government's economic policies have caused factories and pits to close? As a result, there are fewer ratepayers to pay rates to the Ogwr borough—not because of the policies of Ogwr borough or the county, but because of the Government's economic policies.

Last week the right hon. Gentleman imposed a restriction, with a total of £844,000 for Mid-Glamorgan and £446,000 for Ogwr borough. When the new procedure comes in next year—I hope, incidentally, that it will be arithmetically correct, unlike the last ones, so that treasurers can reasonably assess the position—what will he say to the 2,000 applicants for council accommodation in Ogwr borough, who were told that under the present system, with the present restrictions by the Secretary of State, they would be lucky to be housed in 10 years' time?

Mr. Edwards: As a result of our ability to control current spending in Wales, there has been a substantial increase in capital allocations for Welsh local authorities. Another £15 million has been announced in the statement, which will help to ease the housing burdens mentioned by the hon. Gentleman and help to provide facilities for the jobs that he wishes to create. That is in marked contrast to the slashing cuts in capital spending which resulted from the pilgrimage of the Labour Chancellor to the IMF during the Labour Government's term of office.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on once again obtaining such a favourable settlement for Wales. Does he agree that the lesson for local authorities is that if they can get their current spending under control, additional capital resources will be available? Will he persist in that message to Clwyd county council in particular? Will he try to convince its councillors that if they reduce their rates that will help to create more jobs, and that they should concentrate on their statutory obligations and take on board the Audit Commission's message that they are grossly overmanned in some of their departments?

Mr. Edwards: My hon. Friend is right to refer to the relationship between current and capital spending. I believe that in my previous answer I mentioned £15 million extra, when the figure should be £11 million.

Mr. Barry Jones: Wrong again.

Mr. Edwards: That is characteristic of the childish conduct of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). The day on which he announced additional capital spending for Wales would be a day indeed.

If Clwyd county council manages its affairs sensibly, there will be a very modest rate increase. In the hon. Gentleman's borough, there is the prospect of a rate reduction.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I hope that Clwyd county council will look after the needs of its people and not apply policies advocated by the hon. Member for Dlyn (Mr. Raffan). The Secretary of State said that he had consulted the county associations and that they were fairly agreeable to the new regime. Does he not think that the local authority associations feel themselves to be under the hammer and that they will accept any crumb from the table? Does he not also think that they loathe the policy of incessant meddling in local government practised by the Government since 1979 and that they detest the centralised Whitehall jackboot policies that have been pursued?

Is there anything that the Secretary of State can do to exempt local authorities which want to encourage industrial development in their areas — he must remember that the Government's economic policies are falling to pieces with the continuing increase in unemployment — from capping and return of block grant? Or can he improve the safety net so that they can spend on industrial development without detriment to any of their other functions?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman talks about centralisation. He seems to forget that the Government introduced a separate Welsh rate support grant system, which has been widely welcomed by Welsh local authorities. They know that it has been administered so as to produce enormous benefit to Welsh local authorities and that their relative position has been much improved because they have behaved more sensibly than many extreme Labour authorities in England. The best contribution that the hon. Gentleman's local district can make to industrial recovery in Wrexham is to spend in line with or below inflation. There will then be the prospect of a 16 per cent. rate reduction. I can think of no more substantial contribution to attract industry.

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman has recently given many wrong answers to questions, both in the Chamber and in Committee. He has also presented faulty documents. When he next has a statement to make, I shall be prepared to go over it with him beforehand.

Mr. Edwards: Once again the hon. Gentleman, who takes his responsibilities so seriously, has not bothered to listen. The statement was perfectly correct, but, in answering a question across the Dispatch Box, I gave a figure which I immediately corrected. I also note, and I hope that the people of Wales will note, that that is the only criticism that the hon. Member is able to make of the settlement, which he knows is one of the best rate support grant settlements to be given to the people of Wales in many years.

Liverpool City Council

5.55 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the position of the Liverpool city council arising out of the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment today plus the already serious rate and budgetary problems in the city which, unless resolved by negotiation, can lead to cuts in services, loss of jobs and possible surcharges and disqualification of councillors."

I think that the matter is specific because clearly there is a serious problem in the city. It is important because people's futures are at stake. Councillors could have their homes taken from them and their wives and families placed in great difficulties and Liverpool city council workers could find themselves out of work and on the streets. It is also urgent because the matter will clearly develop to a greater degree unless negotiations take place before the end of the recess. I honestly believe that serious problems of unrest in Liverpool could arise unless the matter is resolved by negotiations. It is therefore important for the House to debate the matter before we rise for the recess.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the position of the Liverpool city council arising out of the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment today."

I have listened with the greatest care to what the hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Finance Act 1985.
2. Appropriation Act 1985.
3. Interception of Communications Act 1985.
4. Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985.
5. Trustee Savings Banks Act 1985.
6. Wildlife and Countryside (Service of Notices) Act 1985.
7. Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985.
8. East Lothian District Council (Musselburgh Links, etc.) Order Confirmation Act 1985.
9. Shetland Islands Council Order Confirmation Act 1985.
10. Hastings Pier Act 1985.
11. Oxfordshire Act 1985.

Social Security

5.59 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that it would be for the convenience of the House to take with this the following motions:

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Amendment and Up-rating Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.

That the draft Child Benefit (Up-rating) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Family Income Supplements (Computation) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Housing Benefits (Increase of Needs Allowances) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Pensioners' Lump Sum Payments Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

That the draft Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 Statutory Sum Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 22nd July, be approved.

That the draft Social Security Benefit (Dependency) Amendment Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 22nd July, be approved.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Benefits (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1100), dated 16th July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th July, be annulled.

Mr. Speaker: Is that for the convenience of the House?

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: So be it.

Mr. Newton: The orders are accompanied by a report from the Government Actuary on the effects of the proposals on the national insurance fund and by a statement from my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, on the background to the uprating proposed for the mobility allowance.

The statutory instruments put into effect the uprating of social security benefits announced in the House on 18 June by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. They also provide for the payment of the £10 Christmas bonus, an increase in vaccine damage payments and other changes to which I shall come later in my speech.

As the House is aware, it is the Government's intention that this should be the last November uprating before the move to annual upratings which will take place from April 1987. To pave the way for that change, we have taken powers in the Social Security Act 1985 to enable us to undertake the 1986 uprating in July — four months earlier than usual. The result is that after November 1985 there will then be two upratings at eight-month intervals, in July 1986 and April 1987. That move has been welcomed as sensible on both sides of the House and well beyond it.

Rather than catalogue the details and technicalities of each of the orders, it will be more helpful if I merely remind the House of the main features of the upratings and then deal with some of the issues upon which it seems right to comment further.

For the majority of benefits, including retirement pensions, unemployment benefit, widow's benefit and war pensions, the uprating orders provide for an increase of 7 per cent.—the full measured increase in the retail price increase in the 12 months from May 1984 toMay 1985. For a single person, the retirement pension will increase by £2.50 per week — from £35.80 to £38.30; for couples the increase will be £4 a week—from £57.30 to £61.30. The full rate widow's pension will rise in line with the single person's retirement pension.

Those increases, once again, clearly fulfil the Government's firm and continuing commitment to protect the value of the basic retirement pension. As the House is aware, since the Government first took office in 1979, that promise has been more than fulfilled. When this increase takes effect in November 1985, pensions will have increased by about 96 per cent. since November 1978— 10 per cent. more than the expected rise in prices over the same period.

I should emphasise, because it is a point that is not always sufficiently appreciated, that that improvement in the pension's real value has been achieved at the same time as the number of retirement pensioners has increased by about 800,000, taking the total number of retirement pensioners from 8·3 million to 9·1 million. Against that background, the Government's record of more than maintaining the value of retirement pensions is one of which my hon. Friends can be proud.

Alongside those increases in pensions and many other benefits, the supplementary benefit and the housing benefit needs allowances will also be appropriately increased by the orders. In the case of supplementary benefit, the increase is 5·1 per cent., in line with the increase in the retail price index between May 1984 and May 1985, less the element of housing costs. As the House is aware, that difference in uprating methods merely reflects the fact that for those on supplementary benefit housing costs are, for the most part, met separately through the housing benefit system.

With regard to housing benefit, the needs allowance generally will be increased by between 5·5 and 6·2 per cent., again in accordance with the usual rather complicated formula. The one exception is the child's needs allowance, which is being increased by more than the usual formula would have required.

While talking about housing benefit, I should refer to the uprating of non-dependant deductions. That has been the subject of some comment. It is also provided for in the regulations before the House. The purpose of non-dependant deductions is to take account of the contribution towards housing costs which is assumed to be made by a non-dependant living in a beneficiary's household. The deductions are therefore uprated in line with changes in housing costs. That formula, which follows previous practice under the supplementary benefit scheme, has been in place since the introduction of the housing benefit scheme. The same formula is also applied to the supplementary benefit non-householder housing addition. The normal method of uprating the non-dependant deduction and that non-householder housing addition in supplementary benefit has been applied this year.

I am aware that anxiety has been expressed that the statement and schedule accompanying my right hon. Friend's statement on 18 June did not include the figures for those deductions. As I explained in a written answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on

[Mr. Newton]

8 July, we were following previous practice. On this and previous occasions, the practice has been for the uprating statement to give details of increases in the main weekly benefit rates but not increases in the considerable number of minor benefit items.

It was solely for that reason that the increases in non-dependant deductions were not referred to. Clearly the House has the opportunity to consider them, as it does this afternoon, when the relevant statutory instruments are laid before the House. Nevertheless, having said that, I hope that I have made it clear, against the implications that the hon. Member for Oldham, West sought to establish earlier — that there had been some attempt to conceal, abnormally, what the proposals and the uprating methods were — that there was no departure from previous practice.

In view of the comments made on this occasion, we shall clearly have that matter in mind when considering what should be put in the scheduled list of the uprating of benefits next year. I am glad to see the hon. Member Oldham, West nodding, because we do not wish to convey the impression, which he evidently first gained, that we have in some way sought to conceal matters. That was far from our intention. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry to see the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) conveying some disbelief at that statement. I hope that I have made it clear that we were merely following normal practice.

Before leaving the issue of housing benefit, I should refer to the proposal contained in my right hon. Friend's uprating statement to increase the rates taper from 9 to 13 per cent., which does not feature in the orders before the House. That proposal is not contained in the orders because, unlike others in respect of housing benefit contained in the uprating, it is subject to consultation with the local authorities, and we wish to ensure that adequate time is allowed for that process of consultation and then for us to consider the responses that we receive. When we have considered them, we shall take the action necessary to implement the conclusions at which we arrive. No doubt the House will want to have the opportunity to debate whatever proposal is put forward when it resumes in the autumn.

I wish to deal with benefits for families. The House will be aware that the orders provide for an increase in child benefit of 15p — from £6·85 to £7. The Government have made clear their continuing view that it is right to maintain child benefit as a non-means-tested, non-taxable benefit normally payable to the mother, and the fact that it is inevitably necessary to make a judgment about the appropriate level at the time of each uprating decision and to make that judgment in the context of social priorities and the social security budget as a whole.

On this occasion—this is a subject that the House has already debated—we concluded that that increase to £7 was the appropriate increase for child benefit generally, and that it was right to make a special increase at the same time in those aspects of benefit which apply to lower paid families in work with children. I now come to those changes.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): How much money will the Government save by not uprating child benefit in line with prices? As to the increases in the other benefits for families, how much of that money saved will be paid in benefit? When the new family credit comes in, will there be a commitment to use all the savings from child benefit to finance that?

Mr. Newton: The answer to the first half of the hon. Gentleman's intervention is that in a full year the saving from the uprating to £7, rather than a 7 per cent. increase to take account of the rise in prices over the full year from May to May, is £175 million. The cost of the various measures to which I am about to turn in respect of lower income families is about £26 million in a full year.

The answer to the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question is that, just as we must make a judgment in the context of this uprating about the appropriate level of child benefits, when we come to make decisions about the rates to be set in relation to such proposals as we may implement following the review, we shall also have to make a judgment on the balance of all considerations in the context of the social security budget as a whole.

Mr. Field: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that that is a change in the Government's position from the time of the uprating statement? The Secretary of State then said that the reason for this cut in child benefit was to enable money to be targeted on the poorest. Clearly he is now leaving the option for some of that money to be taken from families to be given in tax cuts to single people. That is hardly targeting.

Mr. Newton: I do not accept that there is any difference in meaning or emphasis from what I have said now and on previous occasions and what the Secretary of State has said on previous occasions. Our positon is quite clear. We believe in maintaining the child benefit system in the terms in which I have just presented it. We also believe that it is right to accord particular priority—in looking at the social security structure as a whole and, particularly, when considering the balance of benefits for families—to the needs of lower paid families, especially such families in work. The hon. Gentleman is straining a bit in suggesting that there is some major change in emphasis in what I have just said.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has raised an important point. The Minister has said that in real terms the cut in child benefit is about £175 million. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the Secretary of State said that the motive was to concentrate resources on families in greatest need. Will the Minister confirm that the value of the improvement in family income supplement and housing benefit child needs allowance together comes to about £23 million, which is about only 13 per cent. of the cut in child benefit?

Mr. Newton: Had the hon. Gentleman been listening about three minutes ago he would have heard me give the figure, which is around £26 million, but I do not seek to build too much on that.

As the House is aware, these orders propose an increase in family income supplement prescribed allowance by more than 7 per cent. and introduce an element of age relation into the scheme by setting new higher prescribed amounts for families with older children. The new prescribed amounts for a one-child family will be £97·50 a week where the child is under 11; £98·50 where the child is 11 to 15 years old; and £99·50 where the child is 16 to 19 and still at school. For each additional child the prescribed amount will increase by £11·50, £12·50 and £13·50, again depending on the age of the child.

As well as targeting help more effectively, this measure will help mitigate the effects of the unemployment trap, which is a matter of concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House, by aligning more closely the rates paid to low-income working families with children and the rates paid to families who are unemployed and receiving supplementary benefit. To the same end, we are increasing the housing benefit child needs allowance by about £1 a week more than a normal uprating would require.

I should also emphasise that we are increasing one-parent benefit by the full extent of the 7 per cent. general uprating from £4.25 a week to £4.55 a week. The children's scale rates within the supplementary benefit scheme—which apply to the least-well-off families out of work—are also increased by the full supplementary benefit uprating percentage.

Taken together, those measures targeted to low-income families, and especially to low-income working families, are of very significant additional help to such families, especially when taken with the changes in national insurance contributions that were announced in the Budget and that are due to come into effect in October this year.

To give some idea of the importance of those changes taken together, if I compare what we are proposing, including the national insurance changes, with what would have happened had a normal uprating been carried out, it shows that a married couple, with one child aged 3, with gross earnings of £80 a week will be £2.02 a week better off than they would otherwise have been; a married couple on the same earnings with two children aged 4 and 6 will be £2.43 a week better off than they would otherwise have been; and a married couple with three children aged 3, 8 and 11 will be some £3.18 better off. I know that on this at least I shall carry the hon. Member for Birkenhead with me in regarding those as useful improvements for a group of the population for whom in the past we have perhaps not done enough through the social security benefits system or in other ways.

Mr. Field: The Minister certainly carries me with him on that point, but are not his considerable debating skills yet again being used in the Chamber to disguise a significant change in Government policy? Until very recently the Government were concerned with two objectives—the living standards of poor families and the living standards of all families. Is there not now a marked change? While there is concern for the very poorest—although some of us may debate how effective the changes are — the Government have gone back on their commitment to ensure that living standards and the tax burden are shared equally between those with children and those without. Is not that a very significant change indeed?

Mr. Newton: I do not believe that the Government have gone back on their commitment, although I accept that in the context of this uprating there is a difference of opinion between the Government and the views held by the hon. Gentleman about how that commitment is best fulfilled. He will have read what has been said in the social security review Green Paper and will be well aware of the emphasis placed in that paper on the needs of families with children. But particularly—and we do not run away from the word "particularly"—the emphasis is on the needs of low-income families with children, not least on low-income families in work who have children. That is a sensible reflection of sensible social priorities.

I wish to turn to the questions arising from these orders relating to benefits for disabled people. I remind the House that, in line with the general uprating figures, mobility allowance will rise from £20 to £21·40 a week. That means that it has far more than doubled since the Government took office. The higher rate of attendance allowance will rise from £28·60 to £30·60. The lower rate of attendance allowance will rise from £19·10 to £20·45. The rate of severe disablement allowance—the replacement for non-contributory invalidity pension—will go up from £21·50 a week to £23.

I wish to draw particular attention to the fact that those on the contributory invalidity pension will receive an uprating well beyond the rate of inflation at 7 per cent., and in all that will amount to an increase of 12 per cent. That will be worth more than £4 a week to single beneficiaries and £6·50 a week to married couples. That is because, as the House is aware, we are restoring the 5 per cent. abatement of invalidity pension, despite the fact that at present there are no immediate plans to bring the benefit into taxation, even though we have always said that that is the intention in the longer term.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Minister confirm that nevertheless the changes in the offset of the additional component in the invalidity allowance mean that the Government are making a net saving?

Mr. Newton: I was about to come to the other changes that I would not wish to disguise from the House. One of them is covered in the regulations, and I wish to make particular reference to it. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has already referred to an aspect that is not covered in these regulations but which is covered in the Social Security Bill that was passed earlier this week, and that is the measures we have taken in relation to the invalidity allowance addition, which is paid at a higher rate to those who become sick and disabled at an early stage in their life, as against the earnings-related additional component.

I wish to refer to another aspect, the way for which was paved in the Social Security Bill. It is also reflected in the Social Security Benefit (Dependency) Amendment Regulations which are part of the package that we are debating. It provides for a new form of earnings rule for adult dependants of recipients of certain long-term benefits. As the hon. Lady knows from my replies to parliamentary questions, we intend to set the level of the new earnings rule—which is an equal treatment earnings rule that extends our provisions for equal treatment under the social security system—at the rate of unemployment benefit, which is now £28·45 a week. It will be increased to £30·45 a week from November.

We intend to apply the earnings rule to the wives of invalidity pension husbands and also to the husbands of invalidity pensioner wives. The net effect is to create a more generous rule for the husbands of women who are in receipt of long-term benefit, in particular invalidity pension, but it is a rather less generous rule than the present one for the wives of men who are receiving a similar range of benefits. By linking the level of the earnings rule to the rate of unemployment benefit, we ar adopting a common sense position. By the time people are earning more than they could achieve on their own contribution record if they were out of work, it is hardly sensible to regard them as any longer dependent upon

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somebody else who is receiving social security benefit. We shall also ensure that the earnings rule is regularly increased. It will be increased in line with changes in unemployment benefit.

I should emphasise that this measure will come into effect on 16 September but that there will be no cash losers. It will apply only to new claimants after that date.

The hon. Member for Derby, South has already expressed interest in the last point I wish to make on this subject. Originally we said that as part of a series of changes that would affect invalidity pensioners we intended to move to fortnightly payment of benefit in arrears. The hon. Lady has been probing me about the Government's intentions. She will by now be aware that, in the light of the general proposition in the social security Green Paper to seek more consistency and greater alignment between the payment mechanisms and other forms of rules affecting a whole variety of social security benefits, we have thought it right to defer the implementation of that proposal and to give further consideration to it in the wider context of the Green Paper.

I turn to a number of particular supplementary benefit issues other than the general uprating of supplementary benefit with which I have already dealt. We propose to make two changes to the supplementary heating additions which will be uprated generally by the rise in fuel prices. This was 4·4 per cent. between May 1984 and May 1985. First, we intend to limit the central heating additions. They were introduced in the early 1960s when the few claimants with central heating undoubtedly spent more than other claimants on fuel. The position has changed markedly. About half of all claimants now have central heating. Central heating is more efficient than most other systems of heating houses. Claimants with gas and electric central heating systems spent less, on average, on heating than claimants without central heating.

In these circumstances, we have decided to make no further awards of such additions in this category to claimants after 5 August. Claimants who were entitled to central heating additions before 5 August will receive them while they are still on benefit and remain eligible under the current rules, but from that date no new central heating additions will be awarded to new claimants. I want to emphasise that other heating additions will continue under a variety of headings. I re-emphasise the point I made at the beginning: all heating additions are being uprated to the full normal extent—that is, by the price index that measures the increase in fuel costs.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The Minister has not provided figures for the savings on central heating allowances. However, in a full year they amount to about £55 million. No fewer than 1 million families will be affected. Is he aware that a number of hon. Members disagree fundamentally with his statement about central heating costs? In many cases they are a burden to families. I have received representations on this point from a number of constituents. If expenditure upon this kind of heating allowance is not as high as it might be, it is because people feel that they cannot afford to turn on the heating. This causes widespread concern among the elderly, especially since this rule has been introduced at such short notice. Many hon. Members are anxious about a saving of this kind being slipped through in what appears to be a rather surreptitious way, although large sums of money are involved.

Mr. Newton: It can hardly be said to be surreptitious when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services devoted the best part of a paragraph of his statement on 18 June to this point. Savings are involved. The figure for a full year will be about £38 million. It will increase in future years because claimants who are already on benefit and in receipt of a central heating addition will continue to receive it. So the effects are not quite the same as they would be with a normal social security change.

Mr. Millan: The figure I was given in a parliamentary answer relates presumably to savings which take into account the fact that present recipients will continue to receive the addition, unless they come off benefit, however temporarily. The figure that was given in a parliamentary answer was £55 million for a full year.

Mr. Newton: I suspect that the difference between us is that the figures I have in front of me relate to 1986-87, whereas the right hon. Member is referring to 1987-88. That ties in with my point that this builds up a little, because existing claimants are protected. To pick up the main thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's point, those who are already in receipt of supplementary pension will be protected in the way that I have already stated. Moreover, any householder over the age of 65 will receive a heating addition.

Mr. Millan: But at a lower rate.

Mr. Newton: No, not necessarily at a lower rate. Anybody who is over the age of 85 will receive a heating addition at a higher rate than this. That would nullify any central heating addition to which they were entitled. We give the claimants the highest heating addition to which they are entitled. A significant number of pensioners below the age of 85 may be in receipt of higher heating additions under other provisions, including those that are directed to the need of the long-term sick and the disabled. Although I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point and the point that no doubt the hon. Member for Birkenhead is burning to make, I would ask them not to overplay their hand when considering the effect of these proposals.

Mr. Frank Field: As the Minister for Social Security is anxious that I should not overplay my hand, and as he therefore thinks that the point I am about to make is not very important, may I ask him whether I am right in saying that after 5 August people will cease to be eligible for a heating addition on the ground that they have central heating? As the point I am making is so unimportant and as the costs involved will, presumably, also be unimportant, can the Minister say what steps he will take between now and 5 August to tell those of our constituents who are eligible for this benefit that they should put in a claim before 5 August because on 6 August they will cease to be eligible? Will he be appearing on the popular radio and television programmes to get that message across?

Mr. Newton: I shall not seek to conceal that information from anybody who wishes to have it. The fact that the hon. Gentleman has raised the point in that way will, I hope, be a helpful additional means of bringing this fact to the attention of those who may be affected.

Another point, which is relevant to the point made by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), is that the central heating addition is paid at two rates. The lower rate of central heating addition is the same as the rate of heating addition for all pensioner householders over 65. There is sometimes a tendency to talk about this measure as if all central heating additions were paid at the higher rate rather than the lower, and therefore to assume an effect on pensioners beyond what the facts would sustain.

The other point about central heating additions, on which I would also hope to carry the right hon. Member for Govan and the hon. Member for Birkenhead, is that we have proposed to extend the lower rate of heating addition, which would be worth £2·20 a week from November for all sick and disabled householder claimants on the long-term rate of supplementary benefit. We expect that proposal, which will cost about £1 million—I accept that it is a modest cost—in a full year will benefit about 18,000 claimants.

An indirect effect of the approval of the Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order is that the specified sum—that is, the amount deducted in accordance with section 6 of th Social Security (No. 2) Act 1980 from the supplementary benefit payment payable for the dependants of strikers—will increase automatically at the time of the uprating by 7 per cent. which, rounded down in this case, would take the figure from its present level of £16 to £17 from 25 November.

That change happens automatically unless the Government lay regulations before the House to prevent the automatic application of the primary legislation, and we have decided not to do that. My right hon. Friend will, as usual, make a declaratory order before the effective date simply to put the change on the official record in the normal way.

I move now to the board and lodging regulations and payments under them. The limits on payments for board and lodging do not form part of the regulations before the House, but, when we announced the new limits in March, we undertook to review those limits within a year of their coming into effect in April and to give a further sign of our thinking at the time of the uprating. As the House knows, we have set in hand extensive arrangements for monitoring the operations of the revised board and lodging rules as well as commissioned further research. We hope, by the turn of the year, to have results that will enable us to conduct a comprehensive review of the limits. At the same time, we intend to review the level of the meals allowance for boarders and people of no fixed abode.

The hon. Member for Derby, South asked a parliamentary question today about my next point. We are not uprating the meals allowance in November. That allowance already stands at nearly £30 a week—£29·40 to be precise—which is more than the total benefit available to most non-householders for all purposes and not just for meals. We have had several representations about this anomaly and we think it right to give it further consideration in the context of the board and lodging system as a whole and of the review.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Can my hon. Friend give any comfort or reassurance to a constituent of mine who has written to me about her mother, who suffers from senile dementia, but is in a residential home rather than a nursing home because she does not require nursing? It looks as though she will be hit by the new limits. I understand that my hon. Friend will be reviewing this, but is there any immediate comfort for my constituent or does she have to await the outcome of the review?

Mr. Newton: I may be able to give some immediate comfort, and I shall return to that point in a moment. Before doing so, having referred to the meals allowance, I should also refer to the other half of the question asked by the hon. Member for Derby, South. I have answered her parliamentary question in rather terse terms in expectation of being able to fill out the information that I gave her. We intend to increase in the normal way all the personal allowances within the system. I shall not give the full list in the regulations, but I shall give the main representative examples.

The personal expenses allowance for residents in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes will rise from £8·50 to £8·95 a week. The rate for people on the ordinary rate of benefit in other circumstances who are single will rise from £9·25 to £9·70 a week and the long-term rate for a single person will rise from £10·30 a week to £10·85 a week. The other aspects of the personal expenses allowance, which constitute a list rather more than three times as long as that, will rise in the same way. I hope that the hon. Lady will welcome that.

I return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). When we referred to our intention of reviewing the limits by April 1986, it was both our expectation and that of the House that it would be appropriate to make changes to the limits, probably in April 1986. Since then, there has been a significant new development in the proposals that we have put before the House in the social security Green Paper which is to change the uprating base, on our current plans, in July 1986. That will make it very difficult and undesirable for us to be conducting changes in the social security system affecting significant numbers of claimants in April 1986 because of the work, on which our officers are already engaged, to carry out the July 1986 uprating.

In those circumstances, we felt it right to consider whether we should make any changes as part of the general uprating of benefits this November, which had not been our original intention. We shall in any case keep these matters under continuing close scrutiny in the light of the monitoring to which I have referred and in the spirit of our willingness, which I have clearly demonstrated in recent weeks, to make appropriate changes in these regulations where the need is shown.

I can tell the House and my hon. Friend that we believe that it would be right, at the time that the uprating takes effect in November, to make some increase in limits for residential care and nursing homes. We intend to increase the limits for all types of residential homes by £10 a week so that the range for these limits will now run from £120 a week to £180 a week instead of from £110 to £170. We also intend to increase the supplement added to these amounts for nursing homes, which at present stands at £28·60 a week, to £50 a week. That means that the limits for nursing homes will be increased by nearly one quarter and will, after November, fall in the range of £170 a week to £230 a week.

We have already provided some scope for greater partnership between my Department and local authorities by allowing local authorities to add in some circumstances to the amounts that they can pay as topping-up provisions

[Mr. Newton]

in board and lodging payments. Over the next few months, I propose to explore with the local authority associations and others who are concerned whether there is room for building on this beginning by making these arrangements still more flexible, and we shall have particularly in mind the position of people over pension age.

The order that does not run along with the normal social security and housing benefits orders is that concerned with vaccine damage payments. The order will double the amount paid in vaccine damage cases from £10,000 to £20,000 for claims made on or after 18 June. This matter was the subject of some discussion in the House when we debated Lords amendments on the Social Security Bill earlier this week and it was widely welcomed on both sides of the House as a move which improves the position of those unhappy families suffering from these problems. It takes the value of the payment beyond what inflation alone would have required since payments were introduced in 1979. I believe that this improvement will be warmly endorsed by both sides of the House.

Mr. Meacher: We welcome this increase, but there is a great deal of feeling that this method of payment is inadequate and that weekly payments, as is the case in New Zealand, and the Pearson proposals for strict Government liability would be preferable. Will the Government look seriously at those alternatives?

Mr. Newton: I made some comment about this in the debate on Monday and I do not wish to add to what I said. As the hon. Gentleman knows, and as I said on Monday, it is well within the knowledge of hon. Members that the Government have put in hand the largest ever survey of the extent of disablement and its effects with a view to reviewing a wide range of issues, and in particular social security benefits affecting disabled people.

That does not relieve us of looking at the scheme brought forward by the Labour Government in the late 1970s, under which the payment has undoubtedly been eroded by inflation. We are doing something about that problem within the context of existing legislation by amending the Social Security Act, and by bringing forward the regulations to provide for the increase from £10,000 to £20,000 which I have described.

Given the terms on which vaccine damage payments are made, it is virtually certain—I might say certain if I were not such a cautious man at the Dispatch Bax—that any child in respect of whom a vaccine damage payment has been made will automatically qualify for severe disablement allowance, which also operates on an 80 per cent. disablement test when the child reaches the age of 16. There is some controversy about whether weekly payments should be made before that age, but certainly a child who was subject to a vaccine damage payment would be likely automatically to qualify for a weekly payment of benefit on reaching school leaving age. That goes at least some way to meeting the point made by the hon. Gentleman.

The uprating of benefits, which is the main effect of this package, will cost over £2,000 million in a full year. As I have said, not only have we kept our pledge to maintain the value of pensions and linked long-term benefits, but we have also protected from inflation the great majority of other beneficiaries. At the same time, we have managed to direct help to low-income working families who need help most. That is a considerable achievement, and I invite the House to endorse the orders.

6.45 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): As the Minister said in outlining the broad intention of most elements of what is a farrago of uprating orders, there is no common theme behind today's debate. That does not mean that some important issues in the current development of social policy are not illustrated by these orders. Like the Minister, I want to concentrate on certain of those principles.

The uprating orders deviate substantially from the simple objective of compensating for inflation. The main reason for that is that they are a dry run for the Fowler Green Paper. In several important respects they anticipate and prepare the ground for it, even though that makes a travesty of the whole idea of the consultative process. Under this Government, consultation over social security is something of a sick joke, bearing in mind the number of times the Government have disregarded the advice of their review committees and their Social Security Advisory Committee.

These orders pre-empt the consultative process in at least three significant ways. They increase child benefit by only 2·2 per cent. instead of the full 7 per cent. required to maintain its value. The Green Paper does not specifically state that the real value of child benefit will be cut, but that is the clear implication of paragraph 4(49) which says:

"The Government believe that it will be right to give greater priority to assistance for families in the income range covered by family credit than to the assistance given to families as a whole through child benefit."

The Government are already implementing that policy by raising the family income supplement prescribed limits by between 8·3 and 10·6 per cent. So much for the Green Paper charade. The Government obviously made up their mind on family benefit some time ago. The same applies to housing benefit where the tapers above the needs allowance for rates are to be increased from 9 to 13 per cent. This pre-empts any consideration of the Green Paper proposal in paragraph 3(56) which says:

"the income-related taper for rates should be steeper than underthe current scheme"

The change under today's uprating order more or less exactly meets the Green Paper's aim, because a rate taper of 13 per cent. combined with a rent taper of 29 per cent., which is the current level, will produce a combined total of 42 per cent., and that is on gross income. It is surely hardly a coincidence that that is roughly equivalent to a 70 per cent. taper on net income, which just happens to be the illustrative figure used in the Green Paper.

Another example of this same pre-empting of what is misleadingly called a Green Paper lies in the abolition of the supplementary additions for central heating to which the Minister referred at some length. As the House knows, the Green Paper proposes the abolition of all additional requirements and their replacement by various client group premiums. We know that this is actually being implemented in respect of central heating additions for new claimants with effect from 5 August. In other words, it is being implemented six weeks before the consultation period is completed. So much for the Green Paper. I suggest it is a hard shade of white, and for many thousands of claimants it will be somewhat tinged with black edges.

What is the point of a so-called Green Paper if it is followed not only by a consultation period which is absurdly short, but one which is foreclosed by action taken to implement policy proposals?

Mr. Frank Field: Is it not sensible for the Government to have a short consultation period? After all, they appear unwilling to pay much attention to what we have to say. Surely it would be worse for them to lengthen the process.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend has made explicit what was implicit in my argument. Not only have the Government disregarded in the review exercise their own Social Security Advisory Committee, but they have disregarded the opinions of almost all the pressure groups. A short consultation period extending over two summer months is entirely consistent with that. The Government are not listening to any of the acknowledged experts in the field of social security. Moreover, they are not listening to public opinion, which is more important. Successive opinion polls and a recent Mori poll show that people are not behind the sort of cuts in the Green Paper, and most people want to see the welfare state preserved, even restructured, but not cut back and they want to see an increase in expenditure, particularly in the Health Service.

It is not just a matter of the niceties of consultation, because there is another underlying motive in the Government now pre-empting the Green Paper's objectives and that needs to be brought out. It is that it enables the Government to reduce the losses at the time of changeover in April 1987. By making cuts now of £175 million a year through a lower child benefit uprating, cuts of £38 million by ending new awards of central heating additions, and cuts of £57 million through increasing the rates taken for housing benefit, we have a total cut of £270 million a year. I know that it is offset by about £20 million of increases, but that is a net loss of £250 million.

The Government will announce losses to claimants through the Green Paper changes in April 1987, when they finally get around to doing that, that are much less than they would be otherwise able to claim. That is why the cuts are being made now, although, in all fairness, they should have been included in the overall evaluation of Green Paper cuts, when they finally emerge in 1987.

Another myth surrounding the upratings that must be exposed is the boast, made belligerently by the Secretary of State in his uprating statement on 18 June, that the overall cost of increases in the upratings—£2 billion in a full year—demonstrates the Government's generosity. He was clear about that and belittled me when I suggested otherwise. The fact is that it does nothing of the sort. The Government are doing little more than the bare minimum required by the law on national insurance benefits, or by practice and pledges in the case of supplementary and housing benefits.

The fact that there was leeway for generosity if the Government wished it is revealed by the contrast—I often point out this contrast—with the Budget of 19 March this year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer increased the principal income tax allowances by almost 10 per cent., which was more than double the 4·6 per cent. required by the statutory indexation formula at the time. The cost of increasing the tax thresholds according to that formula would have been about £800 million, yet the Government chose to spend no less than £1·6 billion on them. They did so despite the fact that tax reliefs are indiscriminate, contrary to the Government's repeated insistence that expenditure should be focused on those in greatest need.

The contrast between the Government's willingness to spend on increasing tax thresholds and their reluctance to spend on benefits is especially stark in the case of child benefit. Child benefit was intended to be a replacement for child tax allowances at the end of the 1970s, and was seen as a first step in the introduction of a tax credits scheme, which the Tory party favoured throughout the 1970s. Indeed, in 1975, the present Minister for Health, who held a different portfolio then, said on behalf of the Conservative Opposition in a debate on the Child Benefit Bill that we should have index-linking on precisely those grounds. How bedraggled and miserable that Tory promise on child benefit, so proudly made 10 years ago, looks today.

Another theme runs through the uprating orders. Benefits are uprated according to the barest minimum that is legally required, but deductions in benefits are being increased far faster than any inflation formula could justify. The Minister frowns, but I am sure that he knows what I mean. The 18 per cent. increase in non-dependant deductions is, by any standards, exceptionally severe. The Minister glided over his justification for that extremely quickly. I thought that he was merely telling us that the method by which he communicated it to the House was in accordance with normal custom. He did not seem to defend it.

Mr. Newton: Nothing will stop the flow of the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric, but he suggested that no conceivable uprating basis could underlie the figures. The fact is that they are the measured increases in the retail price index element for housing costs, which was 18 per cent. Similarly, we have uprated heating additions in accordance with the increase in fuel prices; clothing additions by the increase in clothing prices; diet additions by the increase in food prices; and supplementary benefits by the increase in the retail price index, less housing costs. We have uprated the non-dependant deduction and the non-householder housing additions, which are specifically related to housing costs, by the increase in housing costs.

Mr. Meacher: That sounds reasonable until one remembers that the bulk of the increase in housing costs between May 1984 and May 1985 was caused by the huge increase in mortgage rates. During that period, the mortgage interest element of the retail price index increased by no less than 50·8 per cent. I should ask the rhetorical question: how many housing benefit claimants with non-dependants are paying off substantial mortgages? The Government are using an index that is wholly inappropriate and unreasonable and which produces an extremely harsh effect.

Mr. Field: Is not the Minister using some Alice-in-Wonderland logic? He says that housing costs have increased by 18 per cent., but the main effect of changes in housing benefit is to cut the number of people eligible and the amount that they can claim. He turns the argument the other way when it comes to this deduction, saying that the deduction has been increased only by the amount that housing costs have increased. At the same time, he is reducing the amount of money for housing benefit.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. The Government are trying to have it both ways.

Mr. Newton: While we are talking about people trying to have it both ways, will the hon. Gentleman or the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) give me a reasonably straight and simple answer to the question whether they would apply similar logic to the non-householder housing addition, and whether they would have increased it by less than 18 per cent.?

Mr. Meacher: We are talking about this non-dependant deduction, which has been increased substantially over a short period.

Under the heavily camouflaged title of the Housing Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 1985, the Government have chopped benefit on the assumption that a working 18-year-old who lives at home with his parents contributes £7·80 a week to rent and £2·60 a week to rates, making a total contribution of no less than £10·40 a week. The DHSS tax benefit models suggest that, in April 1985, typical rent and rates for a married couple with two children were £16·55 a week rent and £8·65 a week rates. That means that the youngster is being asked to contribute almost half of a typical family's housing costs. How can the Minister argue that that is not excessive or unreasonable?

That is not just my view. It is also the view of the Social Security Advisory Committee, which is a quarry of anti-Government material. I hope that that will not give the Minister grounds for abolishing it, because it is an extremely important voice in the wilderness. For the moment, it is a voice coming out of prison, because we are allowed to see its reports. On the increasing of the deduction to £8·20, the SSAC said this:

"We are concerned, however, that these increases have gone beyond what is fair and realistic, and that there will be circumstances in which it is not reasonable to expect the non-dependant to pay a contribution of as much as £8·20. In these conditions the householder either has to bear the increased deduction himself, as a real cut in his own income, or force the non-dependant to leave. Neither may be a realistic option in the actual circumstances of the family, and may indeed work against other aims of social policy, such as the cohesion of the family unit and the better exercise of control by parents over young people. Many representations to us pointed out that if the non-dependant *were* encouraged to leave home as a result of these changes, the social security costs could well be higher in the long run. It is not possible to quantify this suggested consequence of the proposed changes, but those concerned with dealing with homeless young people report to us that quarrels over finance are a significant cause of young people leaving the parental home."

That is a comprehensive indictment of the Government's policy of rapidly increasing the non-dependant deduction. The rise for 18 to 20-year-olds from the pre-April 1983 period, when it was £3·15 a week, to the time of today's order is no less than 230 per cent., while in the same period inflation was of the order of 10 per cent. As the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government's own advisory committee, concluded,

"this increase in two years bears no relation either to inflation, to increases in earnings or to increases in housing costs."

In my view, it is simply a way of hammering young people, which seems to be quite an obsession of the Government in many of their policies.

There seems to be a inconsistency, to put it mildly, in the Government's approach to young people. On the one hand, they encourage them to live at home with their parents, for example, by imposing the two, four and eight-week rule on the under-26-year-olds in board and lodging, by proposing a lower rate of income support for the under-25-year-olds in the Green Paper. On the other hand, by imposing very high levels of non-dependant deductions, they make it increasingly difficult for them to do so if their parents are on a low income. Either way, I believe that the deductions bear harshly on young people.

On the main Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1985, I wish to make one major point. It is an extremely important one, I think, which has so far been missed. The two-stage change in the future uprating time scale, to which the Minister referred, from an annual cycle based on November to July 1986 and then to April 1987, has so far been seen, at least by Opposition Members, as a device paving the way for a handout of goodies in the electoral run-up period, as we imagine, in the middle of 1987.

There is another perhaps much more serious issue which I think has not been noted. Under the guise of what is purely an administrative procedure, the Government will cut benefit of nearly 7·5 million single pensioners and nearly 2 million pensioner couples by about £25 million a week. By bringing forward the date on which pensioners get their yearly rise from November 1986 to July 1986, the Government almost certainly will be giving them less, not more. This is because the retail price index has already risen by 4·5 per cent. between January and May 1985. There is nothing unusual about that—it is the normal seasonal sharp rise in prices at the start of the year. If the annual rise in the retail price index turns out to be 4·5 per cent. or thereabouts for the period January 1985 to January 1986—that is certainly the Government's intention and the Chancellor's repeated forecast — it means that pensioners will get nothing, or nearly nothing, because the retail price index will show a nil increase over the period May 1985 to January 1986. That is the period on which the next uprating will be based. I imagine that the Government have noticed that point. I do not think that anyone else has, and in my view it is an important point.

If, on the other hand, the Government left things alone and uprated pensioners' benefits in November 1986, as has been done on a bi-partisan basis over the past 11 years, pensioners might expect to get an increase of around £1·75 a week if they are single and £2·75 a week for a couple. That is the extent to which I believe pensioners will lose by this apparently innocuous bringing forward of the uprating period from November to July.

Mr. Newton: I am interested in the point which the hon. Gentleman makes. It is obvious that any uprating mechanism, over whatever periods are used, related to the rate of inflation will mean that the uprating figures will be affected by changes in the rate of inflation.

Has the hon. Gentleman considered the point that, had we used the Labour Government's uprating formula of operating on forecasts rather than historic figures, it is likely that the uprating in pensioners for which the orders provide in November would be significantly lower than on his analysis? He is really saying no more than that he thinks that the rate of inflation will drop, a comment for which I am grateful in a wider context. If that is the case, the old forecasting method which the Labour Government applied would have produced much lower increases in pensions this November than those contained in the uprating order.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister, perhaps not surprisingly, evades entirely the point that I am making. If I may answer his specific point, it matters not whether one uses the forecasting method or the past record method as long as

one is consistent in keeping it year by year, because there are swings and roundabouts. Given that there is an under-expectation of inflation, losses are made up next time around so long as one maintains the 12-month periods. What we are discussing for the first time is the reduction of a 12-month assessment period for the uprating to an eight-month period. That will have significant effects on the next uprating. There will be a once-and-for-all signifaicant loss by pensioners. The Government had better take that point on board, and consider whether they still wish to go ahead with an uprating period which is likely to give pensioners zilch next time.

Mr. Newton: It would obviously be wrong—indeed, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish—to raise unnecessary and misleading fears. The Government have made it clear that the upratings, at whatever time they are carried out—the one we are carrying out with these orders for next November, the one which we propose for July 1986 and the one which we propose for April 1987, and thereafter annually in April—will continue to be based on the historic measurement of the rise in prices. There can be no question but that pensioners will be protected against any rise in prices which takes place. The point at issue is to what extent that rise in prices has occurred in, and is therefore taken into account for, any particular uprating.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister is not answering my point. If there were a 12-month period, what he says would be absolutely correct and, if only the Government would continue to do that, there would be no issue. My point is that the switch from a 12-month to an eight-month period can produce very different results. I am not commenting on whether this is a deliberate device to cheat pensioners of the uprating which they might otherwise get if one kept to the 12-month period. I am saying that it looks as though that will be the result. We all have to take a view on why that is being done. I am not trying to raise fears but, if I am correct that most of the inflation is bunched at the beginning of the year, and one takes the period thereafter as the basis for the assessment period, what I said seems to follow. That will be a substantial disadvantage to 10 million pensioners. The matter should be reconsidered carefully.

Our main contention on this mass of orders is that, behind the genial facade of the uprating, there lurks a series of pitfalls. Wherever the Government are not bound hand and foot by statutory requirement, it seems to some of us that no end of ingenuity has gone into ways of introducing fresh cuts. To give one example, the Minister said that the Government are putting in £26 million. If the Minister refers to *Hansard* of 15 July this year at columns 63 and 64, he will see that the figure is £23 million, but we will not quarrel about £3 million. If he is putting that amount into improving family income supplement and increasing the housing benefit and child needs allowance, that is fine, but it is dwarfed by the £175 million cut in child benefit. As I said, about 13 per cent. of that cut is being used to assist families in greatest need.

To give another example, the Government are spending an extra £1 million a year, as the Minister mentioned, in extending the lower rate heating addition into sick or disabled person's supplementary benefit. At the same time, they are ending the central heating addition for new claimants which, according to the Government's figures, given on 2 July, will save £55 million by 1988. The word "save", as always, is a euphemism. We are talking about cutting benefits to claimants.

Thirdly, the Government have presented the change in the earnings rule for the wives of invalidity and retirement pensioners as an equal treatment measure between men and women—and indeed it is, to a certain extent. But as in the case of the changes in the immigration rules, it is a levelling down between the sexes rather than a levelling up. It involves cuts in benefit which, according to the Government's figures, will amount to £20 million in 1987-88.

There is to be a change in the housing benefit rates taper which will lead to cuts for more than 2 million households, including 500,000 who will lose entitlement to rate rebates altogether. For that and the big increase in the non-dependent deductions, there is not even any compensating improvement in benefit for the most needy.

While we welcome those parts of the package that will restore protection against inflation, the package is pitted with hidden cuts. I have mentioned only a few tonight. If it is a preview, as I believe it is, of the Green Paper scenario, all that I can promise the Government is that they are in for a long, hot autumn.

7.11 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I do not want to speak at great length, although the House is not too full, and one might be excused for taking the opportunity to dilate on some of the very important things that underline the decisions contained in these regulations.

I would like, first, to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on something of the greatest importance—the renewing of the Conservative party's commitment to child benefit as the keystone of the family support system.

Mr. Meacher: What?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: The hon. Gentleman may be surprised by what I have said, but he must be as aware as I am that there is a body of people inside and outside the House who need to be reminded again of the strength of the arguments in favour of child benefit being paid as a universal benefit, rather than targeting assistance to people who might appear to be in the greatest need.

For the most part, the people who have not given the subject of the redistribution of income a great deal of attention feel that child benefit paid universally is somehow wasteful and that it would be better for the money paid to be concentrated on those who come forward through case work and can establish that they have a great immediate need.

However that may be, I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend on the resolute way in which he has presented the case and won the argument in favour of the continuation of universal child benefit. It is a very important matter and an absolutely right decision. He should be congratulated especially by me, because I have taken an active interest in this subject for a very long time. I am delighted with the way in which he has taken up the cause and convinced the party.

I should like, however, somewhat sadly, to comment on the failure to uprate child benefit this year in line with the movement of the economy. Seeing the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in his place reminds me that

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

on 23 April 1980 he and another hon. Member, who unfortunately is not here tonight, were kind enough to support me when I sought the leave of the House to introduce a 10 minute Bill called the Child Benefit Uprating Bill. The House did not seek to divide and I was given leave to introduce my Bill.

I do not wish to detain the House too long, but the matter is so apposite to what we are discussing now that I would like to read out the brief explanatory memorandum. It states:

"Child benefit was introduced in 1977 to amalgamate in a single payment the family allowance, which was paid from 1946 to 1977, and the child tax allowance, which was introduced in 1799 by William Pitt and was finally phased out for almost all children resident in Britain in 1979.

The objects of the Bill are to raise the amount of child benefit to a figure at which its purchasing power will be broadly equivalent for standard rate taxpayers to the combined value of the two earlier forms of provision for children at the time when the family allowance was first introduced in 1946; and to ensure that its purchasing power does not again fall more than 5 per cent. below that value.

The Bill accordingly stipulates that the rate to be paid shall be raised from November 1980 to not less than £5 per week and that adjustments shall subsequently be made not less than once a year to keep the purchasing power of the benefit in line with retail prices.

In proposing the necessary adjustments to the rate of benefit to be paid from time to time the Secretary of State is required to take account of factors in the composition of the Retail Prices Index which affect its relevance to the particular needs of children."

I do not think that it was a bad Bill. I have not sought to calculate what the figure of £5 in November 1980 would need to be today, but I am sure that it would be more than the uprating to £7 which the House is now considering. If I introduced such a Bill again, I do not think that I would rely for the uprating on the retail prices index. The right index should be the yield of personal taxation, because that is the direct way of assessing the movement of the economy and what the economy is able to bear in the redistribution of income.

I want to make one elementary point. Child benefit is not part of Government expenditure. The Government do not spend the money—it is spent by the parents, usually the mother, of the child. The Government act as agent in the redistribution of income. They take money from people through tax and hand it back through benefits. That is the Government's special function as originally envisaged in the national insurance scheme, which was outside the Treasury in its early days. I am sure that the Treasury did not like that, and it has now more or less absorbed it completely into the Budget. However, the original concept of national insurance was that money was paid in by people at the times when they were able to contribute and drawn out by the same people at the times when they needed it — for example, in the form of pensions, unemployment relief and sickness benefit.

During the life cycle of a citizen, there are times when he puts money into the system and other times when he draws it out. We all welcome the fact that pensioners are entitled to draw money out. However, there is a strange reticence about children drawing out money. Yet they are also citizens and during their life cycle we hope that they will make a valuable contribution to the economy. At times they will be putting much more in than they are taking out. Surely during the life of a child we are considering the time when society should ensure that the child has enough income so that it is properly brought up.

The precise amount of contribution at any one time in the life cycle of a citizen, and the precise amount of benefit that a citizen can take out, are choices for the Government of the day. There is no absolutely right level of benefit or absolutely right level of contribution that one could look at like tablets of stone from Sinai. The Government must make the choice, and they are doing so now.

The right course is to interpret the popular will. What do people want to contribute to national insurance or income tax? What do they think should go back to different categories such as children and pensioners? What should the upratings be so that the Government keep in line with popular feeling while at the same time making the necessary adjustments to adapt to the movement of the economy?

The Government must interpret the popular will, and it is my humble submission that on this occasion my right hon. Friends have it wrong. The public would have preferred child benefit to be increased fully in line with the movement of the economy rather than by the smaller amount to the round figure chosen by my right hon. and hon. Friends. It is a matter on which it is not possible for anyone to pontificate, but I feel that a mistake has been made. I hope that that will be rectified in future years.

Of course, other aspects of the Department's budget must be considered. Within the whole of the outgoings of the Department, a great number of choices must be made, and I know how painful they are for my right hon. and hon. Friends. The House appreciates the attention that Ministers give to getting these matters as right as they can with the resources they have.

Should they have done more this year about raising the selective benefits, which are a sort of emergency service outside the conventional pattern of the redistribution of income, or would it have been better to target their money to the universal benefits? They have chosen the selective benefits and, no doubt, that money will be well spent and competently administered within the limits of the system's capacity to cope with the problems that we have.

However, the selective benefits are not being increased in real terms by the full amount of the cut in child benefit. Thus, the decision to concentrate on the selective benefits does not absorb the full amount of the money that will not be put out in the form of child benefit. We are changing the life-cycle pattern of the average citizen.

What will be the real effect of this decision? It represents a shift from families to childless people in terms of their spending power. Is that a social objective of the Government? I believe that it is not, but that it is an incidental effect that has not been thought through. Although it was not desired initially, it is, nevertheless, a real effect.

When childless people complain that they do not see why they should be made to contribute to other people who choose to have families and bring up children—who say that it is a matter for them if they want to have children — they are neglecting the fact that somebody brought them up when they themselves were children; somebody made a contribution to their upbringing.

When childless people complain that they are asked to pay, by means of tax or national insurance contributions, for the families of other citizens, I feel disposed to ask them, "Who are you bringing up in compensation for the

fact that you, in your turn, were brought up by somebody else?" Each generation takes something from the previous one and passes it on to the next, and we all make the contributions that we can or that we feel able to give. I am not sure that I would have chosen childless people as those who should be beneficiaries of the change in Government policy on the redistribution of income.

We also see here a shift from women to men. We recall the debates that we had about abolishing the child tax allowances and amalgamating them with the old family allowance. Family allowances were conventionally drawn by the mother and the child tax allowance was an aspect of the make-up of the pay packet of the man. We had debates, some of them not entirely creditable, in which some Members argued that the wallet was more important than the handbag. The decision was taken; but now the Government are, to some extent, reversing it. I do not regard that as being in accordance with the spirit of the times and I hope that further thought will be given to that aspect of the matter.

From the administrative point of view, we are seeing more emphasis on individual casework and less reliance on automatic computer credits. The child benefit is an automatic credit. It is a benefit which enjoys an extremely high rate of take-up. There is no humiliation to people in drawing the universal child benefit; but there is inevitably a degree of reluctance on the part of citizens — an element of humiliation and elements of distaste — in drawing a benefit which relies on proof of need through casework.

From answers to parliamentary questions I elicited the fact not long ago that, in the administration of national insurance and supplementary benefit, the Department is required to make more than 90 million manual entries every week. That is the administrative burden that is now carried by the loyal and wonderfully reliable and long-suffering staff of the Department of Health and Social Security. In that the Government are relying increasingly on casework and less on the use of computer and automatic benefits, they are adding to the millions of entries that must be made, and that is a mistake.

We have many times debated the whole subject of selective and universal benefits. One must remember, because the logic of the argument leaves one with no choice, that if the Government rely on universal benefits, they unite the nation and eliminate administrative work. But if they rely on means-tested benefits, they introduce into the redistribution of income two highly undesirable elements.

A large number of people learn the hard way that there is no purpose in thrift because they must run their savings down—I appreciate that there is an allowance, that it is not ungenerous and that it is being increased—before being eligible for benefit. If they save a large sum of money, they rule themselves out of benefit. That must for many people be an argument against thrift.

More than 8 million people in Britain today are dependent on supplementary benefit. That means that 8 million people are learning the hard way that an aspect which is central to the tenets of the policy of the present Government—which is widely supported and which is part of the British tradition of common sense, namely, the importance of self-reliance and thrift—does not apply to them.

Further, they are not always the same 8 million people whom we carry with us as second-rate citizens. People go in and out of reliance on supplementary benefit from time to time, so that between one election and another the number of people who have learnt that what the Government say about the importance of thrift does not apply to them may be as many as 10 million, or even more.

There is also the problem of the disincentive to work, which the Government are seeking to diminish by their brilliant suggestions for the reform of the redistribution of income. However, when all is said and done, if we rely on giving benefit only to those on very low incomes and withdraw their capacity to draw benefit as they increase their incomes, we undermine their incentive to work. We can dress that up in different ways and try various methods to encourage them to work, notwithstanding the logic of that underlying fact. Nevertheless, selective benefits undermine the will to work, and that is a fundamental argument against them.

In spite of what I have said, I congratulate the Government on their decision that universal child benefit shall remain the keystone of our family support. Christian democrats in all parts of the House can rejoice in that.

I have one suggestion, which I hope the Minister will consider to be constructive. Because a number of people feel that it is wrong for them to draw child benefit because they do not strictly need it, the Government may consider the possibility—I have mentioned it in the House before —that such people could be allowed to renounce the child benefit and let it remain the child's money. It could accumulate in a special account, such as a national savings account, and be indexed to cater for changes in the value of money. After reaching a particular age—say 18—the child would be entitled to a lump sum which would be the rolled-up full amount, with compound interest, of the child benefit to which that child was entitled from the start.

Many parents might think that an endowment of, say, £10,000 which had been saved for the child by that means, would be an attractive family credit. Instead of drawing the money each week, when they feel that they do not strictly need it, they could sign a form of renunciation which would allow that money to accumulate on the child's behalf until, say, the age of 18, being a form of child endownment giving a capital sum instead of a weekly allowance.

I hope that the Minister will consider that possibility. It would meet the case of people who feel a certain distaste, perhaps an unnatural shame, about drawing their child's benefit. It would give them another option.

7.30 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am always pleased to be able to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). I feel that I am better informed for listening to his speeches. Of course, I do not always agree with what he has to say, but I appreciate his experience and assiduous work on these matters. I am pleased to say that I agreed with many of his comments, especially those directed to child benefit. Perhaps his effusive congratulations to the Government on the way in which they have maintained child benefit as the keystone of their policy when they have failed to increase the benefit sufficiently to keep it in line with inflation could be described as incongruous, but I agreed with the majority of his speech and he advanced his case extremely well.

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

Last weekend I canvassed the views of the man in the street, as it were, in my constituency. I included especially the elderly. I sought my constituents' views on the upratings that we are now discussing.

Mr. Field: The anti-women industry.

Mr. Kirkwood: I stand corrected. I carried out my canvass in what might be described as small Scottish rural towns and I accept that it might not have produced an average and typical sample. However, it appears that there is a wide gulf between their perception of the opportunities and standard of living that are available to them and that of the Government. I deployed to the best of my ability the case that the Government are presenting, which it is possible to do statistically. The reaction of those to whom I spoke was to ask, "What about the top salary pay review and the awards? It is all very well to say that £2,000 million has been spent on the uprating but what about the Secretary to the Cabinet, whose salary is to be increased from £50,000 to £75,000 per annum?"

Retired people, especially those on small occupational pensions, complained bitterly that their pension income is taxed. They stressed that they have been waiting for a long time for the Government to change the earnings rule. The Government have promised that they will do so as soon as they feel that they can afford to change the rule but they have been promising change for a long time. Other complaints were directed to dental charges, the service provided by opticians and the limited list of drugs available to doctors for prescriptions, although some of the complaints about the list have been met. However, there remains a great deal of heartache, confusion and concern in the high street of Hawick and other places in my constituency.

One can say until one is blue in the face that the uprating reflects the movement of the retail price index but the response of the average person is to argue that a 1 per cent. increase in the RPI is not reflected exactly in price increases in the shops and that a tin of corned beef which costs 65p moves up to 75p in the space of a week although the RPI has reflected only a 1 per cent. movement. One lady told me that she had calculated that her shopping costs over the past two years had escalated by 33·3 per cent.

Many of my constituents cannot understand why they are faced with standing charges for their gas, electricity and telephones. They read in their newspapers that the fuel industries are, by and large, making huge profits in terms of money, which they understand, yet sometimes standing charges amount to as much as the units that they have consumed. The Government are doing nothing to reduce standing charges and in some instances are imposing levies on the fuel industries which bear adversely on some of the poorest in our society. The argument applies to television licences, but to a lesser extent. There is concern also about the death grant, and the Government's proposals would serve only to make the position worse. I received complaints also about the Government's failure to increase the Christmas bonus to a proper level in line with inflation.

It seems that there is a wide gulf of misunderstanding. If the Government have a better case to put to the public, I suggest strongly that they get out into the highways and byways and present it to the people. They should make a better job of their PR if they think that they can do so.

There is a gap between those receiving benefits and pensions, which are based on the retail price index, and increases in average earnings, which are based on another scale. How is the discrepancy to be approached in future? Do the Government recognise the justice or the merit in increasing benefits and pensions in excess of what is statutorily required to try to redress the balance? If they say that they are not prepared to accept that recommendation of the Social Security Advisory Committee, it is inevitable that pensioners and those in receipt of benefits will fall further and further behind wage earners.

I agree with the hon. Member for Kensington that there is a shift in Government policy in favour of childless couples. If that is the fact, it should be stated explicitly and debated. Like the hon. Gentleman, I feel that it is the wrong way in which to move. The move to diminish the importance of child benefit to the extent of £175 million discriminates actively and positively against women, which is deeply to be regretted. Some of the pressure groups feel that the process of consultation that the Green Paper is supposed to stimulate is being stymied and fudged by some of the changes that the Government propose or which have been made, especially in relation to child benefit.

The Government might have been able to persuade me that the cut in child benefit was defensible if they were able to be more convincing in the provision that they have made for other benefits, especially family income supplement. I might have been persuaded by the Government's case if the cut in child benefit of £175 million had been diverted to the family income supplement mechanism, or to a far larger extent. The Minister has said that £26 million has been ploughed back into FIS as opposed to the £175 million that has been removed from child benefit. Unfortunately, the proposals for FIS do not go anything like far enough to enable me to support the cut in child benefit. The Child Poverty Action Group suggests that if the Government are determined to proceed with the £175 million cut, they should consider introducing a child benefit premium for low income families. That suggestion should certainly be considered during the consultation period.

The CPAG has argued—it has persuaded me—that the FIS system reaches only a small minority of low income working households with children. Its briefing paper states:

"The analysis of low incomes in Vol. 3 of the Green Paper shows that about 700,000 families with children headed by a wage-earner were in the bottom fifth of incomes (the definition of low income used) in 1982. The number is likely to be even higher today. FIS is currently received by only about 200,000 families (and was received by only 158,000 in 1982). Similarly, DHSS figures show that, in 1981, over one-and-three-quarter million children were being raised in working families living in poverty or on its margins (up to 40 per cent. above SB level). FIS is currently received on behalf of only 417,000 children."

There is evidence that FIS does not go far enough, and the Government have missed an opportunity to extend that cover.

Child benefit is an important part of the budget of the low paid. Again, the CPAG reported the analysis of the social policy research unit at York university, and concluded:

"child benefit clearly plays an important role . . . Low income families not in receipt of supplementary benefit received about a fifth of their net disposable incomes from child benefit, rising to about a quarter for lone parent families if one-parent benefits

is also included . . . These results suggest low income families would lose a substantial proportion of their income if their entitlement to child benefit was in any way reduced."

That is true. The case has been incontrovertibly made. The Government have made a mistake, and the hon. Member for Kensington was right in saying that the popular will was contrary to the Government's will. The man in the street was surprised to find the extent of the Government's proposed cut. Given the Green Paper reviews and the ongoing consultation process, the future does not augur particularly well for low-income families. The work done by the Institute for Fiscal Studies is evidence of that. It studied the impact of some of the proposals on one-parent families, and one-earner couples with a variety of family complexions, and concluded that low earners, low income families and single parent families would bear the brunt.

I am worried about the central heating addition changes. Their introduction cannot be justified. The £1 million extension to the disabled and the sick is obviously a welcome development, as all sides of the House will recognise. However, the complexity of the system that remains will cause tremendous confusion. The present dual test identifies those who are sick and disabled and who live in difficult-to-heat accommodation. Whereas previously people in that category could double up those two conditions and receive a higher rate of benefit, the proposal will remove that possibility. The Government should consider restoring the possibility of receiving the higher level of benefit, if the difficult-to-heat accommodation test is also met.

There has been considerable trouble in my constituency with the difficult-to-heat estate rates. The Government should reconsider that, and introduce proposals to allow people to apply for and claim that rate of benefit, if the central heating equipment was installed after the estate was built. I have personal experience of the tremendous difficulties that that causes.

I cannot understand why the Government have chosen 5 August to introduce the change in the central heating additions. It may be a deeply significant date. It would have been much more sensible to use the November uprating date so that we had more time to publicise the cut. As the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) rightly pointed out, people who do not apply between now and August will forgo the benefit, and that is unfair.

If the Government are acting in good faith on the central heating addition, during the consultation period they should spend money on a widespread campaign for take-up of benefit so that we have a true measure of the cost of benefit. It could be easily done by giving local offices the power and resources to campaign in the local press, and on local radio and television stations. That would satisfy me to a greater extent that the Government were approaching the review in a more open-minded and fair-handed way.

The staff resources of the Department must be stretched to the limit by the proposals for next year. The concertinaed process of the upratings, on top of the development work on some of the changes, especially in housing benefit, will put an intolerable pressure on some of the front line staff. I do not mean the mandarins in Whitehall but people such as those in my local integrated office. By and large they do a good job in impossible circumstances. I hope that the Government are considering them, as well as policy points and other problems.

It would be churlish not to recognise that the Minister's announcement on board and lodgings allowances for residential increases in nursing homes must be warmly welcomed. The Minister responded quickly, and I certainly did not expect the announcement so soon. It shows that he has been paying attention to what has been going on. The increases will be warmly welcomed, and that is a good point on which to end.

7.46 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I was intrigued to hear that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) spent last weekend meandering through his constituency, and setting on unsuspecting constituents to ask their views. He shows a political talent which most of us lack. Perhaps he was more aware than the Government Whips of how close Wednesday's vote would be and how near the possibility of a general election we were. His local paper will undoubtedly pick up his diligence in gaining constituents' views.

I was also interested to learn that the hon. Gentleman discovered his constituents' concern about the Top Salaries Review Body award. It is interesting that in the early hours of Wednesday morning, when we discussed top people's pay, the Chamber was so crowded that hon. Members were almost swinging from the balconies, and that today, when we discuss bottom people's pay, far fewer hon. Members are present in the Chamber. I cannot quite understand why.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has left the Chamber, because I wish to comment on some of his remarks. He has obviously taken comments on the need to consult constituents to heart. At this moment he is probably tearing back to Kensington to hear his constituents' views. He skilfully plunged the stiletto knife into the Government by gently congratulating them on their child benefit decisions. He was really saying —if he were not such a gentleman he would have put it in my terms — that if we did not have a Government whose protection of the family was so awful, we would be debating, not cuts in child benefit but increases, and we congratulate the Government only on the new status quo that they are creating because the position could have been much worse. Child benefit could have been means-tested. The Government could have paid attention to their supporters and abolished it completely. It is appropriate that the hon. Member for Kensington should comment on child benefit, because for a long time he was the lone voice trying to educate the House and the country about its importance.

The change of view on child benefit and family support owes a great deal to the work of the hon. Member for Kensington. Back Benchers can be influential if they stick through thick and thin to a few topics. I welcome the hon. Gentleman back to the Chamber. It is appropriate that I said the nice things about him while he was out of the Chamber. I can now refer to some points of disagreement.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman, who is the main champion of child benefit in this House, will not again end his speech in the way that he did this evening, by saying that some parents feel a certain amount of guilt about drawing child benefit. If guilt exists, it has to be challenged, because it is a benefit that goes to all families as of right. I hope that we would not limit any reform to those parents who at any time feel that they are so well off that they do not need to claim child benefit.

[Mr. Frank Field]

I hope that the next Labour Government—we all live in hope—will be far more radical and follow the path of the New Zealand Government, and not only in regard to the abolition of tax benefits. For a considerable time the New Zealand Government have allowed mothers to choose whether they wish to capitalise part of their child benefit payments. If we are serious about extending home ownership and the ownership of capital goods in the community, this House and the electorate should think seriously about giving people the chance to have a capital sum in lieu of child benefit payments, rather than adopting the much more modest proposal made by the hon. Gentleman. He seemed to suggest that some people feel some guilt about claiming child benefit and that they should be allowed to build up a capital sum for their children. I should much prefer that capitalisation to occur for the family now, rather than that children of well-to-do families should pick up the value of child benefit at 18, or whatever age was chosen.

I should like now to refer to the comments of the Minister for Social Security in his opening speech. Opposition Members were trying to establish that there has been a major change in attitude towards child benefit on the part of the Government, whereas the Minister was claiming that nothing of the kind had occurred. He was saying that at each review the Government have to make a judgment about whether to increase child benefit. That is a major change from the position that was outlined before the uprating statement.

I need to take the House back to the time of the last Labour Government. They were wrongly maligned on many issues but rightly on their initial attitude to child benefit. The House will remember that the Labour party gave an election pledge to introduce child benefit by merging the family allowance system and child tax allowances. Then some northern Members talked over the weekend to their constituents—I warn the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire that it is dangerous to talk too much to one's constituents—who were horrified to find that the Government were proposing a reform which would transfer income from men to women. The Government panicked. Initially they said that the scheme would not be introduced but, as a result of the leaking of Cabinet papers, they were forced to introduce the scheme.

The then official Opposition rightly exploited the embarrassment of the then Labour Government. One of the means of exploiting that embarrassment was the tabling of early-day motions. Early-day motion 420 was tabled on 12 July 1977. One of the signatories to an amendment to that motion was the present Minister for Social Security. It called on Her Majesty's Government

"to ensure that increases in child benefit are treated in the same way as tax cuts, so that . . . there can be an improvement in the real value of child benefit as part of an overall reduction in the burden of direct taxation and a shift to indirect taxation".

I emphasise that the operative words talked about

"an improvement in the real value of child benefit"

and not the cut with which we are faced today. The signatories also wished to see

"a shift in indirect taxation".

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) received a letter from the Prime Minister during the general election campaign of 1983, and her reference in that letter to child benefit came in two parts. They are important and relevant to our debate. First, the Prime Minister said:

"Child support has also been fully protected under the Conservative Government; allowing for the new rate announced at the time of the Budget, which came into payment this November, there has been an increase since April 1979 of over 62 per cent. in the level of child benefit. This would put Child Benefit at its highest ever real value."

It was absolutely correct and right for the Government to make that claim. If tonight's orders are passed, the Prime Minister will not be able to make that case to any hon. Member or to any constituent, because we are now talking about cuts in child benefit.

In her letter, the Prime Minister rightly went on to refer to the achievements of her Government when she said:

"The importance the Government attaches to Child Benefits was made clear by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech in March this year, when he said: 'It is important for families and particularly for the low paid. Indeed it is the benefit which provides the greatest help for many of the poorest families in the country'".

I emphasise the crucial importance of the statement about the importance of child benefit for families and for the low paid, and that it is of the greatest help to many of the poorest families in the country. Her letter illustrates the significance of the change that we are debating tonight.

Until the introduction of the order, the Government could claim that the Conservative party was the party of the family. The Government will not be able to make that claim in the next general election because tonight, for the first time under this Government, we are seeing a reversal of the policy of clear commitment to view increases in child benefit in the same way as reductions in taxation. Before the order, there was no talk of increasing FIS or of introducing a new social credit. The Government maintained that the benefit was crucial to all families and to all women, and of particular importance to the low paid.

I should like now to refer to the points made by the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and for Kensington. We know that the Government will save £175 million from the cut in child benefit. We were fobbed off by the Minister for Social Security when we intervened in his speech. We have a right to ask him whether the Government will give us an assurance that the whole £175 million will go into the new social credit. The Government cannot claim that the cut is being made as a means of targeting help on the poorest families unless that assurance is forthcoming. The hon. Member for Kensington said —he has a delicate way of putting a stiletto into the Government's side — that if we do not get that commitment, the Government will be using much, if not most, of the saving not to help poor families but to help finance tax cuts for all taxpayers, the majority of taxpayers being those without children. Therefore, we shall be seeing a redistribution from families to single people.

I end, as the hon. Member for Kensington ended, by reminding the Government—because I am less gentle than the hon. Gentleman in thinking that the Government do not need to be re-educated about the importance of child benefit—that it is not only a way of maintaining tax equity between people with children and those without children. We must all reiterate the new argument advanced by the hon. Member for Kensington that it also ensures that thrift is not penalised because there is nothing in the rules of paying child benefit which will penalise those who save and those who have capital. It also concentrates help on the very poorest people in the sense that child benefit

is a larger part of their incomes than it is of the incomes of other families. It is the best way of tackling the incentive to work problem and, as both the hon. Member for Kensington and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) reminded the House, it is the most effective way of transferring resources to women.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will be more forthcoming about this issue than the Minister has been. The Opposition are putting forward the view that there has been a fundamental shift in Government policy from a commitment without qualification to child benefit to a limited commitment to it. That has profound repercussions, in the way that other hon. Members have described.

I want also to comment on two other issues raised in the orders. The first relates to central heating additions and the second to the changes in housing benefit.

The Government must be given credit. They are highly skilled in presenting these changes. If private industry paid attention to our debates, it would set head hunters to work to discover who it was in the DHSS who had this extraordinary skill of presenting quite significant cuts as a way of providing extra help for the poorest of our fellow citizens.

We see it in the heating additions. The Government say that they are making an automatic benefit for the sick, the disabled and the blind who are on the long-term rate of supplementary benefit and do not have to register for work. The Government say that they will get the benefit automatically. At the same time, after 5 August, the Government are to abolish the heating addition for central heating.

It is a clever move. From the answers to parliamentary questions by the Under-Secretary, we discover that the automatic benefits will cost £1 million in a full year but that the cuts in central heating additions will total £55 million. The message goes out to our constituents that, on average, 510 of them will lose this benefit unless they claim before 5 August. We have 10 days in which to tell large numbers of people who currently are eligible for central heating additions that they should claim.

I tremble for the future of our social security system when I consider the reason that the Government put forward for the cuts. It is that they are alarmed at the numbers of people claiming. It has been a success. The Government have targeted help to it. Our constituents have claimed. Then the Government say that so many people are claiming it that it had better be withdrawn quickly. It means that we are caught in the Government's own benefit trap.

Benefits are secure under this Government only if large numbers of our constituents do not claim them. Once they start to claim, the chances are that the Government will suggest that the expenditure is getting out of control and that cuts must be made.

I congratulate the Government on the cleverness of that DHSS official who has managed to present yet another important cut as an increase in benefit rights for some of our poorest constituents.

As for the changes in housing benefits, even the cleverness of that official in the DHSS has not been able to disguise the extent of the cuts both in the rates taper and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, in the changes in the non-dependant deductions.

Under these changes, overall about 2 million claimants will lose some benefit, 460,000 will lose all help with their rates and an additional 340,000 will lose all housing benefit. It means that about 800 of the constituents of each hon. Member will lose all help with their rate payments, about 550 will lose all help with housing benefit and, in total, between 3,500 and 3,600 of our constituents will suffer cuts in their living standards as a result of this move to change the rates taper. If that is not enough, we see further cuts in these very important changes in the non-dependant deductions that many poorer households will face.

The Government make these proposals without any real understanding of the tension caused in low-income families. Many mothers know what a strain it is to bring up children in a poor household. There is a sense of continual failure that they have never managed to give their children what other children have. They are anxious that when their children cease schooling and, if they are lucky enough, find jobs or draw benefit, they have money in their own right with which to buy clothes, just as their peers at school or at work have always had. For the Government to say that, at the point where there is extra income coming into a household, for the first time they will claw it back shows a real lack of imagination. If it is not a lack of imagination, it demonstrates a degree of cruelty which even this Government have not shown until now.

There is much in the orders that the Opposition welcome. There are the changes for disabled people which all hon. Members will welcome. There are the changes for our very sick constituents in nursing homes. That is especially welcome and it is a very generous move on the part of the Government. However, necessarily I have concentrated on the cuts in the heating additions and above all in child benefit. There has been a sea change. Until this order, the Government could claim that they had a good record in being the party of the family. They made much of that. In 1979, the Government claimed to be that party. In 1983, they rightly claimed that their record justified that assertion. They will not be able to go into the next general election with that claim intact.

8.8 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate. I shall endeavour not to cover the same ground so ably covered already by those hon. Members who have contributed.

I begin where my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) left off. We were talking about the change in the uprating date, and my hon. Friend said that this might have unfortunate implications, for example, for pensioners, and he wondered whether this was a way for the Government to save money or just what their intention was.

I have a nastier mind than my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West. I wonder whether the Government have in mind that, because the inflation figures will be rather lower than normal when these changes are being considered, they will be able to tell pensioners that they are not entitled to anything because inflation has been kept low and there is little need to give them very much. However, they will add that, out of the generosity of their heart, they intend to put in an extra 1 or 2 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation. That is much more in line not only with what my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

Birkenhead (Mr. Field), with his customary charity described as skill but with the boldness, if not the barefaced cheek, that the Government usually show in advocating their policies. It would also be much more in line with the Government giving pensioners an increase similar to that which they would normally receive at the date of the usual uprating and claiming credit for it being over and above the rate of inflation, and with the election-winning strategy that the Government are attempting to pursue.

Hon. Members have spoken about the Government's change of policy towards child benefit and family income supplement and the way that that represents a shift away from assistance for families. I listened, as always, with interest and admiration to the remarks of the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). I do not always have the same degree of admiration when I listen to those who say how hard it is for them to bring themselves to claim child benefit, especially, as is sometimes the case in the House, when those same people use the fact that they hate claiming child benefit as a justification for its ceasing to be a universal benefit. The result would be that hon. Members and a whole range of other people who are not so well paid would lose the advantage of child benefit.

The hon. Gentleman said that there might be some way in which people could change the use of child benefit. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead made some suggestions. I have never understood why those people who so dislike child benefit do not make a convenant and transfer the money to a charity or a group of poor people about whom they are worried. I trust that the next time a change in the universal nature of child benefit is advocated those people who say that they should not be drawing it will have seen that it has gone to those in greater need.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I should not like to say that I disagree with the hon. Lady's attitude, because I believe that there is a good deal of humbug amongst those people who are well off enough to raise a child without this form of tax cut. Child benefit is a tax cut. A benefit and a tax cut are the same. In suggesting that a way should be found to turn the benefit into capital for the child, I am seeking also to emphasise that the money is the child's and not that of the parents. The parents should not think that they are drawing it for themselves. They draw it because they have a responsibility for the child, and they should spend it on the child. In those cases—not many—where mothers are blamed for not spending it on the child, it should be drawn to their notice that that is the purpose of child benefit.

Mrs. Beckett: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I do not altogether disagree with him. In a sense, we accept that child benefit is a benefit for the child. The fact that those who draw it have no need of it is often used as an argument for child benefit not to be universal. I have never understood why such people do not take steps to give it to those for whom they usually express anxiety instead of seeking to reduce the scope of the benefit for those who may need it more.

Although families may benefit from the increase in family income supplement, they are liable to lose through some of the changes in child benefit and housing benefit. That means that they are not being treated as generously as the Government sometimes claim.

We wholeheartedly welcome the change being made in line with the pledge given by the Minister of State about the payment of funeral costs for people engaged in disputes, and the changes and the substantial increase in payments to those who have suffered vaccine damage.

We were sorry the other day to hear the Minister say that that change does not necessarily mean that there will be an increase each year in line with inflation, but we hope now that the Government have taken powers to make that increase that it will not be seven years before the next increase—even if it is not every year. I know that the Minister said that the changes did not preclude the introduction of a more wide-ranging scheme for those who have suffered vaccine damage and others, but we hope that that is not a sign that the Government have no plans to introduce better schemes.

The Government should draw to the attention of those who might be able to claim the central heating addition the fact that they are liable to lose it. The Government should seek out those who have wrongly suffered a voluntary unemployment deduction. The Minister will be aware that his Department has recently been absolved from the duty to make the payment to those people, but we hope, nevertheless, that the Department will consider undertaking a further campaign to draw that loss to their attention. I hope that he will give an undertaking that in the meantime the Department will not destroy the files so that there is no record of those who may be able to claim such deductions were they aware of the extent to which they have been deprived.

The Minister mentioned the regulations which we have become accustomed to call the board and lodging regulations. We welcome the improvement that the Minister has announced. It is fair to say that the Government were warned consistently, when they introduced the temporary regulations and when they introduced the present regulations, that the limits set were inadequate. We are glad that they have decided to make an increase from November and to make the limits available to those in nursing homes. It was extraordinary that people in such homes were entitled only to claim something like the attendance allowance above the limits available for residential care homes.

Although we welcome what the Minister said about residential care homes and nursing homes, there is one aspect of what he said which caused me anxiety. I hope that when the Under-Secretary replies he will answer my questions. The Minister for Social Security said that he felt that the change in the date of uprating from now until July 1986 meant too long a wait for an alteration of that magnitude which would therefore be made in November. He did not, however, announce any increase in the limit for the under-26-year-olds who are also affected by the regulations. I wonder whether the implication of what the Minister said is that we shall have to wait until July 1986 for an increase in those limits. That would be a serious matter.

We are at the beginning of the period when people in major cities, especially London, will be affected by the limits and the other changes in the board and lodging regulations. There will be increasing protest about the inadequacy of those limits, for example, in London. If we are not to see any change in those limits for a year—as may be inferred from the Minister's statement — the Government are in danger of making an already bad position a great deal worse. I shall say no more about the

structure of those regulations, on which we have strong views, because I am sure that we shall return to the subject. I am anxious to have an answer from the Minister on that point.

I welcomed what the Minister for Social Security said about the increases in other allowances, although I wondered—I shall not press the Under-Secretary on this point — whether he was implying that the meals allowance might be reviewed down. I hope that I was mistaken in drawing that inference, but we shall watch that point carefully. If that were to be the case, it would add insult to injury and greatly exacerbate what is already a difficult and, for many youngsters, a disastrous position.

I intend to deal with housing benefit and central heating additions together. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, with his usual skill, drew the Government's attention to the fact that they are acting strangely if one accepts their description of the course on which they claim to be embarked.

In terms of the entire housing benefits scheme, we have seen how the Government first substantially cut the money available for general housing subsidies by £1,300 million since 1979. They then actively encouraged increases in rents that were bound to follow by cutting such a fantastically large sum from the general housing subsidy. When those rents increases meant that many more individuals were eligible for housing benefit, the Government said that too many people were claiming it, and, having targeted spending in the first place, they used that targeting as an excuse for later cuts. We strongly suspect that we shall be seeing that on a much greater scale later.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead pointed out, the only reasons so far advanced by the Government for making the change in central heating additions—unless the Minister comes forward with a fresh reason tonight—is precisely that too many people are claiming them. That was also the reason for the Government's proposals on board and lodging regulations. It is all very well to have such regulations, but the problem seems to arise when people are so inconsiderate as to wish to draw these benefits.

The Government have deliberately imposed extra taxes on fuel and have deliberately raised fuel costs. It is therefore extraordinary that they should be cutting heating additions. I understand that many people, particularly those who draw the higher rate additions, are unemployed. It is particularly unfortunate that, in line with the Government's general attitude to the unemployed—and their proposal that such people be on the lowest rate of income support in the scheme that will be put to us in the next parliamentary Session — they are again cutting central heating additions to the unemployed.

The Minister of State said that central heating additions used to be higher because the costs of central heating were considered to be above the costs of heating in general. It was pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) that that could well be because at this time of year many people did not have their central heating switched on. My constituency case work convinces me that my right hon. Friend is quite correct.

But let us set aside the reality of how people live and accept the Government's argument. The Minister appears to be saying that it was fine to have a central heating addition when costs were above general costs, but now that they are not so far above, or perhaps even below, general heating costs, the money is taken away altogether instead of being switched to improve general heating additions. That is a strange argument, and it is perhaps another example of the ingenuity to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead referred when he spoke of the Government justifying the various cuts and changes that they have made.

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Lady recognises that, leaving aside heating additions, the supplementary benefit rates include a basic element for heating costs. The justification for the existence of the heating addition is that the types of property involved carry with them heating costs over and above the norm. That seems to destroy the hon. Lady's argument.

Mrs. Beckett: I understand the Minister's second point, but, as I have already said, the Government's own actions have substantially raised the cost of fuel.

The Minister is always telling us that this Government feel that they have a much better record than previous Governments. If he feels that the notional element in supplementary benefit rates for heating costs is sufficient, we would be more than happy if he gave an order of magnitude as to what exactly that element is. We would then be able to judge how near that comes to meeting the fuel costs of claimants.

We should like to hear that the Government intend to keep the higher rate of addition for those who will still qualify. I understand that at present only about 4 per cent. of claimants would qualify. But those who are fortunate enough to quality under the Government's new scheme should at least get the higher rate of addition, particularly as they could lose out if in the past they were entitled to two additions but did not claim the one that is being preserved.

The Government ought to consider extending the estate rate addition to estates in which central heating systems were installed after the estate was built rather than at the same time. That is an unquestioned loophole in the regulations, and, having made fairly substantial savings elsewhere, the Government should well be able to afford such an extension.

Over the last few years there have been substantial cuts in housing benefit—far above what could possibly be justified. In 1983, 400,000 people lost entitlement altogether, and 1·75 million lost some benefit in order to provide a cut of about £50 million. In 1984, when there was a cut of £215 million, 500,000 people lost entitlement altogether, and about 1·75 million lost at least some housing benefit entitlement. The Government are now embarking on another round of cuts of about £500 million. We can therefore expect substantial additional numbers of people to lose out.

Apart from the general cuts in the housing benefits scheme, there are specific proposals that come within the ambit of the changes that we are now discussing. Has the Minister been able to discover or invent any justification for the cut in subsidy to local authorities to 80 per cent.? In the past, the subsidy that was received was generally of about 100 per cent. When we last discussed housing benefit, this appeared to be a wholly arbitrary figure. There seemed to be no particular reason why the rate should have been set at 80 per cent. There appeared to be no reason for saving that money. If the Government have now managed to come up with a reason, we would be interested to know of it.

[Mrs. Beckett]

Has the Minister any better reason for taking away altogether the subsidy that local authorities are receiving for administration? At present it is about 60 per cent. of costs. We were told that it would provide a greater incentive to contain costs and improve efficiency, but this is at a time when the Government intend substantially to increase the costs and difficulties faced by local authorities, as well as the number of defaults they are likely to face, by the proposal under which everyone will have to pay 20 per cent. of the rates.

We are also discussing the increases in tapers that the Government will be putting forward. I understand that over the past two years the Government have effectively doubled the rate taper. There are now to be further substantial changes. Not only will that affect hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people, but it will save the Government substantial sums. I sometimes wonder whether the Government appreciate the effect of this on the incomes of those from whom they keep making what they regard as comparatively minor savings.

There has recently been evidence from the Low Pay Unit about the amount of household income left for those with incomes at the highest levels at which housing benefit is still paid. We understand that the Government are seeking to reduce those levels, and the Government constantly complain that housing benefit is paid too far up the income scale. But, as we constantly remind them, it is not paid to anyone who is even near average earnings unless that person's rent is above average.

Using the data from the family expenditure survey, in evidence to the Government's housing benefit review the unit pointed out that, after expenditure on essentials, such as food, fuel, clothing and housing, the kind of households that are able to draw housing benefit are left with about £2.50 to £3.50 a day. It also drew attention to the items that those sums of money have to cover: laundry, shoe repairs, transport other than to work, toilet requisites, the prescription charges that the Government have substantially increased and such minor costs as children's pocket money and toys. Nevertheless, these are very important items of expenditure, particularly for poorer families. Therefore, it is unwise for the Government to continue cutting away at housing benefit, thinking only of the public expenditure consequences and not appreciating the effects that the cuts are having upon the standard of living of so many families.

This is applicable in particular to non-dependant deductions. My hon. Friends have made most of the points that I would otherwise have made, but I think that we ought also mildly to rebuke the Under-Secretary of State for his statement on 27 June that nobody on supplementary benefit would be affected by the Government's proposed changes to housing benefit. The Minister for Social Security said that it is unusual to announce the increases in non-dependant deductions with the upratings, so perhaps they had slipped the mind of the Under-Secretary of State. However, they certainly affect those on supplementary benefit and from that point of view alone ought perhaps to have been drawn to our attention.

The Minister for Social Security said that the index which has been consistently used for non-dependant deductions is 18 per cent. He implied that this increase has been used for many years. Will the Under-Secretary of State tell us whether the major increase in non-dependant deductions in April 1984 — an increase which was roundly condemned as wholly unreasonable by the Social Security Advisory Committee — was made purely because of the increase in the housing cost index? If so, it is surprising that the Government gave no reason for an increase which at the time was so widely and extensively condemned.

About 400,000 families will be affected by the Government's savings. I wonder whether they realise what the impact of these changes will be. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead referred to the fact that a working teenager might have to pay almost half of the family's housing costs. This point was made by the Social Security Advisory Committee. It said that this was unreasonable. If such a household were fortunate enough to have two working teenagers, the consequent deduction of £20.40 from housing benefit would mean that parents who are living on supplementary benefit would receive absolutely no housing benefit if their rent and rate payments were average.

This is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the Government's housing benefit review group, which pointed out that the full housing costs, whether rent or rates, of those on supplementary benefit should be met. The increases in non-dependant deductions mean that the Government are putting more and more people further and further away from having their costs met. This may result in public expenditure savings, but it will result in a very substantial increase in family tension. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West said that the Government will be making a saving of about £250 million by the introduction of these measures.

One of the documents to which reference has not been made is the report of the Government Actuary. Once again the Government are keeping the balance in the fund at 23 per cent. However, the Government Actuary, upon whose figures the Government are normally anxious to rely, says that a prudent Government need not set aside more than 16 per cent. of their income. The national insurance fund is a notional fund, but the Government appear to be raising substantially more income than they need. That means that it is not a notional sum. They must be raising about £1 billion more than they need to keep the national insurance fund in balance. They are also raising it in a most regressive way. It will be raised through national insurance contributions. The Government have made a number of changes, but they had not come into effect when these figures were drawn up. Not only are the Government raising substantially more money than they need; year by year they are also reducing the amount of money which is received in a more progressive way from the tax system through the Treasury supplement.

In effect, therefore, the Government, as in so many areas of our national life, are taking rather less from those who are more able to pay and rather more from those who are less able to pay. We have heard a great deal this week about why the Government believe it to be right to increase the salaries of the better-paid members of our community. It is in line with the Government's approach that the only figures in this package of measures which show an increase above the level of inflation are the non-dependants' housing benefit deductions. That is sadly characteristic of this Government's attitude. Although, therefore, we welcome some elements of the package, the Government do not deserve full credit for it.

8.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) for at least having the goodness to recognise, in contrast to her hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), that a number of factors in the uprating package are to be welcomed. She mentioned the changes to the vaccine damage payments and the changes that will affect nursing homes and residential care homes. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) was also good enough to welcome those changes.

The uprating will add more than £2 billion to our massive social security programme. Even in the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate I had hoped that the charity induced at the end of the term would lead to a greater welcome by the Opposition of this package. Perhaps that was too much to ask of the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

Turning to pensions, we had the vignette of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire travelling around his constituency at the weekend trying to explain to his constituency pensioners the significance of the uprating of the basic rate of pension. I hope that he was good enough to explain the real increase since the Government came into office. If we achieve the projected rate of inflation, down from 7 per cent., there will be a 10 percentage point increase in the real value of the basic rate of pensions since 1979. I recognise the situation that he described, and that a number of people take a lot of convincing because they are constantly bombarded with a good deal of propaganda in the other direction.

Labour Members and members of the TUC have taken to misrepresenting our proposals on the state earnings-related pension scheme as a cut in the basic retirement pension. As we have constantly said and demonstrated, and are clearly demonstrating again tonight with these orders, our commitment to maintaining the value of the basic retirement pension is absolute and is fulfilled. The elements in the cost of living to which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred are taken into account in the RPI.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West saw some machiavellian plotting in the fact that to achieve many sensible advantages in introducing the uprating on an April to April basis, we were proceeding with two eight months uprating periods for pensions. He seemed to see some wickedness in that proposal. However, pensioners will have cause to recognise the benefit of that. It will more closely match the rate of inflation, although the hon. Gentleman seemed to have some worries that there would be a low or even no rate of inflation, which would cause problems for the pensioners.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, there has often been pressure for more frequent upratings than 12 months. I find it difficult to understand why he should be so concerned about uprating periods of eight months. The increase will reflect much more clearly the more immediate effect of the uprating from November 1985, and by July 1986 pensioners will have a much greater advantage. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not seek to attribute the sort of tactics that might appeal to less charitable Governments to this one.

Mr. Meacher: Will the hon. Gentleman accept my proposition that it is likely that in July 1986, if the Government's inflation forecast is met, pensioners will get no increase?

Mr. Whitney: We shall have to wait to see what turns out. I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman is so concerned that inflation should fall. I can understand that he might have some sensitivity about this, because he will remember, and he would like pensioners to forget, that the Government of which he was a member averaged an inflation rate of 16 per cent. in every year of office. Pensioners will never forget what that did to their savings. If the hon. Gentleman is upset that we are likely to have a low rate of inflation, I can assure him that pensioners will not be.

There was considerable discussion on child benefit, including the, as always, distinctive contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), who appealed to all Christian democrats in the House to welcome the commitment that the Government have reinforced to the universal provision of child benefit. Child benefit is an extremely expensive social security provision. About 6·9 million families and 12·3 million children are involved. From listening to a number of Labour speeches one would have imagined that something desperate was being done, but about £75 million in a full year is being added to the £4·5 billion that we spend on that benefit.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is clearly unable to be here now. However, in answer to his point, I can say that we are prepared to go into the next election reasserting our justified proposition that we are the party of the family, because provision at that scale, at a time of justified stringency in our national accounting, is something of which we are proud. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security pointed out, in addition to the increase, which I recognise is not fully in line with inflation, we have directed some of that to the lower end of the income scale through FIS and the housing benefit children's needs allowance.

Account has to be taken of the fact that the rest of the community—those who are not at the lower levels with which we are mostly concerned here—will benefit from our achievements in the years since 1979 on wage increases and tax changes. Since we came into office, the real income of the overwhelming majority has increased, whereas it fell for most people during the period of the Labour Government. The real take-home pay of a person on average earnings has gone up by 13 per cent.

Mrs. Beckett: I noticed with interest that part of the hon. Gentleman's justification is that most people are better off, but I understand that if one takes into acount the whole package of tax changes made by the Government, only people with incomes of over £18,000 a year are better off. The Minister may move in such circles, but not everybody else does.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Lady to the statistic that I quoted. When the Labour Government were in office, people were actually worse off, and that point must be taken into account. I particularly made the point that we are talking about people on average earnings. I recognise the unemployed, but that category is not at issue. The

[Mr. Whitney]

increase under this Government has come about because with our child benefit we are targeting help more accurately where it is clearly needed.

The next source of concern for Labour Members was the non-dependant deductions. That seemed to take little account of the wages being discussed. It is important to remember that we are talking about, for the full non-dependant deduction of £10·40 a week, people between 18 and pension age. We are not talking about those on supplementary benefit, or the youth training scheme or pensioners, for whom the deduction will amount to only £3·90, but about those over 18 who would be expected, if they are in work, to face a deduction of £10·40.

The average gross weekly earnings of 18-year-olds last year were £83·60 for males and £73·90 for females. In relation to figures like that, it cannot be maintained that a deduction of £10·40 is in any way unacceptable. The hon. Lady referred to the last time there was a sharp increase. It was in 1982 rather than in 1984, when, on the same formula, housing costs for supplementary benefit cases were met under the supplementary benefits scheme and the non-dependant deductions increased by 21 per cent. In the following year there was no change in this item, despite increases in the main housing benefit and the supplementary benefit rate. Therefore, claimants have both gained and lost over the years by the application of that rule.

The cuts in relation to heating attracted a certain amount of attention and there were one or two areas of misunderstanding. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred to the estate rate heating addition. That has not been changed and his worries on that score are unjustified. Many of the cases he referred to would be eligible for the higher rate heating addition, and we are not putting an end to that. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State pointed out, nowadays the justification for the central heating addition is, to put it mildly, considerably less than it was, and it is scarcely to be maintained.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) seemed to be disturbed that some of the measures contained in our uprating proposals are in harmony with the proposals in our review. It would be rather strange if that were not the case. Having said that, I am not saying that the consultation process is anything but an extremely genuine and far-reaching one. It is, of course, the second stage of a lengthy and unique public operation.

For something like 18 months my hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of State had open hearings around the country and we received thousands of submissions. There were also many letters to the Department. After 18 months of careful study and review, all that resulted in the proposals. Then we had the period from June until mid-September for the second stage of the consultation process. I refer the House to another leaflet we shall be issuing today. It will give another fillip to this national process of consultation.

The House recognised the value of the increase in the limits on residential care and nursing homes and I welcome the support that those proposals received. When we introduced those measures, we said that we would continue to monitor their effects. The way in which we have done that has justified our promise. We recognise that the tightness of the nursing home provision and addition has caused difficulties, and I hope that the new figures we have announced, a £10 increase in the basic rate and the increase of the addition to £50, will improve the position.

The hon. Lady asked about the provisions relating to under-25s, known in our Department as the ordinary board and lodging. We shall maintain careful scrutiny and we have shown, as we promised, a good deal of flexibility on the time limits and the exemption categories. We have a proud record on that. Our initial indications do not at present suggest that there is the same sort of case for an overall increase in November in the ordinary board and lodging limits as for residential care and nursing homes which my hon. Friend has announced. That, too, is something which we shall keep under careful review, and we shall certainly monitor it very carefully.

Mrs. Beckett: I do not wish to press the Minister too much, but perhaps I could ask him to say a little more on this point. Will he give me an assurance that it is not the Government's intention to wait until July 1986 before announcing any increase in the limits? The Minister will know that the residential homes limits were considered to be inadequate. A couple of days ago the Leader of the House accused the Opposition of pandering to popular sentiment, and, although I do not accuse the Government of doing that, I suggest they are a little more worried about elderly people in residential homes than they are about the young, against whom they seem to have a particular dislike. I should like the Minister to assure us that it is not the Government's intention to wait for another full year.

Mr. Whitney: I should like to correct a misunderstanding which the hon. Lady has perpetrated more than once. She alleges some hostility on our part towards the young, but that is by no means the case. One of the reasons why we acted as we did was the great damage caused and the new unemployment trap. We shall continue to keep that under review as we kept under review, for example, the exemption categories. We showed our flexibility on that. We also kept under review the level of charges in residential care and nursing homes. By monitoring those, my right hon. Friend was able to announce charges. The evidence is lacking to suggest that there is a need, or may or may not be a need, for uprating.

We are considering an important range of additions to the social security programme. They include major increases in retirement benefit, unemployment benefit, and widow's pension and benefits. They are all of 7 per cent., which recognises that that was the increase in the RPI for May. If our hopes are fulfilled, it will mean a significant increase, by the time those proposals are implemented, above the cost of living at the end of November.

The upratings are another fulfilment of our pledges. We have increased invalidity pension by no less than 12 per cent. We have established our commitment to the Christmas bonus—understandably, that is a sore point with Opposition Members — we have doubled the vaccine damage payments, changed other benefits, and significantly increased residential care and nursing home allowances. The package will cost more than £2 billion. Since we came to office in 1979, we have increased our social security budget by more than 30 per cent. in real terms. Most of the increase is accounted for by higher real-terms increases in all the major benefits scales. We are also paying for about 800,000 more pensioners.

The Government are proud of that record, and I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

Supplementary Benefit

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Amendment and Up-rating Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 8th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Child Benefit

Resolved,

That the draft Child Benefit (Up-Rating) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved. —*[Mr. Newton.]*

Family Income Supplement

Resolved,

That the draft Family Income Supplements (Computation) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Housing Benefit

Resolved,

That the draft Housing Benefits (Increase of Needs Allowances) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Pensioners' Lump Sum Payments

Resolved,

That the draft Pensioners' Lump Sum Payments Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.— *[Mr. Newton.]*

Vaccine Damage Payments

Resolved,

That the draft Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 Statutory Sum Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 22nd July, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Social Security Benefit

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security Benefit (Dependency) Amendment Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 22nd July, be approved.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Electricity

That the draft Electricity (Borrowing Powers) (Scotland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.

Customs and Excise

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 10) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1027), a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th July, be approved.

Town and Country Planning

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which was laid before this House on 25th June, be approved.

Judges

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 1st July, be approved. —*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Labelling of Beer, Cider, Perry and Wine

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 80(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10211/82, draft Directive concerning the labelling, presentation and advertising of beer, cider and perry, and 9452/83, two draft Regulations laying down rules for the description and presentation of wine, grape must and special wines, and supports the Government's intention of introducing measures requiring the indication of the percentage of alcohol by volume of all alcoholic drinks with the aim of reducing alcohol related health problems, and removing certain barriers to trade within the community.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Question agreed to.

Arthur Bell and Sons (Guinness Takeover Bid)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

9 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to debate the attempted takeover of Arthur Bell and Sons, a Scotch whisky company in Perth, by Guinness. I wish to make it clear from the outset that my concern in this matter is that of a constituency Member of Parliament and also the public interest. As I had to tell the BBC earlier today, in this matter I am no one's lackey. Neither I nor any members of my family have shares in Arthur Bell and Sons or in Guinness. During this short debate, I am afraid that I shall have some harsh comments to make about the self-regulating body of the City—the Panel on Take-overs and Mergers. I shall also make some comments about the role of the Bank of England in this matter.

Let me make it clear to the House that I support the stock market and that I am a passionate believer in the private sector and in the capitalist system. What I say this evening should not be taken as a reflection of my belief in this area. There are advantages in a self-regulatory mechanism, but I firmly believe that such a mechanism must be seen to be fair, and that justice must be seen to be done when the panel operates.

In the case of the attempted takeover of Arthur Bell and Sons by Guinness, I hope that I shall demonstrate clearly to the House that justice was not done, and was certainly not seen to be done. I shall also demonstrate that what one of my more flamboyant hon. Friends called, "Skulduggery in the smoke-filled rooms of the City," has taken place.

I regret very much the fact that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not wait to hear the evidence that I shall present this evening before deciding on the matter. All aspects of this attempted takeover should have been more fully investigated, as I requested, by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. During the past few weeks, I and several other Scottish Members from all political parties have made repeated requests for a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. My hon. Friend must realise that the fact that that did not happen will not be forgotten in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that, recently, there has been a dark cloud hanging over the activities of many stock and insurance markets. Following the disclosure of murky and dishonest activities by individuals and by groups of individuals in the system, Lloyd's was forced to introduce new rules and to insist on a new code of conduct. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has little reason to be pleased with the way in which the Bank of England behaved during the costly farce of Johnson Matthey Bankers, yet the Bank of England is supposed to be the guardian of the standards and morals of the City. The former deputy governor of the bank is the chairman of the Panel on Take-overs and Mergers.

The *Financial Times* of Friday 19 July, referring to a decision taken by the panel, said:

"The conclusion, it seems, is that Mr. David Stevens—the chairman of the two companies — was not in concert with himself but agrees that he should be regarded as if he were. This is nonsense. Given the widespread concern about the Panel's future ability to police a City impregnated with conflicts of interest, it is also worrying nonsense."

Having once been found out in a massive cover-up, any reasonable person must wonder whether it is just possible that the bank will again be party to another cover-up; party to an attempt to whitewash unacceptable acts in the stock market by firms and individuals which operate within the system.

Unless the Chinese walls of the City are seen to work, and unless they are believed to be an effective safeguard against inside vital knowledge being made available to unfriendly sources, the morals and credibility of the City must be at risk. If the Chinese walls can be or have been breached, this would not be good for the wellbeing of the capitalist system, the private sector or the stock market. I care very deeply about this, which is why I requested a meeting with my right hon. Friend and asked for the debate.

I shall present my evidence this evening in three parts. They are, first, the activities of the bankers Morgan Grenfell and Company Ltd. and the panel on Take-overs and Mergers; secondly, the misrepresentation of the facts by Guinness; and, thirdly, the importance of the independence of Arthur Bell and the importance of the whisky industry and the Scottish financial institutions to Scotland.

No one disputes that on 3 February 1983 the chairman of Arthur Bell wrote to Morgan Grenfell and suggested:

"best interests would be served by a gradual winding down of our business connections."

What is in dispute are the events that followed. Morgan Grenfell claimed that the winding down was exactly what happened. The Panel on Take-overs and Mergers believed it. I do not, and I believe that I can show that the events which followed that letter demonstrate that Morgan Grenfell made determined efforts to retain its business connection with Bell and, what is more important, that it retained its business connection.

I have a letter dated 15 February 1983 written by Mr. Christopher Reeves to Mr. Miquel, the chairman of Arthur Bell and Sons:

"We have had a very long relationship with your company and with yourself and I believe that David Ewart and Christopher Knight, the new Assistant Director whom I have allocated to you, will provide the sort of service that your are seeking."

The letter continues:

"I do however hope that it will be possible for us to get together later on this year to review the progress that is being made on a series of most important moves for the development of your company."

The letter contains other matters, but those are the important phrases. That was dated 15 February, which is after the so-called severance of the two concerns.

I believe that I can show more than that. Morgan Grenfell actually improved the way in which it serviced Bell, and it did so, as the letter clearly shows, by the setting up of a new team to service Bell's. On 8 February 1983 Mr. Christopher Reeves, the chairman of Morgan Grenfell, wrote to Mr. Miquel concerning a meeting at 1.30 pm in the Connaught hotel. On 18 February Mr. David Ewart, director of Morgan Grenfell, wrote to confirm the visit by himself and Christopher Knight to East Mains, Dunfermline, Perth, and Pitlochry. This was to acquaint the new team with more of the details of the

company. Mr. David Ewart wrote to Mr. Miquel on 10 May 1983, talking about companies that might be suitable for takeover.

On 23 March 1983 there was a meeting in the London Hilton, attended by Mr. Miquel of Bell's, Mr. Cooper of Bell's and Mr. Reeves, Mr. Ewart, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Knight of Morgan Grenfell. At that meeting Morgan Grenfell was asked to prepare a list of prospective acquisitions. On 22 July 1983 Mr. Cooper of Bell's wrote to Mr. Ewart:

"As you know we aim to provide a comprehensive range of financial advisory services to our clients, but the extent to which those services are called upon varies considerably from client to client."

That letter discusses the charges that Bell's would have to pay. It continues:

"It is our wish to provide Bell's with the best possible advice and best possible services."

On 7 July 1983, writing to Mr. Cooper, Morgan Grenfell said that there was a large public company, with a turnover of £1·5 billion, which was in trouble and in which Bell's might be interested. The letter also mentioned another company in the food industry. It is an interesting letter.

On 3 February 1984 Mr. Ewart wrote to Mr. Miquel:

"As you probably know I was at the Panel today with Patrick and was simply delighted at the final ruling. I enclose a copy of the *Financial Times* referring to . . . I rang Geoffrey Cooper and mentioned it to him this morning."

That is another company being suggested to Bell's.

On 20 April 1984 copies of reports and accounts were sent from Mr. Ewart to Mr. Miquel. On 28 March 1984 Mr. Colville wrote to Mr. Cooper suggesting an involvement in a sector in the United States On 15 March 1984 Mr. Miquel wrote to Mr. Ewart thanking Morgan Grenfell for its assistance in bringing Gleneagles Hotels plc into the Bell's group.

On 9 April 1984 Mr. Ewart wrote to Mr. Miquel referring to "grand slam", that being the code name for a well-known company in the United Kingdom. On 25 May Mr. Miquel wrote to the chairman of Morgan Grenfell about "grand slam" saying:

"I am looking forward to you and your team joining us here next Friday."

A copy of the letter was sent to Mr. Ewart.

On 9 May the secretary to Mr. Ewart wrote to the secretary of Arthur Bell's outlining details of the timetable for the meeting on Tuesday 22 May. Mr. Ewart was to join Mr. Miquel at the Sheraton Park hotel, Knightsbridge, for breakfast. They were then to take a taxi to Victoria, to catch the 10.30 am train to arrive at their destination at 11 am. On arrival they were to be met by a chauffeured car, the property of the chairman of "grand slam"—a well known company in the transport and hotel industries.

On 22 June 1984 Mr. Ewart wrote to Mr. Miquel with information about a company code named MATCH. He said:

"We will need to discuss our next step, clearly . . . is a man who has to be handled with some care and we have to consider whether it is best for you to make a direct approach to him or whether we should get in touch with Hill Samuel, the company's advisors."

On 5 October 1984 Mr. Colville wrote to Mr. Cooper at Bell's:

"As requested by you we have carried out"—

and this is important——

"an update of our information on the above company. (Enclosed reports and information.) Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any further information you require."

On 14 December 1984—close to the date when we first heard about the proposed takeover—Mr. Ewart wrote to Mr. Cooper a detailed letter, of which I have been fortunate enough to obtain a copy. The letter refers to the group structure of Bell's. Morgan Grenfell is advising Bell's on its group corporate structure and financial planning. The letter concerns the transfer of trading activities to a holding company and states:

"From a taxation point of view such a change would be quite straightforward with capital gains tax losses remaining with the holding company whereas trading losses would normally accompany the trade and undertaking to the new subsidiary."

The letter discusses the forming of a new company, the effect on Bell's debenture and loan stock, the cost of that, the public relations aspect, the timing and so on. That letter was dated 14 December, which shows that Morgan Grenfell was immersed in Bell's structure, its corporate planning and its future at that date. To suggest some months later that somehow it was not involved is nonsense, and I shall show why.

Mr. Christopher Reeves writes to Mr. Miquel on 14 November 1984 thanking him for his good wishes on his new appointment, and continuing:

"These are certainly interesting times in the City and I look forward to the challenges ahead. I too am sorry that we will not be able to meet in Edinburgh in December, but no doubt there will be another opportunity for us to get together, either in Scotland or in London."

On 20 December 1984 Mr. A. J. Corville of Morgan Grenfell wrote to Mr. Cooper at Bell's:

"Accounts of"—

a liquor company—

"Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance in relation to this Company."

Here is another proposed takeover. The minutes of Bell's board meetings throughout 1983 and 1984 discloses details of discussions and agreements on sensitive matters involving Bell's and Morgan Grenfell, plus details of accounts rendered when there was supposed no longer to be any connection with Bell's. They were accounts rendered and paid for. In March 1985, only days before the beginning of the events, I saw a letter inviting Mr. Miquel to attend with Morgan Grenfell a seminar on investment opportunities in Australia.

I believe that all this evidence—there is much more; I took what was only a sample—clearly demonstrates that Morgan Grenfell was working as Bell's merchant bankers right up to the time when the Guinness takeover was launched.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Miquel was asked to lunch on 21 November 1984 with Mr. Ian Watson, city editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*. Mr. Watson mentioned that a company was interested in acquiring information on Bell's. What is more, the bankers acting for that company were Bell's own bankers.

Mr. Miquel did not believe the story, yet it was confirmed later at the lunch by a colleague of Mr. Watson. On returning to Scotland, Mr. Miquel telephoned Mr. Christopher Reeves of Morgan Grenfell. He as unavailable, being in Europe. Mr. Miquel then spoke to Mr. David Ewart, who said

"that he would be surprised if this was the case—and if it was, it was nothing to do with him."

Mr. Miquel was not satisfied and asked for Mr. Reeves to contact him to confirm that the information he had received was not correct. Mr. Reeves did not contact Mr. Miquel further.

[Mr. Bill Walker]

All this information, and more, was available to the panel. I believe that it represents a clear case which shows that Morgan Grenfell was working both for Bell's and Guinness at the same time. I cannot believe that the managing director of Morgan Grenfell, Mr Christopher Reeves, Mr. David Ewart, and the director Richmond Watson, in charge of the Guinness takeover attempt, exchange only pleasantries when they meet.

I suggest that there is a prima facie case of the Chinese walls of the city having been breached. Is it any wonder that I must ask whether the panel decision was a whitewash, particularly when one realises that there is no recognised appeal procedure against panel decisions? That is why I wanted to consult the Minister before the decision was taken to go to the commission.

I draw the Minister's attention to reports that have appeared in the press in recent days to the effect that the Kuwait Investment Office bought 3·8 per cent. of Bell's stock on 17 June 1985, three days after the bid was announced. It bought at an average price of 270p, at a total cost of £13·5 million. It has also been reported, and not denied, that it has accepted, on its own behalf, 225p for all of the 3·8 per cent. share.

I remind the Minister that in January 1984 the Kuwait Investment Office was the under-bidder in the purchase of Gleneagles Hotels plc. Why, then, is it buying shares in Bell's at 270p and, a few days later, selling them for 225p, thus creating for itself a substantial loss? What is the pay off? Surely that is a reasonable question. Could it be that it will be given the chance to buy Gleneagles Hotels if Guinness is successful in its bid for Bell's? If so, this smacks of people acting in concert. Is this another example of "skulduggery in the smoke-filled rooms of the City"?

I am reminded that Mr. Peter Stevenson, a director of Moble Grossart, who is well known to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on the Front Bench, is, with some of his friends, a defender of an independent Scottish economy. It is Mr. Peter Stevenson who has attacked me in the press. I remind the House that he was a director of Gleneagles Hotels before the company was taken over by Bell's. Is that just another coincidence? Whatever it is, I find it fascinating that Arab money is used to purchase shares in a liquor company when the mere possession of liquor in Arab countries leads to flogging and/or imprisonment.

In the words of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), the Guinness publicity machine has been issuing statements that are unpersuasive and positively misleading. Why does Guinness want Bell's? The answer is that it needs Bell's to pay its United Kingdom dividend. If Mr. Saunders, who seems never to spend more than four years with any company, does not increase his dividend, he will be seen to be a facade. He does not wait for the truth about his pruning and surgery to emerge. He moves on before the truth emerges.

For example, pledges of no redundancies from Mr. Saunders are worthless. A few days before Christmas 1984, Guinness told its workers in Liverpool that they were managed by people who lived in the area and that they had strong local ties and roots. However, in May 1985, well over 200 long-service, loyal employees were made redundant. In 1984 Guinness took over Martin, the newsagents. The staff were given assurances that there would be no redundancies. Despite the assurances, many long-serving, loyal staff were made redundant.

Guinness has problems and Bell's does not. Guinness cannot get its overseas profits into this country to pay its United Kingdom dividend. I understand that profits from Nigeria can take up to two years to get into the United Kingdom. Guinness is writing off advance corporation tax and it does not have enough United Kingdom earnings to pay its dividend. Guinness is in trouble and Bell's is not.

Bell's is a different sort of company from Guinness. I would describe Bell's as an ideal company. It is an identikit company of the Tory party. It is the sort of company that the Tory party dreams about. It increases sales every year but never cuts its prices to do so. It increases its profits every year and it has no redundancies. When it builds new plants and factories many miles away from existing sites, it busses its employees. Indeed, it has been doing so for over 20 years. Bussing is not a recent phenomenon in the Bell's organisation. It is the sort of company that every Member dreams about having in his constituency. I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will tell me how fortunate I am.

The Bell's staff receive the same allocations for shares and get the same shares as directors when shares are allotted. Everyone in Bell's is treated alike and everyone works hard. The Scottish institutions, God bless them, have recognised this. They have remained with Bell's and I am thankful to them for that. They recognise that if Scotland has no home-based, profitable firms, the very reason for the existence of the Scottish financial centre will vanish. If we lose Bell's, which company will be next? Will it be The Famous Grouse, which is also in my constituency? Perhaps Mr. Saunders will have his eye on Distillers which, again, is in my constituency. I have an interest in the welfare of the Scottish whisky industry.

I can provide my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with all the evidence that I have used this evening and much more besides. Perhaps it is not too late to prevent the destruction of the good name of the City, about which I care deeply. More importantly from a Scottish point of view, I hope that we can protect and safeguard the Scottish-based whisky industry, which has done so well for Scotland for so many years. It has been kind to the Exchequer for many years and it has helped the balance of payments for many years, which it will continue to do if it is managed effectively and efficiently by those who care.

9.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Alex Fletcher): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) for the opportunity to respond to certain views which he has expressed about the conduct of the Arthur Guinness bid for Arthur Bell, and takeover bids generally. He properly disclosed his interests in both companies by saying that he had no financial interests in either company. I can add to that by saying that I know for certain that he is not even a customer of Bell's or Guinness.

First, the merits of the bid and the way in which it is pursued are separate questions. My hon. Friend's view is that the bid has no merit, and that Bell's should remain independent. He is perfectly entitled to take that view, whether on the basis of a detailed evaluation of the Guinness offer or on broader constituency grounds. I

wholeheartedly agree with him that Bell's is a highly respected company. It has a good commercial reputation for its performance over many years, and as a neighbour. It is a good company from a social point of view, not only in the city of Perth but in Scotland as a whole. It is probably improper for me to say that Bell's has also been a good friend to the House from time to time.

However, it is Bell's shareholders, rather than I, whom my hon. Friend needs to persuade that he is right. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had decided not to refer the proposal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, as he announded on 23 July. The decision is in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading, and was taken after full consideration of all the relevant issues. I discussed the issues with both companies, my hon. Friend and other hon. Members. They in turn, took the opportunity to present their cases to the Director General before he made his recommendations to Ministers.

It is now for the shareholders of Bell's to make up their minds and to proceed accordingly. They may or may not reach the same conclusion as my hon. Friend. The point is that the decision rests with them, not with the Government. I have made it clear to my hon. Friend that the Government's interest in such matters is in competition and the public interest. All the other matters relating to the performance and management of a company or companies, such as which is the better exporter, are clearly for the shareholders to decide. The grounds on which they make the decision are their own affair.

The essential questions for any shareholder in a company for which a bid is made are whether the consideration offered is adequate, and whether the acquisition of control by the bidder would or would not enhance the value of his asset. Those questions are not for the House because this is not the place to consider those commercial aspects of the bid.

My hon. Friend argued against the bid on grounds of propriety. In particular, he argued that the relationship which existed between the merchant bank Morgan Grenfell and Bell's before the bid should preclude Morgan Grenfell form acting for Guinness. He contends that the takeover panel erred in allowing Morgan Grenfell to act for Guinness, and suggests that alternative arrangements for regulating takeovers should be considered.

My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of propriety in these matters, because that concerns the Government, but who acts for whom in the conduct of a takeover bid raises quite different issues from the merits of the bid as a commercial consideration. In any event, the circumstances that my hon. Friend has cited do not, in my view, justify the conclusion that it is improper for Morgan Grenfell to act for Guinness, or that the panel's judgment was flawed.

My hon. Friend suggested that justice has not been done in the City, but it is now about 20 years since the panel was constituted and the first code promulgated. That is a short time in terms of some City institutions but a fairly long one in terms of the developments that have taken place in securities markets over the past two decades. During that time the panel has been faced with numerous "vital and important" decisions. I quote my hon. Friend, and his words are apt. Their verdicts have not all been accepted nem. con. It would be remarkable — and dubiously to the panel's credit — if they had. But the panel and the code have come to be accepted—indeed, they have been judicially recognised — as setting the standards which should obtain in this area.

The proposals set out in the Goverment's White Paper, "Financial Services in the United Kingdom", inevitably call into question whether the code and panel can continue to operate on the extra-statutory basis on which they have operated hitherto. The Government have not yet reached a conclusion, but we are no more minded than our predecessors have been to second-guess judgments taken by the panel on the basis of full consideration of all the material facts, particularly when neither of the parties directly affected has represented that the judgment was flawed.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is not true.

Mr. Fletcher: I have had no representations from Arthur Bell about the conduct of the panel. Bearing in mind my responsibilities and, more importantly, those of my right hon. Friend in these matters, I would expect a company that was under threat of takeover to make very strong representations. In my present post I am used to chairmen of companies and counsel coming to see me frequently to make representations in matters of this kind. I can only declare my surprise, in view of my hon. Friend's comments, that it has not happened in this case.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend is not denying that I asked for a meeting. I only cancelled it subsequent to the decision on the referral. My hon. Friend will be aware that I asked for that meeting, and I gave details of who would probably be coming to it.

Mr. Fletcher: Yes, that is correct.

I say to my hon. Friend in the friendliest possible way that if Arthur Bell and Company and their advisers feel half as strongly about the matter as my hon. Friend suggests, that justice has not been done in the City, and that they have been deceived and treated badly, I can only express my surprise that they should cancel the meeting. The fact that a decision had been made not to refer the matter is one thing. The fact that they felt that the City institutions were behaving dishonourably towards them is quite another. If the company felt as strongly as my hon. Friend suggests, it should have made a complaint.

I am concerned that, in his very strong defence of Arthur Bell and Company this evening, my hon. Friend should have impugned Lloyd's and the Bank of England, and generally the good name of the City, particularly in the light of the fact that we have had no representations from Bell on these matters.

However, I am particularly sorry that my hon. Friend has repeated in the House that the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England is the chairman of the takeover panel, because he is not. They are two quite separate persons. The Deputy Governor of the Bank of England is Mr. C. W. McMahon and the chairman of the takeover panel is Sir Jasper Hollom. I have seen no evidence from my hon. Friend and he made no justification for his charges about the City. I repeat that I understand how strongly he feels. However, an hon. Member always has to be careful about abusing parliamentary privilege when making representations of this sort unless they can be properly substantiated.

Mr. Bill Walker: If I have in any way impugned the Bank of England incorrectly, I withdraw unreservedly and apologise. I shall investigate further.

Mr. Fletcher: I am sure that my hon. Friend's remark will be appreciated by those concerned.

It would not be right for me to go into matters of detail furnished to the takeover panel on the basis that they would be treated in confidence. I shall confine myself to a couple of essential facts. The first is that both Guinness and Bell's agreed of their own free will to accept the panel's verdict. There was nothing to stop Bell's from pressing objections at law to Morgan Grenfell advising Guinness. They were not obliged to let the panel decide. They chose to. I have had no representations from them that the panel should have reached a different view.

The second is that, while I do not doubt my hon. Friend's good faith, my inquiries throw a rather different light on this matter. If my hon. Friend took another look at Bell's files, he might observe that in the Gleneagles case that he mentioned Morgan Grenfell acted not for Bell's but for the other side.

Mr. Bill Walker: I knew that.

Mr. Fletcher: He might also entertain the possibility that the letters referred to in the panel's decision terminated Morgan Grenfell's position as Bell's merchant banker. In those circumstances he might think it natural enough that Morgan Grenfell should make some attempt to restore it, hence the contents of the letters that I listened to very carefully and my hon. Friend's reference to a new team to serve Bells.

However, the point is that Bell's and Morgan Grenfell decided to accept the panel's verdict on this matter, and this they have done. The future of Bell's is now, correctly in my view, in the hands of the company's shareholders.

Space Technology

9.37 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the United Kingdom space technology programme. I make that comment in no ordinary sense because the facility provided for an additional Adjournment debate is much appreciated, and I am grateful for the help which I have had from Mr. Speaker's office in making this possible.

I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Information Technology for being in his place. I hope that he, too, will regard this as a useful opportunity to discuss a very important subject which we get all too few opportunities to debate.

I am also conscious that my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy), who referred to the undoubted British success in the Glotto satellite launches, is in his place, as are my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and others of my hon. Friends.

I take a slightly old-fashioned view in referring these days to the Supply Estimates. Under our more flexible system, we do not need to justify subject matters in initiating debates in the House. But it is important to hon. Members who may wish to look at these matters in more detail to refer to class IV, vote 6, of the Supply Estimates, which relate to scientific and technological assistance by the Department of Trade and Industry. Those who do so will find the sum of £65 million in the current Supply Estimates as expenditure, for domestic and civil space programmes to the extent of just under £14 million and contributions to the European Space Agency to the extent of £51 million.

It is to the European Space Agency that I want first to address my remarks.

I should declare my interests at the outset. I am the parliamentary adviser to the Space and Communications Division of British Aerospace. But in this context I am also proud to declare my interest as chairman of the all-party Space Committee, and it was in that latter capacity that I returned earlier this month from Kourou in French Guiana after witnessing the successful launch of the British-led Glotto satellite by the European Ariane launcher.

The significance of that experience, was, I believe, twofold. The first is that, with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, officials and representatives from all our European partners, we were privileged to see what an outstandingly successful facility we have in the Ariane space launch facility. We were part of space history and of a genuine success story for European technological collaboration. The delegation from the House, which included the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) — in this context I regard him as a friend — the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) and my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), represented the all-party space committee and we witnessed the successful demonstration of that launch capability in a precise time slot.

Had there been any hitch in the launch capability or the delivery of the satellite, we should not have witnessed the arrangements by which that satellite is to explore Halley's comet — named after the second Astronomer Royal, Esmond Halley—and we should not have been able to

see the successful launch of that mission. Indeed, it would be about 76 years before one could hope to see that exercise repeated.

Within Arianespace, as is perhaps well known, there is a majority French stake, but there is also a United Kingdom equity stake. I understand that British Aerospace and other parts of British industry have a current interest in increasing the United Kingdom equity stake. I hope that my hon. Friend may feel able to comment on that point tonight because I believe that we should all welcome that kind of increased participation in an undoubted European success.

The rocket stabiliser and some of the launch equipment comes from this country and therefore we have a direct industrial stake in the Arianespace rocketry.

I also appreciate the fact that the Department of Trade and Industry contributes to the Arianespace technological fund and to the cost of the launch site.

On the evidence of our visit to Kourou, that investment and the financial support for which the Department of Trade and Industry is responsible is well placed. I have already said how the European launch capability has a proven track record. It compares extremely well with the United States shuttle and is acquiring its own consumer preference. Above all, it provides competition for the American space shuttle without which we should have all been captive to that launch facility.

Significantly, in the case of the Giotto satellite, Arianespace did not just put the satellite successfully into orbit in the precise time slot, we also saw the launching of a satellite in which British Aerospace had the opportunity, as the prime contractor, to demonstrate yet again that with communications satellites, remote sensoring and scientific development, the United Kingdom — that is not confined to British Aerospace because Marconi, Ferranti and many other companies are involved — has a major facility and success on its industrial horizon.

The second significant feature of the Kourou experience was not just that we saw a European consortium led by British Aerospace, but I have great pleasure in putting on record the fact — we frequently reflect on the difficulties and problems that surround us — that we had a project on which it was crucial to deliver on time, to specification and price, and that all those points were met. Any slippage or failures, as I said, would have meant nothing less than a three quarters of a century delay before we tried again.

Now we must wait until March 1986 for the future exploration of Halley's comet. The satellite will attempt to take television cameras within 500 km of the comet's nucleus. That is an exciting project and one which has captured the imagination of young people throughout Europe. I welcome the way in which an effort has been made to attract their interest. That is not only important industrially and scientifically but is part of the way in which youthful enthusiasm for these matters can be harnessed to work which is important and which points to growing job opportunities in space technology.

As for the Giotto-Halley's Comet mission, we look forward to a steady stream of technical and scientific data, and a unique study of the comet, that will be directly related and relayed, as is other current work within the European Space Agency — be it on communications satellites, remote sensing satellites or the whole raft of space technology — to ESA's ground facilities, particularly to the research and technological centre, known as ESTEC, in Holland and the space operations centre, known as ESOC, in Germany.

The all-party space committee was indebted not only to Arianespace for the Kornou unit but also to ESA for subsequent visits to the ESTEC and ESOC facilities in Holland and Germany. We could not have been more impressed, not only by the level of expertise and dedication of all who work there on our behalf but also by the genuine European spirit that was evident. There are times when we in the House perhaps feel that the European ideal is weakening and that there are few success stories, but we certainly have one in the European Space Agency.

At the same time, I cannot ignore the fact that wherever we went we met substantial numbers of British scientists and engineers, whose work is highly regarded, they were seen as key personnel and employees within the European Space Agency.

Within the Europan Space Agency and the European launch capability of Arianespace we have as I indicated earlier a real success story. The Minister has played a notable part in the European Space Agency family and at the ministerial meeting in Rome earlier this year, not only by reinforcing and supporting the future of ESA but by committing the United Kingdom to a substantial stake in that work. I hope that he will take this opportunity particularly to reaffirm the Government's commitment to the future of ESA. As I see it, we now have a long-term committment because of the agreement at the summit on the future of manned space stations and the opportunity for ESA and NASA to work together. That is also true of the whole range of ESA activities that I have tried to outline.

I hope that the Minister will also say something about two major domestic issues. The first is direct broadcasting by satellite. Widespread disappointment has been expressed at the apparent collapse of the so-called "club of 21" — the attempt by the BBC and the independent television companies to decide how to use a British approach through UNISAT, the industrial consortium of British Aerospace, Marconi and British Telecom.

I must report that in talks between the all-party space committee and the European Space Agency, one of the factors that in a sense rubbed in our disappointment was the strong feeling that within Europe there is now a major growth of direct broadcasting by satellite. There is the French-German scheme, and there is now the strong possibility of an Irish-Portuguese DBS system. There is also the Italian DBS provided on the ESA large satellite capability. However, for a variety of reasons, the United Kingdom proposals have run into the sand.

The Government are inclined to say that it is for the television industry and the industrial suppliers to work this through. But given the experience of other European countries, two things must be said. First, within ESA and elsewhere we were told time and again that Europe cries out for the quality of British programming. It would therefore be the ultimate irony if the only English language programming came from the English language service of the French-German satellite or another source that were essentially oriented outside the United Kingdom. I am not simply making a chauvinistic point about the excellence of our programmes. There are also a wide range of industrial implications. By definition, anybody who is involved in direct broadcasting by satellite will be involved in the opportunities for industrial development in

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

down link equipment, dishes and many other items. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology will be able to say a few words about what the Government can do to facilitate a new initiative on United Kingdom direct broadcasting by satellite. The widespread assumption is that the Home Office will call for new franchises. I appreciate his problem in speaking on behalf of other Departments, but anything that my hon. Friend can say to encourage those who have an interest in these matters will be timely.

Finally, I am anxious that an early announcement should be made about the proposed United Kingdom space centre. I appreciate that many problems have to be overcome. For example, it is important that the right people and the right site should be chosen for the centre. The bringing together of major Departments, notably the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Education and Science and the Ministry of Defence, would be a logical extension of one of the unsung successes of the Government: the creation of interdepartmental liaison.

It should also draw on some of the outstanding work on behalf of British science in centres of excellance such as the Rutherford Appleton laboratory.

The future success of our space policy will very much depend upon whether a space centre can be established. This takes on added significance in terms of the summit commitment to explore the possibility of European-American collaboration on space platforms.

We must also consider whether the United Kingdom can play a role with the United States in the strategic defence initiative. Space is an area of high policy and we must adopt an effective approach. A space centre would be a logical channel for that policy. I am pleased about the Government's commitment in principle and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make an announcement before we return from the summer recess. If he can, he will be doing a service not only to the House but to the country.

9.53 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): The record shows that this Government have provided sustained financial and political support for the development of space technology and the space industry in Britain. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) for providing me with an opportunity to put some of these facts on the record. I am also grateful for the sustained and well-informed interest that, as chairman of the all-party committee on space, he takes in the subject. In the past five years my Department has invested nearly £300 million in space technology, and the annual expenditure has increased by some 45 per cent. Civil space expenditure across the whole of Government has risen broadly in line with this. Over the same period, the performance of the British space industry has out-paced this growth. From a turnover of less than £100 million in 1979, the industry's turnover is estimated in the current year at £250 million. This year, British companies led the two competing consortia to fill a contract for $150 million to provide maritime communications satellites to INMARSAT. British Aerospace led the successful bid and the way in which the major American space companies were prepared to take a back-seat shows the high standing which the British industry enjoys throughout the world. United Kingdom industry has also secured the largest non-United States share of the most recent procurement by the international telecommunications satellite organisation INTELSAT.

In the defence market, an all-British consortium of British Aerospace and GEC-Marconi followed up its contract for two SKYNET IV satellites by winning a further order this year for a third satellite. The latest contract will be worth some £40 to £50 million. The companies are pursuing international markets in this sector with full Government support and encouragement.

My Department's primary objective in supporting civil space research and development has been to promote the development of profitable industrial and commercial organisations capable of producing and exploiting space hardware, software and services — particularly in communications. Employment in the industry is growing at more than 10 per cent. a year and the current order book is twice the size of annual turnover. Space is a success story, and we are undoubtedly achieving our objective. The continuity of the Government's policy has been an important factor in providing a stable climate for growth, but the responsibility, and congratulations for that growth lie, quite rightly, with the industry itself.

The space business is a risky business and, just as it has been impossible for the space industry to bear the burden of investment by itself, so it has been important for the United Kingdom to co-operate with the Governments and industries of other countries in major development projects. The United States and the Soviet Union have had the economic strength, political will and defence requirement to develop a fully comprehensive space capability. There is now a recognised third force in space —Europe. By collaborating through the European Space Agency, the 11 member states and three associates have between them also developed a comprehensive capability.

Britain was a prime mover in establishing the agency in the early 1970s, and we continue to devote some three-quarters of our space technology expenditure directly to the programmes of the agency. We have in particular concentrated our efforts on the communications satellite programmes and enabled British industry to achieve prime contractorship on every major programme in this sector. This has paved the way for the commercial successes of which I spoke earlier. Our participation in other projects has been necessarily more modest but no less impressive. The guidance system on the European rocket Ariane is supplied by Ferranti and the launcher has delivered its payloads into orbit with such accuracy that the life of the satellites has been extended by up to two years.

The United Kingdom has also an internationally renowned space science community. In the ESA's mandatory science programme, British scientists have been extremely successful in their proposals for flying instruments on European satellites, and in obtaining observation time in competition with proposals from scientists in other member states. The same is true of their co-operation with the United States. The Spacelab 2 shuttle flight, which is due to be launched next week, will carry two United Kingdom scientific experiments—the only non-American experiments selected by NASA for this United States scientific mission. Incidentally, the pallets on which the experiments will be flown were manufactured by British Aerospace.

The Government will continue to support the development of space technology by sponsoring projects

which break new technological ground but also promise long-term commercial potential. I therefore gave full support for the new 10-year long-term plan of the European Space Agency which was discussed at the Ministerial Council in Rome at the end of January.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): My hon. Friend is making a generous tribute to British Aerospace, and that means many of my constituents both in the management and work force who contribute towards the wonderful work in the space programme. The work force and management at British Aerospace equally appreciate the dedication and interest that my hon. Friend and his colleagues in the Government have shown in paving the way towards making sure that the United Kingdom is a major force in the space business.

Mr. Pattie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those kind remarks. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel has already mentioned that he and I were present in French Guiana when the Giotto satellite was launched. We were not only very impressed by the work carried out by the British Aerospace team, but when I met the people concerned I was impressed by their sheer professionalism and dedication. Within the overall plan, I expect the British contribution to provide continued support in communications in the ESA programme, with the development of payloads and on-board switching techniques for the markets of the mid to late 1990s and in existing and new satellite remote sensing programmes.

It being Ten O'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Mr. Pattie: The latter will include not only the development of conventional satellites but their successors, the refuellable, maintainable space platforms which will form part of the international space station capability.

Following the agreement in Rome, work has now begun on the preparatory phase of the European space station-related progamme Columbus. Originally a proposal by Germany and Italy for a pressurised laboratory module and astronaut-tended co-orbiting platforms, the programme has been expanded to take account of British proposals which include platforms operating in the polar orbits, particularly suitable for remote sensing. British Aerospace has now won the ESA contract to lead on the development of all the platform elements in the Columbus programme and its proposals have attracted great interest in the United States from both the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The space station project will entail major advances in technology and in the way in which we operate in space. The presence of the space station will eventually impact on the design of all spacecraft, and the Government believe that it is essential to assess the costs and benefits of the programme from the close involvement which we gain as a full participant in the project definition phase.

We shall also be looking to substantiate the prospects which are foreseen in the programme for major advances in technologies with clearly identifiable terrestrial application, such as robotics, data management and communications. British companies are involved in all these areas and it is important for us to take advantage of the opportunities to build up our technology in them. We also need to gain access to the various parts of the space station for our user community. However, we were keen to obtain leadership on the platform elements because we believe that, particularly in its polar-orbiting form, the platform best meets the needs of those users we have already identified; that it would be attractive to the United States as part of their own capability; that it is well suited to the skills which our industry can offer; and, most importantly, that it looks the most commercially promising part of the programme.

If I have emphasised the more commercial programmes of the ESA, it is because my Department is responsible for the Government's contribution to these. But it would be wrong to discuss space technology without returning to our scientific successes which I touched on earlier and in particular to congratulate the European scientists and engineers involved in the Giotto programme to intercept Halley's comet. I was privileged to be in French Guiana on 2 July when Giotto was launched, as were my hon. Friend who initiated the debate and some of the members of the All-Party Space Committee.

The choice of mission shows great imagination by the European science community. This spacecraft will provide information about comets that is expected to provide clues to the origins of the universe. At the same time it will attract great public attention and generate interest in the achievements of both the United Kingdom and the European space programmes. Great ingenuity has been shown in squeezing as many as 10 experiments on the spacecraft, and one of the British experiments, the dust impaction detector, even makes use of the shield designed to protect the spacecraft during the early stages of the encounter. The spacecraft was primed by British Aerospace leading a European consortium. It is a remarkable compliment to industry's ability to work to severe time pressures that the development has taken less than four years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel said, when the target does not reappear for 76 years, industry could not afford to miss the very narrow launch window which was available. Other areas of British industry could usefully study the techniques practised by our leading space companies to learn ways of increasing quality and reliability.

While our contributions to the programmes of the ESA have grown, we have also seen an increase in the complementary national programme of space technology which my Department supports. Much of this is managed by staff at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, including the National Remote Sensing Centre which is housed at the establishment. The programme involves the development of space technologies which will be relevant to future satellite programmes. It also includes the study and definition phases for some bilateral projects, such as the RADARSAT remote sensing programme which is being jointly studied with the Canadians.

As my hon. Friend is well aware, the Government's space activities involve several Departments and public bodies. I continue to chair the two committees which he established and which co-ordinate policy within Government and discuss policy issues with the space industry and user organisations. However, the Government took the decision earlier this year that there was a need to build on those co-ordinating arrangements,

[Mr. Pattie]

and establish a British National Space Centre to improve the development of space technology in the United Kingdom and to co-ordinate policy more effectively.

A growing range of users of space services is spread across Government, academic institutions and all types of industry. As they have become more aware of the benefits offered to them by space, it has become more important to establish a single focus to which they can turn for advice and technical support. We hope that they will seek to influence the programmes of the centre by making their own financial contributions. Our aim is to improve the use of public resources, and I believe that one of the most effective ways in which we can be sure of achieving this aim is to invite industry to play a major role within the centre. Detailed discussions are taking place, and I hope to be ready to make an announcement in September.

The establishment of a National Space Centre does not signal a new direction in space policy. Rather, it emphasises the Government's commitment to the development of space technology for industrial, scientific and defence purposes. ESA will remain the cornerstone of our civil space activities and I left my colleagues at the Rome Council in no doubt about Britain's continuing role in Europe and our determination to play a major role in space activities.

My hon. Friend referred to direct broadcasting by satellite. Having supported the development of the necessary technology, the Government's view remains that the introduction of an operational direct satellite broadcasting system in the United Kingdom should be carried out as a purely commercial venture. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department has received a representation from the shadow Broadcasting Board on the various feasibility studies that have been undertaken, and I expect his response to be announced soon. In view of that, my hon. Friend would not expect or wish me to go further now.

Even at this relatively late hour, I would like to congratulate my hon. Friend on the timely way in which he has brought this subject to the attention of the House. Britain's involvement in space is a success. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) for his support. This debate has allowed us to give the industry the public recognition which it richly deserves.

Silloth (Travel-to-work Area)

10.7 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for scheduling the Adjournment debates today to slot in an extra one, which has given me the opportunity to raise this matter. I am grateful for the help of your office, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment for cutting short an engagement to reply to the debate.

After a debate on space exploration, we must come down to the problems of Silloth on Solway, in my constituency. However, this is an important subject to me and to many of my constituents. In 1983 and 1984, the Department of Employment carried out a review of travel-to-work areas. The review used data about travel-to-work patterns from the 1981 census of population, and the results were published on 16 July 1984. The new travel-to-work areas and the wards in them make up the building blocks for the revised map of assisted areas published by the Department of Trade and Industry.

In making the calculations, the Department of Employment has made a fundamental error in assigning Silloth on Solway to the Carlisle travel-to-work area instead of the Workington travel-to-work area. To prove that point, I hope to show my hon. Friend that the new travel-to-work formula, based on a random 10 per cent. sample of the population, can go dangerously astray when dealing with such a small sample. In addition, I shall show from the evidence collected from main employers in the area that the majority of the work force in Silloth are Silloth-based and Workington-based rather than Carlisle-based.

It is necessary to understand how travel-to-work areas are defined and how individual electoral wards, which may be 50 or 100 miles apart, are allocated to them. The Department admits that there is no one theoretically correct algorithm for grouping areas in this way. Nevertheless, it has adopted a formula which is described simply as the commuting links formula. Algebraically, that formula is described as

$$\frac{Fa.b}{Ra} \cdot \frac{Fa.b}{Wb} + \frac{Fb.a}{Rb} \cdot \frac{Fb.a}{Wa}$$

Fa.b is the number of journeys to work from area A to area B, Ra is the number of workers who live in area A, and Wa is the number of people who work in area A.

That is sufficient to deter most people from querying whether the Department of Employment has it right. Fortunately, the Employment Gazette described how the formula and algorithm were used in practice. The algorithm used to arrive at travel-to-work areas consisted of five stages. Since my hon. Friend knows all those stages, I will not go through them, except to say that I believe that it was at the fifth stage that the Department made the fundamental error over Silloth on Solway.

If Silloth on Solway was allocated to a TTWA on its merits, it would certainly be associated with Workington on the west coast. However, wards are considered not on their own, but in relation to the commuting links with the next door ward. To the east of Silloth ward lies Waver ward, a large rural area stretching well over to the east near to the Wigton wards. Wigton, naturally and rightly, has close commuting links with Carlisle TTWA, and is

assigned to that. Because most of the rural population, particularly in the eastern part of Waver ward, has, after Carlisle, the closest commuting links with Wigton, Waver ward has been assigned to Carlisle TTWA.

The Department has got Silloth wrong because the industrial estate in Silloth on Solway is technically a few hundred yards within the Waver ward boundary. Most people know it as Silloth airfield industrial estate, and know that it is an integral part of Silloth town, so much so that the vast majority of workers in the factories there come from Silloth. Nevertheless, it completely distorts the figures because technically all the workers from Silloth commute daily to Waver ward a few hundred yards away. That is because Waver ward has been dragged inexorably towards Wigton, which has links with Carlisle, so Silloth is also shown to have the closest commuting links with Waver ward, and is technically also allocated to Carlisle. A study of a map would demonstrate this much more clearly than my explanation.

We thus have the anomaly of a large rural ward such as Waver covering 40 or 50 square miles, not densely populated, but with a majority of people in the eastern part looking to Wigton and Carlisle for their natural commuting links, while tucked away in a small corner on the western extremity of the ward is the industrial estate of Silloth, which then gives a totally wrong loading to the commuting links formula.

As one of the factors governing the choice of algorithm was its ability to produce contiguous areas, the geographic position of Silloth, bounded by the sea on one side and on the other three sides by Waver ward, must mean that it is extremely unlikely that Silloth will be allocated to a different TTWA from the one to which Waver is allocated. This view is confirmed by the travel-to-work patterns.

On the basis of the figures given in answer to my parliamentary question of 15 April 1985, the approximate commuting link factor between Silloth and Waver, based on those in employment only, is 0·07, which is much stronger than any of the factors given in answer to my parliamentary question of 30 April when I asked:

"what was the value of the calculations of the measure commuting links formula for *(a)* Silloth ward and the wards 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13 of Carlisle . . . area". — [*Official Report*, 30 April 1985; Vol. 78, c. *106-7*.]

The answer was 0·00702. The factor between Silloth and Aspatria and Ellen wards was 0·00009, and the factor between Silloth and Castle, Dalton, Netherhall, Northside, St. Michael's, Stainburn and Westfield wards was 0·00010. I also asked about the factor between Waver ward and Wampool and Wigton wards, to which the answer was 0·00014. Between Waver ward and Aspatria and Ellen wards, it was 0·00006, and between Castle, Dalton, Netherhall, St. Michael's, Stainburn and Westfield wards, it was 0·0. If one studies this carefully, it can thus be seen that there is a very strong commuting link factor between Silloth and Waver, which everybody knew without the necessity for the formula which I have described. Thus any argument I make to my hon. Friend that Silloth has been wrongly allocated must also include consideration of Waver ward. The evidence from the census for allocating Silloth and Waver to Carlisle was very slight.

The crucial point is that the commuting factor between Silloth and Waver was 0·07. However, the commuting factor between Waver and Aspatria and Ellen was 0·00006. The commuting link between Waver and Wampool and Wigton was 0·00014. On those grounds alone, Waver was allocated to Wampool and Wigton, which thus had a stronger commuting link by a figure as splendid and as large as 0·00008. That is an incredibly small difference. I estimate that it could represent fewer than 10 journeys in each direction. On that basis alone, Waver was allocated to Wampool and Wigton. The travel-to-work patterns are based on a random 10 per cent. sample of census forms. Thus there could be a number of people commuting from Waver to Aspatria without that being reflected in the sample.

Let us suppose that the true number of journeys from Waver to Aspatria and Ellen was 10. There is roughly a 35 per cent. chance that none of the forms mentioning those journeys would appear in the sample. Similarly, if the actual number of journeys was 20 or 30, there would be probabilities of 12 per cent. and 4 per cent. respectively, but the sample would still suggest that there were no journeys.

If the number of journeys from Waver to Aspatria and Ellen had been 10 rather than zero, the commuting link factor would have been 0·00016—a stronger link than between Waver and Wampool and Wigton. Therefore, the allocation of Waver to the Wampool and Wigton Proto travel-to-work area may have depended on the random selection or otherwise of a single census form.

Because I believe that a random 10 per cent. sample is far too dangerously low a formula to use in a sparsely populated rural area, I conducted my own survey of the five major firms that account for most employment in the Silloth area. My sample shows a very different pattern of commuting from that shown in the 1981 census. However, in some respects our figures agree, which shows that my sample is based on valid criteria. The 1981 census identified 670 people working in Silloth; my sample of five firms four years later identified 700. The 1981 census identified 440 of those workers resident in Silloth. My sample identified 380. The remaining 60 will be made up of employees of smaller firms which I did not survey. Our figures are so close that no one can argue that my survey is inaccurate.

However, the figures show a different result for those commuting into Silloth from other areas. The random 10 per cent. sample of the 1981 census suggested that 110 of the Silloth workers commuted from the Carlisle TTWA and only 40 from Workington. My comprehensive survey, carried out in 1985, showed that only 84 commuted from Carlisle and 236 from Workington. Those are not minor statistical aberrations — they are glaring differences between the figures.

Let me read to the House extracts from letters I have received from the managing directors of the various firms concerned. One firm employing 55 workers states:

"Our staff locations done in a recent survey are as follows — Silloth 21, Maryport 11, Aspatria 11, Wigton 6, Abbeytown 6. 90 per cent. of our staff, therefore, come from the Maryport catchment area."

That managing director goes on to make the point I have endeavoured to make. He says:

"Firstly, all the factories on this airfield of which we are one are not in the Silloth Parish area and are included in the Waver District. The Waver area is allied to Wigton which is allied to Carlisle. With our intimate knowledge of Silloth we can only assume that all people travelling to Silloth Aerodrome and to British Sidac in Wigton are counted as travelling to Carlisle area. In our experience of employing people, our catchment area covers Maryport District in nearly every case. Applications for

[Mr. David Maclean]

jobs come overwhelmingly from the Maryport area. We have had hundreds of applications and have never, ever had an application from Carlisle."

All the other four firms make the same point. One states:

"Total number employed 149. From Silloth 93. From Carlisle 12. From Workington 44."

I do not need an algebraic formula to determine where the strongest commuting links are in that case.

The fifth major employer in my survey gave me this information:

"Total number of staff employed 184. Number from Silloth 46. Number travelling from Carlisle TTWA 22 and number travelling from Workington 116."

The managing director went on to state:

"As you can see from these figures, there is no doubt in my mind that in the case of our company we are providing a valuable service to the Workington TTWA, which has a high level of unemployment, especially in the non-skilled working area which we are mainly employing. We run transport daily, at our cost, from Workington via Maryport to the works and it is clear from the figures that we draw mainly on this area for our labour force."

The 1981 census and my survey show that 60 per cent. of those working in Silloth reside in Silloth. A random 10 per cent. sample from the 1981 census shows that 16 per cent. of those working in Silloth travel from the Carlisle area, and on that basis—a basis of 16 per cent.—the Department of Employment has allocated Silloth to the Carlisle TTWA.

That would be a poor basis on which to make an allocation even if the figure was correct, but I submit that the figure is grossly inaccurate. My comprehensive survey shows that only 12 per cent. of workers in Silloth have commuting links with Carlisle. For Workington, the random 10 per cent. sample shows that only 5 per cent. of the Silloth workers have commuting links with Workington.

However, the correct figure, as evident from my survey, is 34 per cent. There is no doubt that a serious error has been made, and I know that when my hon. Friend has had a chance to read my speech in *Hansard* tomorrow, and study the figures for himself, he will inevitably come to the same conclusion.

I do not expect the Minister to give me an instant answer to the problem I have presented him with tonight. He will have seen from my parliamentary questions that it has taken me eight months of painstaking research to discover the fault in the algorithm and the formula. When confronted with

$$\frac{Fa.b}{Ra} \cdot \frac{Fa.b}{Wb} + \frac{Fb.a}{Rb} \cdot \frac{Fb.a}{Wa}$$

it is difficult for an ordinary hon. Member, without the facilities at the disposal of my hon. Friend, to know what is the correct answer. In this case, I did not even know the correct questions.

I have not mentioned the effect of this error. I have not dwelt on it because it has been my sole intention to prove that the Department has made a mistake in the formula calculations, rather than to recite the catalogue of disaster which will befall the Silloth area if this eror is not corrected. The Minister will know that I am referring to the loss of assisted area status, and I urge him to look at the map and see the isolated and difficult position in which Silloth finds itself. The managing director of one firm said to me:

"The consequent loss of regional development status is quite serious to us, given the fact that a lot of the investment in our company has been made possible by regional grants, and should these be lost, the long-term effects due to the high transportation costs of our product will be quite serious."

Another firm said:

"We brought our business from London because of the regional assistance afforded in the area and the high quality of staff available. If the incentives are taken away, then why come?"

Another firm stated:

"Currently we have proposals pending, with our parent company overseas, for large capital expenditure. The receipt of approval for this expenditure. The receipt of approval from this expenditure and the securing of jobs that this will affect could be heavily dependent on the availability of grant facilities. Currenly, our overseas facilities, with their advantageous tax and grant situations, have received approval for their expenditure, which are already well advanced in action. The loss of our regional grant status could incur unfavourable comparisons and weaken the case for our 1985 capital programme, as well as in subsequent years."

I know that that is not the province of my hon. Friend, but he knows that the Department of Trade and Industry map for regional assistance is based on the figures produced by his Department for TTWAs. In my constituency, the largest in England, with 1,250 square miles. I can find many areas that I would dearly like to see quality for assisted area status, but I am restricting my request only to the town of Silloth on Solway, and for one reason only, and that is because it has been erroneously removed from the Workington TTWA and allocated to Carlisle.

I know that my hon. Friend, with his natural sense of justice and fairness, will want to correct that mistake as soon as possible. I will gladly send him the file and all the papers, and I look forward to a favourable response, if not in his reply tonight, at least when he has had a chance to study the case personally.

10.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) on the way in which he has deployed his case and for using 18 minutes of the time of the House in an excellent way. He has shown by his persistence that the electorate within his constituency were right to have him as their representative following a great by-election. Sadly I was not able to participate, but I enjoyed taking part in the by-election at Workington in a previous Parliament. I know how much the area matters to those who live in it and I am aware that strong representation is important to them. I am only sorry that there are no representatives from the alliance or Labour parties to participate in the debate. I think that my hon. Friend has made up for their absence.

I am glad that there is common ground that the first four stages of deciding travel-to-work areas are recognised as being completely satisfactory. My hon. Friend's arguments were directed to the fifth stage. I cannot give him any hope of change tonight. However, I shall ensure that all his arguments are studied seriously. He will know from a parliamentary answer given to him on 26 April that there has been only one change in the travel-to-work areas. It took place in an area some way away from Silloth on Solway and involved a change between the Swansea and Llanelli areas. That was based on a revision in the 1981 census of population data. I cannot tell my hon. Friend that

there will be a change following his representations, but if there is one it will be because of his persistence and expertise.

The House may be confused by my hon. Friend's description of the commuting links formula. It may help if I spell it out in English. Equation two is the measure of commuting link between two wards calculated as the square of the number of journeys from ward 1 to ward 2 divided by the product of the number of workers living in ward 1 and the number of people working in ward 2 plus the square of the number of journeys from ward 2 to ward 1 divided by the product of the number of workers living in ward 2 and the number of people working in ward 1.

Anyone who has a chance of studying the occasional supplement No. 3 of the *Employment Gazette*, September 1984, volume 92, No. 9, on revised travel-to-work areas will recognise equation one, which I shall give to the House. It is the weighted flow between two wards calculated by scaling up the observed flows of people in each socio-economic group between those wards by the ratio of the number of unemployed of that socio-economic group in the first ward plus the number of people of that socio-economic group working in the first ward to the number of people of that socio-economic group working in that ward. We do that for each socio-economic group.

If this is common ground and if you are still with us, Mr. Speaker, we have isolated the issues. My hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the difficulty of trying to compare the significance of a link to two decimal places compared with others to five decimal places. The House will be grateful for his algebraic and mathematical expertise. He has made the point that this issue matters a great deal to those in the Silloth area. Assisted area status matters. There are always boundary problems and he has recognised that he could have made a case—perhaps not quite so strongly — for other wards within his constituency. That is why we in the Department take these concerns seriously.

My Department has given many detailed answers to questions from my hon. Friend. We have done that, not always with delight because a fair amount of work is involved, because we recognise that it is right for him to be persistent and it is right for us to produce justifications. If it turns out that there is no justification to be given, it is for us to say so openly. I am not prepared to do that to my hon. Friend tonight even in face of the eloquence with which he advanced his case.

In essence, my hon. Friend is saying that nothing "propinqs" like propinquity. It is the closeness between wards that matters. To put it in plain English, is the airfield in the right ward? If the airfield had been in a different ward, the issue might have been far clearer from the beginning and there would not have been a chance of a 10 per cent. sample not carrying the confidence that might otherwise be attached to it. In general, a 10 per cent. sample carries a great deal of confidence and it can be said that one can rely upon it. My hon. Friend has advanced the argument that the exclusion of one census form in the 10 per cent. sample on which his case is based might have made a massive difference for those in the Silloth on Solway area. I think that I have summarised his case pretty accurately.

I reiterate my thanks to my hon. Friend for the way in which he has brought forward his contentions. If I were one of his constituents, I should be confident that no one could have done it better. He has presented his arguments with good humour but with great expertise. I assure my hon. Friend that either I or my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), will write to him when we have had a chance of studying statistics and receiving advice from those who went further than my A-level in mathematics.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 26 July 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Father of the House

Mr. Speaker: On this day 40 years ago, the Father of the House—the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan)—came here for the first time. I am sure that the whole House would wish to congratulate him and to wish him well in the years to come.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Falklands War (Peace Proposals)

9.35 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, in business questions after I had left the Chamber, the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) raised a point of order, which is reported in column 1313 of the *Official Report*, relating in part to a question that I had asked the Prime Minister, in column 1303.

May I take the opportunity of tendering to the right hon. Gentleman my apologies for any embarrassment that my question may have caused him? I apologise also if he feels that paragraphs 5.14 to 5.27 of the minority report in my name are less complete and explicit than they could have been.

The evidence submitted by the Foreign Office, which is published on page 133 of that report, shows the great efforts that the right hon. Gentleman was making during that period. I was only too well aware of these, as I was present in the House at 11 am on Friday 7 May 1982 when he reported to the House on the results of those strenuous efforts in Washington and New York.

Electrical Substations

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

9.36 am

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Mr. Speaker has commented on what happened 40 years ago today. I am privileged to be a Member of the House with my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). When he entered the House 40 years ago with the return of a Labour Government, there was massive work to be done. The troops came home and realised the mess that the nation was in. There were many problems to be sorted out.

My right hon. Friend is with us today. I pay tribute to the marvellous work that the Labour Government did during that difficult period. I do not doubt that my right hon. Friend will remember that day this morning. After checking wherever one can check these matters, I think that I am correct in saying that he is the only Prime Minister who has become Father of the House. He has been a true and faithful servant to all his constituents, the nation and the world.

Behind every great man there is usually a great woman. I refer to Audrey, my right hon. Friend's wife, who has done sterling work in the community. Without her, I do not think that my right hon. Friend could have achieved what he has.

I now sound a serious note. My constituency of Ashfield in Nottinghamshire contains a place called Selston. That is not a village or a town—it is something in between. Many people live in that fairly large area. On the evening of Saturday 13 July 1985, three youngsters —two 11-year-olds and a nine-year-old—climbed into an electrical substation on the housing estate. Apparently, youngsters do that fairly regularly. The children find cigarettes and matches and they go into the substation to pick off bits of the compound that is used for sealing the units. If the compound is running down the transformers, it means that there is a leakage of some sort, because the compound is on the inside and the units are sealed.

The units carry about 11,000 volts. I understand that for some years youngsters have put their hands into the transformers to get "tickled", as they call it. On 13 July, two 11-year-old boys went into the substation. One of them put his hand in and there was an explosion. That boy died the next day, suffering 85 per cent. burns over the whole of his body. The other boy, who went to the Nottingham city hospital burns unit, suffered 55 to 60 per cent. burns and died the following Wednesday in that unit. It was a terrible tragedy and I feel it my duty to bring it to the attention of the House.

There are, of course, regulations and there is an inspectorate. The authority is the East Midlands electricity board. I understand that the substations are examined fairly regularly, but when incidents of this sort happen it is obvious that something is gravely wrong.

There are 645 similar transformers in the county of Nottingham and nationwide there are over 11,000. Not long ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your own county of Sussex, a lad was killed doing the same thing, and the electricity board at that time promised to take action so that it could not happen again. But nothing has been done, the regulations have not been tightened up, and there have been two fatalities in my constituency.

[Mr. Frank Haynes]

It is disturbing to find that there is very easy access to many electrical substations. The electricity boards are making large profits and should be able to earmark funds for the purpose of safeguarding substations.

The wall around the substation where the tragedy occurred is 6ft high. There is no top on it. There are two doors at the front. The danger notice is on the front of the door. Around the outer perimeter of the 6ft wall is a small fence made with chicken wire. The youngsters were able to stand on the fence, climb over the wall and gain entry to the substation.

The *Evening Post* took photographs of one area in the city of Nottingham, Clifton, in which there are several substations. The photographs show clearly what is wrong with them. One of the substations is totally encased and there is no possible access to it unless the doors are open, but there is easy access to the others. As can be seen from the photographs, one is insecure—children can crawl under the fence. Another has a huge hole in the fence. In another there is graffiti on the substation walls, showing that someone has been in there.

The district manager of the East Midlands electricity board at Ilkeston, who is responsible for the area, says that the transformer and switchgear are contained in steel and are completely safe, but there is a pitch running down them, clearly showing that something is wrong. The board suggests that that is because people have tampered with the equipment. It is clear that the substations are not vandal-proof, and I should have thought that in 1985 it would be possible, with proper research, to make substations safe.

I understand that the district manager has also said that there are no laws with regard to fencing. Surely it is time that the Central Electricity Generating Board and the Department of Energy looked seriously at the situation.

I discussed the problem last night with my hon. Friends the Members for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). They assure me that they have similar problems with substations in their constituencies. If the problem exists in places as far apart as Nottinghamshire in the Midlands, Jarrow in the north-east, and Ogmore in south Wales, the Department and the CEGB have a considerable task to put the matter right.

In rural areas the substations are not cordoned off. We know what kids will do; we have all been kids ourselves. They get up to all sorts of things, but when I was young tragedies of this sort did not happen. I met the parents of the boys and they were in a terrible state of grief. Last Sunday afternoon, on the estate where they live, the field was packed and the parents made it clear to me that they wished me to go down to the House of Commons and do something about the problem. They are asking for all substations to be made safe, no matter what the cost. We cannot put a price on life and we all know that the money is available to overcome the problem.

We also want to know what the powers that be will do about the problem. I hope that the Minister can give me, the House, parents on that estate and parents nationwide an assurance that they will do something with a view to overcoming tragedies such as the one that we had on 13 July in Selston, Nottinghamshire. We want something done so that such a tragedy never happens again.

I remember, as I am sure does my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, a chap during the second world war. His name was General MacArthur. He often issued orders. He said, " I want action on this day." That is what I and my constituents are looking for.

I found that the city of Nottingham spends £10,000 a month maintaining and repairing the substations. Multiplied by 12, that amounts to £120,000 a year. The city council says that it spends that money just to stand still and that no progress is made because no sooner has it done the repairs than the position is back to where it was. That is throwing money away.

The Government say that money should be spent wisely. I agree with that. I hope that I spend the money in my pocket wisely. We want the electricity authority and the Department of Energy to spend their money wisely.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): It is our money.

Mr. Haynes: I accept what my hon. Friend says. It is our money. It is the taxpayers' money, and it should be spent wisely in their interests. Something must be done about the problem. I hope that the Minister will satisfy me this morning that something will be done.

The authorities say that, because of vandalism, they are running to stand still. That is not good enough when so much public money is being spent. I agree that a fair amount of cash is needed, but the problem must be overcome. That is why I applied to Mr. Speaker for this debate. I hope that what I have said has been listened to. I hope that the nation notes the fact that the Department of Energy is full of money. It has all the North sea oil revenues and it receives a great deal of money from the electricity consumer. The Department of Energy and the CEGB have a responsibility. I hope that those departments will respond to this morning's serious appeal so that we never again have such a tragedy anywhere in the United Kingdom.

9.53 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alaistair Goodlad): I associate myself with what has been said by Mr. Speaker and by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) about the Father of the House. I am delighted that our debate this morning should be attended by that great House of Commons man.

This debate is about a subject of great seriousness. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having raised the matter. First, I must express my deepest sympathy with the parents and families of the victims of this tragic occurrence to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

On the early evening of Saturday 13 July two 11-year-old boys were in a substation at Selston. They were close to some of the equipment in that substation when there was an explosion which killed one boy outright and so severely injured the other that he died in hospital a few days later. The substation, which is in a housing estate, is what is known as a distribution substation where electricity at 11,000 volts is stepped down to low voltage for distribution to consumers. The main components were a transformer, a low voltage pillar and three interconnected 11,000 volts switches, and it was on the latter apparatus that the explosion occurred.

I shall answer as best I can what has been said by the hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that he will appreciate that investigations into the cause of the accident are continuing and that I should not wish to say anything that might be taken as being prejudicial to the coroner's inquest or to any other legal proceedings that might follow.

As the hon. Member will be aware, a preliminary inquest on the matter of identification was held on Thursday 18 July. There will, of course, be a full inquest later and the date of that is a matter for the coroner. The safety regulations applicable to such electricity substations are laid down in the Electricity Supply Regulations 1937, made under the Electricity (Supply) Acts 1882 to 1936. Regulation 9(*a*) provides that, where energy at high voltage is transformed, converted, regulated or otherwise controlled in substations or switch stations, including outdoor substations, such outdoor substations and outdoor switch stations shall (unless the apparatus is completely enclosed in a metal casing connected with earth, the apparatus also being connected with the system by armoured electric lines) be efficiently protected by fencing not less than eight feet in height or other means so as to prevent access to the electric lines and apparatus therein by any unauthorised person.

The apparatus in the Selston substation was what is known as metal-clad—that is, all the live electrical parts are enclosed within substantial metal covers and insulated to a very high standard. Although there was therefore no statutory requirement for it, the Selston high voltage equipment was in fact enclosed within a substantial brick wall, 6 ft. high, which was fitted with substantial and padlocked wooden doors. The area containing the substation was itself bounded by a fence about 4 ft. high, also with padlocked gates. A notice was fitted on the substation main gates warning of danger and giving details of how the electricity board staff could be contacted. The substation appears to have met in all respects the statutory requirements.

It appears that the explosion occurred in that part of the apparatus forming a link between two of the three 11,000 volts switches. That part of the equipment took the form of a horizontal cylinder, made from a strong alloy forging, 4½ in. long and about 15 in. in diameter which was 3 ft. from the ground. That cylinder appears for some reason to have failed to such an extent that it had been leaking the bitumen compound which formed the insulating material within the cylinder. As the bitumen leaked from the cylinder linking the two switches, the insulation level fell until the short circuit which caused the explosion occurred. All the electrical protection equipment operated properly to switch off all supplies to the substation when the explosion occurred. Detailed examination and tests of this equipment which simulated the electrical events of the previous day were undertaken on the following day and showed that the equipment was in good order and operating correctly.

It seems clear that the bitumen compound had been leaking from the cylinder, during the day time when temperatures are higher, on the day previous to the accident. Some of the local children were getting compound on that day from both the ground and that part of the switchgear where the explosion occurred the following day. It appears that several boys with quite large pieces of compound were seen locally on the day following the explosion. It appears that the two children were playing with this leaking bitumen inside the substation when the explosion occurred.

The cause of the original failure of the cylinder is not yet known and it would be wrong for me to speculate at this stage. All the relevant parts of the equipment are being examined by a specialised engineering laboratory, independent of the East Midlands electricity board, which is attached to a local power station.

All such substations, as the hon. Gentleman said, are regularly inspected by the East Midlands electricity board on a six-monthly basis, but may be visited more often for other reasons. The routine inspections require the signing of a pro-forma detailing any faults found following an examination of the apparatus in the substation, on the basis of a printed check list.

Two employees of the board had in fact carried out such a routine inspection of the substation on 31 May 1985 and their signed report of that inspection revealed the only faults in the substation as being the absence of some small labels. It is inconceivable that those employees would have missed leaked compound and the check list for the switchgear concerned particularly mentions that leakage must be checked for. The floor under that part of the equipment where the explosion occurred is fully open to view.

An electricity board employee was on the scene within half an hour of the explosion and one of the senior engineering inspectors from my Department went to the site on Tuesday 16 July before any significant change was made in the state of the equipment. The board quickly set up its own panel of inquiry which met on Friday 19 July and has met again since. The chairman of the investigating panel is from the board's headquarters and is thus not directly associated with the area in which the accident occurred, and the panel includes an independent safety officer from the Electricity Council.

The switchgear in the Selston substation is from a very well-known manufacturer, was made and installed in 1965, and is very substantial. There has never been a similar occurrence with equipment of this manufacture.

Planning permission is not required for such small substations. They must, however, because they supply ordinary premises at low voltage, be within about 300 yd of the furthest consumer fed from them. There are about 160,000 of that type of substation in England, Wales and Scotland and in the last 10 years there have been no other fatalities. In common with all electricity boards, the East Midlands electricity board makes great efforts to ensure that the public, and children in particular, are aware of the hazards associated with electricity. The board circulates all schools in its area with offers of safety visits, video literature and so on, and these efforts are usually intensified in early summer before the school holidays begin.

The technical operations of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales are governed by the Electricity Supply Regulations 1937, and regulation 38 requires area electricity boards to notify the Department of Energy of all those accidents on its works or circuits which have caused or were likely to have caused injury. The same regulation is followed by one which empowers the Department to investigate any accident or type of accident it wishes to. The East Midlands electricity board has complied with its obligations in that respect.

My engineering inspectorate examine carefully all such notifications made to it and make such visits and investigations of individual accidents as is appropriate. Therefore, this particular accident will be examined in detail by the Department to see whether the regulations have been observed and to identify whether the accident

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discloses any shortcomings in the regulations or in their application. My inspectors will have the benefit of the report from the board's own panel of inquiry.

All the accident notifications to the Department are collated and analyses are made with the object of detecting any trends to enable preventive action to be taken. These analyses go back many years and, for a variety of reasons, the incidence of accidents, fatalities and injuries on the electricity boards' equipment is in gradual but significant decline, and has been so over many years. The most important of the figures that come out of these analyses are published in the Secretary of State's annual reports to Parliament. Accidents in substations to members of the general public, which have resulted in fatality have amounted to six in the past 10 years. All of these took place in substations where, unlike at Selston, the conductors are in the open air, and which are therefore, under the regulations, surrounded with fences not less than 8ft in height. Most of those fatalities occurred after forcible entry and usually in the course of vandalism or attempted theft of equipment. Until this very tragic accident, there had been no fatalities in substations utilising metal-clad switchgear during that period.

There are more than 419,000 substations of all descriptions in the country. The number of injuries to the general public averages 14 per year, and include some falls and other minor matters. In general, the public are not subject to major or continuing hazards as a result of the existence of these installations.

My Department keeps the regulations under constant review and is at present undertaking a major update of the 1937 regulations as a whole. These will be the subject of widespread public consultation before being laid before the House in due course. I believe that experience to date does not indicate any need for radical change to those parts of the regulations applying to substations containing metal-clad switchgear, which have an extremely good safety record. None the less, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that should the results of the investigation into this accident indicate that changes to the regulations are required——

Mr. Haynes: The Minister referred to the distance between the substations and neighbouring residential property. The Selston substation is almost on top of neighbouring property. It must be outside the regulations. Perhaps the substation was there first and the property built later. Nevertheless, it is almost on top of the property.

I am listening carefully to the Minister's promise to examine the regulations closely to determine whether they need to be tightened. However, I am not quite happy with what he has said, although I appreciate that he has not finished yet. I make an application, here today, for a public inquiry into the incident. I did not want to make that point, but the Minister's remarks have drawn me to do so.

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman's point about the location of the substation in relation to the houses will be taken into account in the investigation and the review.

By virtue of section 66 of the Electricity Act 1947, I have the power to cause an inquiry to be held in any case where I deem it advisable to do so, in connection with any matter arising under the electricity supply legislation. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman has said, of the inquiries being carried out by the board and by my engineering inspectorate, and of the verdict of the coroner's inquest, I shall consider whether a public inquiry would be desirable. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman in due course.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising the matter in the House today because it is right that this very tragic matter should be thoroughly examined to see what lessons—which might go towards preventing similar occurrences—might be learned——

Mr. Haynes: A number of points are being drawn out because of what the Minister is saying. Police often go into schools to educate children about crime. For example, they tell them never to accept things from or go away with strangers. Does the Department issue instructions to the Central Electricity Generating Board and its regions to go into schools to educate children about the dangers of the substations, and tell them that they must keep away from them? That point should be seriously considered, as it would help to overcome the problem. As I said earlier, children will be children, so we must educate them to stay clear of such places.

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As I have said, electricity boards undertake a substantial programme of education in schools and provide demonstrations about electricity and its dangers. It is an enterprise in which everybody should join because there are clearly dangers in electricity. However, on the whole, I am confident that the regulations, which are subject to review, are adequate and that the practices are adequate as well.

Child Abuse

10.10 am

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I shall not have to start by facing the difficulties faced by Lord Shaftesbury in 1875 when he wrote to a friend who was profoundly concerned about the welfare of children and said:

"The evils you state are enormous and indisputable, but they are of so private, internal and domestic a character as to be beyond the reach of legislation and the subject would not, I think, be entertained in either house of Parliament."

I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk about child abuse. It has been estimated that more than one child dies every week at the hands of its parents or guardians, and that every year perhaps 50,000 others suffer lesser deaths —physical cruelty, mental torture, gross neglect, sexual abuse or severe emotional starvation within their families.

None of us can fail to experience a strong emotional reaction to the recent cases of child abuse and death which have been so widely reported. There have been errors of judgment and it is essential that lessons be learnt from those. Rather than simply adding to the sensationalistic and censorious responses to these recent appalling tragedies, for which simplistic solutions are too often proposed and social workers are more often than not used as whipping boys, I should like to try to redress the balance and see the problem of child abuse in a clearer context.

Sadly, there is certainly nothing new about child abuse and neglect. The use of pathological terms to describe its roots, causes and effects and the media's preoccupation with horrific cases should not obscure its long-standing nature or delude us into thinking that its incidence and characteristics are any different now from what has been described in literature over the years. Descriptions of barbarous treatment are widespread in literature and popular culture. There are frequent tales of infanticide, ritual sacrifice, mutilation, starvation, flogging and exploitation. It is only relatively recently that a child has been thought to have any right at all not to be abused or neglected.

I hope that this is not an area in which Members will advocate a return to Victorian values. In Victorian times children did not get a particularly good deal, as can be seen from graphic accounts in novels by Dickens and others. By 1822 there were laws for the protection of animals, but it was not until 1889 that, with the first children's charter, neglect and cruelty to children became illegal. The activity of baby farming where children faced a lingering death from starvation was notorious.

I should like to pay tribute to the work of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, founded in 1884. Like so many other organisations, it was founded by philanthropists responding to need as they saw it. In its 100 years over 9 million children have been helped. The society started with a policy of removing children from their homes and when necessary prosecuting their parents, but increasingly it tried to work with families in an attempt to keep children at home. At the turn of the century its enlightened founder, Benjamin Waugh, said:

"It is better to remove evil from the home than remove the child."

We still face precisely the same issue when dealing with child abuse.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): I hope my hon. Friend will allow me to associate myself with her remarks about the valuable work of the NSPCC. She has drawn attention to the work done by its field workers and also to the work that it does centrally and to its resources, such as the valuable Sainsbury library.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for endorsing my remarks. The NSPCC has constantly moved ahead and has pioneered work and performed the ideal role of a voluntary body of embarking on experimental and innovative work, maintaining statistics, expanding research and developing social work services. It also influences legislation and is increasingly involved in educational work.

The one job for which nobody has training is parenthood. Frequently in cases of child abuse we find poorly skilled parents with remarkably disadvantaged backgrounds who are quite unprepared for the demands and pressures that a child places upon them. Many hope that a child will be source of love for them, and are quite unprepared for long days and nights tending difficult children with demanding behaviour. When the strains and stresses on the rest of their life build up, too frequently it is the child who is the butt of their anger.

The majority of child abuse cases involve children under five, although there are increasing numbers of cases involving children over 10; about one child in four is over 10 at the time of the abuse. Apart from physical injury, they fall into categories of failure to thrive, sexual abuse, which is causing increasing concern, neglect, and emotional abuse. Fewer than half live with both their natural parents. The parents are more likely to be unemployed, and nearly two thirds are in receipt of supplementary benefit.

A significant number of the parents have criminal records, nearly half the men, and one in five of the women, according to recent NSPCC research, and a large number of the criminal records relate to violent offences. This raises the issue of the extent to which criminal records should be available to those responsible for child placement. There are many background stress factors on the families. They include marital discord in virtually half the cases, unemployment, and financial problems, but many parents also complain of difficulties with the children, saying that the child is behaving badly.

Significantly, many parents have an unrealistic expectation of how the child should behave, so that when it behaves badly the parent takes it as a personal rejection. Many complain of being socially isolated. Heavy drinking is a factor in about one in five cases, and another factor is a parent with a psychiatric history. Frequently, parents have had experience of being in care and, significantly, of being battered themselves.

It is helpful to build up background information, but it is naive to think that by building up such information one can predict precisely where incidents will occur, because they are profoundly multifaceted. We know of the disasters and the problems, and we know when a child loses its life. Serious injuries and fatalities are in decline. Social workers and public authorities cannot advertise successes. The confidentiality of the parents and children involved mean that they are protected and, as a result, the public always receive a jaundiced picture.

Social workers are particularly vulnerable. Widespread variations in practice exist and one disaster inevitably results in social workers being pilloried. We had a recent

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example in the press of a lady with seven broken ribs being sent home from hospital, an injury which she sustained in a car accident. The lady later died, but this did not result in a letter from the DHSS advising doctors to X-ray motor accident victims. One can imagine the indignation of the medical profession if this one clear case of bad practice had been used as an example for guidelines.

Few people appreciate the complexity of the job that a social worker has to do. Such a worker has to make life and death decisions, he or she has to decide whether or not to place a child on the child abuse register, whether or not to seek a care or supervision order or whether to go for wardship. The social worker has to decide whether or not the child should be removed from its home and if it should be fostered or adopted, or whether rehabilitation should be attempted. All this uncertainty causes delays, stress on the parents and stress on the child. Indecision is often one of the worst eventualities for a child. But throughout this, social workers have to do all that they can to maintain the trust of the parents.

Too often, child care legislation results from some appalling incident. It is interesting that the Curtis report in the 1940s resulted from a case where a child was killed when in the care of foster parents. It resulted in the setting up of the children's departments. In 1973 Maria Colwell died at the age of seven, and the inquiry report into the circumstances of her care was published a year later. Currently there is the Jasmine Beckford case, when again a child was returned from foster parents to a home with a history of violence.

It would be unfortunate if such a case resulted in widespread over-reaction. Social workers are always having to act according to the whims of public pressure. In recent months we have had a great outcry in the media about social workers removing too many children from their families, suggesting that this is oppressive and a sign of the totalitarian state, and that it is not right for children to be brought away from their natural parents. The Family Rights Group has been particularly active in advocating this view.

It would be sad now if we had a widescale over-reaction, as many feel we did after Maria Colwell, where magistrates, social workers and others are so afraid of being pilloried in the press that they over-reacted. We could safely take hundreds and thousands of children into care to lead a rather sterilised life, doing the best that could be done. But it must be right to try as hard as possible to leave a child with the family, with the proviso that if rehabilitation does not work a brave and firm decision must be made because the child needs a secure and predictable future.

We have had other fashions and trends, some more sinister than others. In some of the more Left-wing areas we have recently faced an obsession with a kind of anti-racism where, in cases of black children especially, social workers were interrogated if they decided that they should be removed from their homes. This is profoundly unhelpful to all families and an insult to the overwhelming majority of caring families from ethnic minorities, suggesting that somehow they need a different standard of care. It is especially incensing when some of the more Left-wing despots try to interfere with professional social work practice in this way and are then often the first to point the finger at social workers and condemn them when cases go wrong.

The social worker has a duty to his local authority, and that points in two profoundly opposite ways. The Children and Young Persons Act 1969 requires that

"children shown to be at risk are protected."

The Child Care Act 1980 lays

"a duty on a local authority to work to prevent children having to go into care whenever possible."

Somehow, social workers have to find a way down the middle.

I welcome the recent consultative paper issued by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary on child abuse inquiries, trying to standardise the way in which inquiries are held. It is essential to hold such an inquiry speedily as soon as there has been an incident. The appalling cost of inquiries at present—up to £500,000 in one case—simply to have the local authority go through much of the same information that is gone through in the court case is unhelpful. We need a standardised way of learning from mistakes, adopting a similar approach to all inquiries so that comparisons can be made.

The British Association of Social Workers has been working for many months on policy papers for codes of practice in cases of child abuse, trying to look long term at the issues involved rather than simply responding to a crisis.

The emphasis laid by all is on the need for training. It was perhaps simplistic to think that a generic social worker could be produced after perhaps one year's training. Increasingly what is required is post-qualifying experience. The Seebohm idea of one front door so that families did not have to go to a variety of agencies is laudable, but to deal with the very difficult issues involved in child abuse must require post-qualifying training and experience.

In many ways, the probation service handles its training better. There is a major problem in that social workers do not receive mandatory awards. They go on their initial training as a result of secondment. It has been tentatively suggested that this makes it particularly difficult for colleges to fail CQSW students who are on secondment. This is an issue which I would like to see looked at further.

Above all, basic training must include a practical understanding and appreciation of child development. In most of the cases that have arisen the child has suffered considerable weight loss, which is one of the first signs of unhappiness and emotional distress. It is essential that some of this knowledge which health visitors have is understood more widely by social workers.

There is also the factor emphasised in the Maria Colwell report that the ability to communicate with children alone is essential. It is not possible to work only through the parents. Direct contact must be made with the child. Again I welcome the letter from the chief inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate to all authorities emphasising the need actually to see the child. I am constantly struck by the number of cases where a huge number of visits have been made but the child has not actually been seen. The child needs to be seen.

In my view, consideration should be given to adding a little more to the obligations of a family whose child is put on the child abuse register. That parent, for instance, might be entitled to a written statement in the way that in court an accused person who is refused bail is given a

written statement of the reasons. Is it unreasonable for the parents whose child is placed on the child abuse register to have a written statement explaining their obligations and what is expected of them? Amongst the ideas that I suggest is, first, that for a child who is not attending a day nursery there should be regular medical inspections. Seeing a child unclothed at regular intervals is a vital ingredient. It is very hard for a social worker visiting a family to ask a child to remove its clothes. That needs to be done by a member of the medical profession.

There should also be an obligation on the parent to inform the local authority or the person responsible of any change in the location of the child. Frequently a disaster has been preceded by a change in the home circumstances —either the child has gone to live with someone else or there has been another significant change at home. Frequently it is a change which might not initially give rise to concern. For example, a father finding a job may to the uninitiated seem to be a good move, but it may mean that the mother is more isolated and more lonely, and the child is more at risk. It is vital for any change in circumstances to be investigated and considered.

Similarly, there is an impact on a family if there are changes in its support team. If a family aide leaves, or if a health visitor leaves, it is essential to recognise the significance and the impact that it may have on the child.

It is essential for management training to be introduced for the social work organisations. Social work departments are recent creations. There is no reason to despair—they have come a long way in a short time — but good management training is vital.

It is also important to have a qualified, experienced worker in each authority responsible for consulting on child abuse cases. The person who holds the child abuse register should not be an unqualified clerical assistant. It is essential to have someone who can give guidance and advice and weigh up information coming in to him.

I wish to spend a few moments discussing the input of the multi-disciplinary team. Children live in an environment in which their schools, their doctors, their health visitors, their local policemen — all sorts of people—have a part to play. A multi-disciplinary team is vital for dealing with cases of child abuse. However, it needs to be practical. It must know who is the chairman and what decisions have been reached. It cannot be just an exchange of hunch, intuition, feeling and suspicion. It must be a practical body which sets out clearly categorised points for action. Moreover, when the points for action have been established, there must be a specific recommendation about the action that needs to be taken if something goes wrong. It is easy enough to prescribe a recipe, but it is not so easy when one finds that the child is not there when one knocks at the door. To whom does one turn then? All of these eventualities need to be clarified.

The general practitioner has a particularly important role to play, but he does not always face up to this role. A recent research project on multi-disciplinary teams suggested that the general practitioner turns up only at 10 per cent. of the conferences to which he has been invited. The general practitioner's contribution is important. In the Maria Colwell case there was comment about the failure of the general practitioner to note the signs of child abuse. The Short report on children in care also referred to the vital role of the general practitioner and his reluctance sometimes to report suspected abuse by parents who are also his patients. A child has a right not to be abused. When he is making up his mind, that should be the overriding concern of the doctor. The child is his patient, too.

Teachers see a great deal of children when they are at school, but frequently they are remarkably unaware of the signs of child abuse. So the training of teachers is also important. A child who is reluctant to change for games may be hiding a bruise. Another sign may be that a child does not want to go home. That is particularly true of the child who wants to run away. It is essential that teachers should know what to do about such worrying signs. Health visitors, who have a practical knowledge of child development, also have a key role to play.

One member of the team who receives wide praise is the police officer. The police have become specialists and extremely sophisticated in dealing with cases of child abuse, particularly sexual abuse. They have the reputation for straightforward but sensitive communication with parents as well as for taking statements prior to any legal proceedings. They make a significant contribution to the team.

Inevitably, tension can arise from the conflict between the need for confidentiality and the need to communicate about children at risk. Guidance on how to weigh up the conflicts between the different professional groups involved would be helpful.

Magistrates are as vulnerable as social workers to the pressures of public opinion and to the danger of making decisions which eventually result in disaster. I hope that this debate on child abuse will be used as an opportunity to discuss once again the future of our juvenile court arrangements: whether it makes sense to have adversarial conflict between the child and a local authority, in which parents have no official standing, or whether we should establish family courts and an inquisitorial system which would allow the court to become a seeker after the truth and to call expert witnesses, instead of being told that certain evidence is not admissible. Court delays can be particularly damaging to a child. A child of three months about whom a decision takes three or six months to be made spends two thirds of its life as the victim of indecision.

The public have a role to play. After a disaster has occurred we are too often told that somebody knew something, or thought something, or had heard something. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has played an excellent role in maintaining public confidence, but particularly at a time when families are geographically separated it is very important that good neighbours should be prepared to take action and to inform the relevant authorities of their concern.

I appreciate the steps which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security is taking to review the procedures and to provide further guidelines in cases of child abuse. It is essential that public confidence should be maintained. For this reason I urge him to think again about the collection of national statistics. None of us can fail to have powerful professional, political and above all personal reactions when things go wrong. I urge him not only to consider the natural outrage that is felt when disasters occur and to make every effort to learn from the mistakes, but to reach his conclusions with a full appreciation of the complexity of the task with which professional social workers and

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others have been entrusted and with an awareness of the good practice and of the progress that is being made in many areas.

10.35 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): Before the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) leaves the Chamber, may I say how very pleased my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and I are that he has listened to our short debate. The Government join the Opposition in warmly congratulating the right hon. Gentleman upon his 40th anniversary as a Member of Parliament. We value having him as the Father of our House. We hope that he will long continue to play that role.

Today the right hon. Gentleman looks very much as he did in that splendid general election photograph of 1945, which is copied this morning in *The Times*. The importance of his election to his then Cardiff constituency and the importance of that watershed general election victory by the Labour party in 1945 passed me by entirely. I did not notice it. My only excuse is that I was then only eight days old. My mind was, alas, on other things. The House warmly congratulates the right hon. Gentleman on his anniversary.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am very grateful to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. May I intervene to congratulate the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on her very interesting and wide-ranging speech, to which I listened with great attention. In the past I had some small responsibility for these matters. The hon. Lady referred to the consequences of the Seebohm commission. We have been unable to reconcile the care of the child with the control of the child. When they are in two separate hands, it is bound to be a recipe for division. The care of the child and the control of the child should surely be in the same hands, or there should at least be the same over-arching responsibility for them.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1969 has not worked out as it should have done, because the children's department in the Home Office, which was able to reconcile those two responsibilities, has disappeared. I am not suggesting that there should be an overhaul of the administration, but I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will consider carefully the hon. Lady's point about the need for reconciliation of the tension between magistrates and social workers. That cannot be good for the future welfare of these children. I hope that he will forgive me for saying that. I fear that I shall have to leave the Chamber very soon, but I shall read his speech.

Mr. Patten: Characteristically, the right hon. Gentleman has pre-empted a large part of my speech. I shall turn from time to time during it to exactly those tensions. When the right hon. Gentleman has a chance to read my speech, he will see that his wise words are reflected in what I am about to say. I join him in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West for the characteristically measured, balanced and articulate way in which she dealt with this most difficult problem. The House listens to her with respect because she has experience of these problems in both the social work and voluntary sectors. She is also a distinguished justice of the peace.

It is curious that my hon. Friend's Adjournment debate should be on the day after the trial of those involved in the tragic case of Tyra Henry. That case, and cases like it, cannot fail to stir the emotions of everyone who reads about them. I appreciate that, and I share the abhorrence which has been well reflected in what has been said about the cases that have occurred this year. However, those emotions must never be allowed to cloud the real problems that exist for social workers, the courts, doctors and others who have the difficult task of trying to balance the rights and welfare of the child with the need to return a child to his or her family, while ensuring that the protection of the child is paramount. The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth mentioned those tensions.

Recent tragic cases have brought home to us all the sad extremes to which parents may go in abusing their children. But they are extremes, and there is a danger that they may give a false impression that all is failure. Such statistics as we have from the NSPCC and other bodies seem to demonstrate that, although child abuse cases must always be matters for considerable concern, there has been a welcome levelling-off, if not a slight decline, in the incidence of child abuse in recent years. My hon. Friend made an important point about whether our national statistics are adequate for our purposes. I wish to deal with that point in more detail than I can fit into the short time that remains, so I shall write to my hon. Friend and set out my views.

One problem is the under-reporting of child abuse, whether it be physical or mental. It is interesting that we have had many more reports of child sexual abuse during the past two or three years than we have ever had. Does that represent an increase in that disgusting practice, or does it represent an increase in the reporting of such cases because people are now prepared to talk about it? I believe that the latter is true, and that the incidence of reporting has been the most important trend in recent years.

The Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Patten: I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment — the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) — who has considerable experience in social work issues, agrees with that.

Professional staff in all disciplines and in all authorities who are in contact with children and families work extremely hard, with much unpublicised success, to help families who have problems. However, I should make it clear that a minority of social workers, social work managers and their political masters—the councillors in borough, district and county authorities — have rightly been criticised for their failings. But they are a tiny minority. The vast majority of social workers perform their difficult tasks extremely well. Most of us in the Chamber this morning would find it acutely difficult to perform those tasks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that, sadly, some teachers, policemen, magistrates, health visitors and members of the public have not acted as responsibly as they might have done in some cases?

Mr. Patten: That has sometimes been the case, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that only a small minority are involved. An unfortunate side effect of cases such as the ones about which we have read this year is that the entire profession gets a bad name for the failings of the few. That is not to say that the few should not be strongly criticised, or that the failure of management properly to direct social workers in their tasks should not be exposed. We should also expose the failings of a small minority of councillors, especially in one or two London boroughs, who have interfered dramatically with the professional judgments of social workers and made their jobs almost impossible.

These are not anecdotal remarks from a Conservative Minister. One need only read a report in last week's edition of the journal *Community Care* from social workers in the London borough of Lambeth, who resent the political interference that makes their jobs much more difficult. Councillors, having laid down policy guidelines, should not give in to the temptation of interfering with professional judgments. That is not their role.

All our efforts in the community stress that we must have an integrated approach to dealing with child abuse. A variety of forms of help can be made available to rehabilitate families. Authorities and voluntary organisations have developed a wide range of facilities, such as day and family centres, which provide much advice and help. In parallel to this activity, we must encourage the entire community to understand its role in helping families in trouble. That echoes a remark made by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West. For example, there has been an encouraging growth in self-help groups in the community which offer assistance to families under stress — perhaps with telephone help lines. We should encourage the continuing growth of help in the community and care by the community for children at risk.

However, we must not be complacent. My hon. Friend referred, kindly, to some of the initiatives taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health and myself. We cannot stop there. We have a considerable task ahead of us in ensuring that tragic cases are avoided in the future. No one in the House would suggest that changes in the law, the guidance that we send out, the statements that I make from the Dispatch Box attempting to influence social workers, social work practice, social work management and those who direct social workers will stamp out the problem. We know that that will never happen, but we must redouble the efforts that we have made during the past few months to ensure that such cases become less likely.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Although I agree entirely that voluntary organisations and communities can help, we must ask how much a voluntary organisation can do in a case of child abuse before a professional judgment is needed. Neighbours looking after a family which they know is under stress may not always see the signs of abuse. Reliance on voluntary services must be limited because, in most cases, professional judgments are needed.

Recently, I heard about a Dr. Barnardo's pilot scheme for providing day fostering to parents under stress. The scheme looks after the child, and teaches the mother how to look after her children properly. Although it is a voluntary organisation, I believe that the professionals must judge how much that stress could be eased by removing the child from the home for a few hours a day. I am worried that if there is a reliance on voluntary organisations the necessary professional judgments will not be made.

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening because he has raised some important points. I know of his interest in these matters. I agree that we must use voluntary organisations carefully. Professional judgments must not be suborned or second-guessed by voluntary organisations, individuals or politicians. However, professional social workers are employed by organisations such as Dr. Barnardo's and the NSPCC. We need partnership, and I believe that social work departments should take the lead in organising voluntary groups and bringing them together so that the problems to which the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) referred can be resolved.

In the nine minutes that are left, I hope that I shall have time to pinpoint the six main points of our overall strategy. The first is that we must continue to learn lessons from serious cases that arise. Based on experience that we have gained from such investigations, on 4 July we issued a consultative paper which sets out to speed up the process of investigation. I am extremely pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West gave it such a warm welcome. We had close consultation with the social work profession, which also has warmly welcomed the paper.

I remember doing an interview on a BBC radio programme a couple of weeks ago, when I made that announcement. At the end of the interview the rather surprised announcer said that the BBC had telephoned the British Association of Social Workers, which said that it agreed with everything that I had said. I was delighted about that warm welcome. I am not criticising the BASW, but simply saying that it was a great disappointment to the BBC commentator.

Secondly, we must make sure that the law is working well. We responded quickly to the excellent report by the Select Committee on Social Services. Child care law is the essential legal foundation on which much of our work to provide help for abusing families is built. We intend, through our current review of child care law to produce a much clearer and much more consistent legal framework in which child care practitioners can operate. That is critical, because there is an enormous area of overlap between the work of my Department and that of the Lord Chancellor's Department. Over the past few months we have had a very helpful set of informal consultations with a wide range of groups of those involved about possible changes and potential benefits that may accrue from changes in child care laws.

There has been a suggestion that that is taking rather a long time. All that I would say to those who say that we are taking a long time is that it is an incredibly complicated area. We have a substantial number of consultation papers, which stand a foot or so high. It is a very complex law. Strong feelings and human emotions are closely involved. However, we shall issue a consultation paper in the autumn—by which I mean the autumn—so that those interested can look at our ideas for reform. Those ideas will of course be related to the general examination being conducted by my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, into the concept of family courts. That idea

[Mr. Patten]

does not fall within the remit and responsibilities of my Department, but should such things come about in child care law that would be critically important.

Thirdly, we must make absolutely sure that our guidance is good. We must have a sound legal foundation on which we can continue to develop the procedural framework for dealing with child abuse. We are trying to develop the two things together. I am not waiting for the final reviews of the legal framework for child law before developing a better and tighter procedural framework for dealing with child abuse. The message from so many child abuse inquiries—alas, there have been many in the past — has pointed to the critical importance of good collaboration among authorities. My hon. Friend also referred to that matter.

Over the past 15 years successive Governments have issued a wide range of advice in that area, and we believe that the time is now appropriate for a much more comprehensive review of that material — to bring the whole lot up to date, to try to make it as sensible, but as direct, as possible, and to try to introduce advice for the first time ever about the extremely difficult and sensitive area of child sex abuse. I hope to be able to provide a collaborative framework within which professional and voluntary sector child care practice can develop. We are also looking at prevention and training, to which my hon. Friend referred. We hope to issue a further consultative paper by the end of the year.

If anyone is impatient with the idea of producing consultative papers, let me tell him that again it is a complicated area. We must consult the professions involved and carry them with us, because it is the social workers on the ground who have to do those exceptionally difficult tasks. However, I am determined that the guidance that will flow from the consultation by the end of the year will be definitive; of the sort that we have not seen before in social work practice.

Fourthly, we must monitor what the statutory social service departments actually do. It is sometimes forgotten by the general public and the media that local authorities run social work departments. They have the legal responsibility for looking after children in care. It is we who have to lay down the guidance, and the development of the professional skills of social workers is an essential part of our bid to improve services. As a contribution to that development, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set up on 1 April this year a Social Services Inspectorate. I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West said about the work of the inspectorate so far. It was set up with the agreement of the statutory authorities. I welcome the tribute that she paid to the work already done by the chief inspector, Mr. Utting, who sent out a letter giving additional guidance on child abuse.

One of the first tasks that I have set the Social Services Inspectorate is to have a radical, rapid look at practice on the ground in connection with child abuse and report back as a matter of urgency so that we can build those conclusions into guidance which we shall introduce in order, we hope, to minimise the risk of tragic cases such as have been described today.

Fifthly, we are introducing regular structured reviews of the circumstances of children in care, trying to balance the needs of children's families and the worries and concerns of social work departments against the needs, interests and welfare of the children. In the light of the work that we are doing on child care law, we are looking again at the guidance that we are giving on that.

Finally, we hope to promote throughout the social work profession and the social work world, nationally and locally—it is at local level that so much is done—the idea that common sense is critical in what social workers do, and that in the continuing debate on whether one should be more or less cautious about a child's welfare, whether to return it to a family should there be any element of risk, in the last resort it must be the welfare and safety of the child that come first.

Recognising that the individual social worker has a difficult role, we believe that he or she must in the end follow the basic procedures laid down — the basic guidance that I gave in April this year. That is that if a child is at risk, and if a social worker has been told to visit and see that child, the social worker must do so. There is no excuse whatever for any social worker, whatever the difficulties he is working under, not to visit a child who is deemed to be at risk. Equally, there is absolutely no excuse for any social work managers not to have definitive instructions and structures within which social workers work. They should give guidance and make sure that it is carried through.

I think that social workers in some parts of the country would be greatly helped in carrying out their task if they were not interfered with by the politicians, who sometimes control and adversely affect what they do, as we have seen recently in Lambeth and one or two other London boroughs.

The Government are determined to introduce by Christmas a new set of guidelines for the entire social work profession that will be based on the six main points that I have mentioned. We hope that this will minimise further tragic cases of the sort that have so appalled the nation.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 5 (Friday sittings).*

Okehampton Bypass

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the bypass of Okehampton on the A30.

The House will know that earlier this year the Government's compulsory purchase orders for a route for the bypass to the south of the town were referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament under the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945. That Committee, by a majority of four to two, recommended rejecting the orders, and proposed instead a route to the north of the town. This recommendation was contrary to that of the independent inspector, who held a 96-day public inquiry during which all the issues were exhaustively discussed. He endorsed the southern route which has been the route preferred by all successive Administrations since 1976. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I agreed with the inspector, that the balance of environmental and economic advantage lies in favour of the southern route, and we proceeded to make the orders.

One thing is clear — everyone is united about the need for a bypass, although I am fully aware of the strong and conflicting opinions which the route of the proposed bypass has aroused, both in Parliament and in the south-west of England. This issue must be resolved once and for all.

The Joint Committee believes that a route to the north could be constructed quickly. I must tell the House that it takes on average 13 years to plan and build a road.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Rubbish.

Mr. Ridley: With the best will in the world and no difficulties arising, I doubt whether we could complete a northern route in much under eight or nine years. It could be much more if there were difficulties, or if the inspector was again to recommend the southern route. For the people of Okehampton and the people of Devon and Cornwall the long delay and the uncertainty would be intolerable when the southern route could be completed in three years.

Parliamentary Select Committees make reports to Parliament, and it is for Parliament to accept or reject them. In this case a procedure for doing this is laid down in the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act. It provides in section 6 for a confirming Bill to be brought in. Accordingly, the Government will introduce such a Bill, at the earliest opportunity, to confirm the southern route.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is it not an outrage—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".]—that the Secretary of State should announce such an insensitive and arrogant decision? How can he possibly pretend that he can justify the destruction of an area of supreme natural beauty——

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Rubbish.

Mrs. Dunwoody: —which is a national asset, on the basis of needing to push ahead with a bypass because it will take 13 years to find an alternative route?

If work were started immediately — the right hon. Gentleman knows very well that the southern route cannot be started immediately because a Bill will have to pass through the Houses of Parliament—it would still take until 1988 to finish the requisite road. Will the right hon. Gentleman admit that if the northern route were started as quickly it would take only two more years to complete a route which would do no damage and which would be environmentally acceptable?

As the northern route has already been surveyed, all the preparatory work has been done and the environmental groups concerned have said that they would be anxious to speed the agreement of the planning procedures for the northern route, how can the Minister justify ignoring all the evidence and the views of the Joint Committee? He is saying, in effect, that the interests of the nation as a whole are of no concern to him and that only financial matters concern him. He should resign and do something constructive to protect transport in Britain.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady has some explaining to do. On 3 September 1976, the then Labour Government issued a press notice which read:

"The preferred route passes to the south of Okehampton."

If that was the view of her party then, she has to tell us why she has changed her mind. She will have an opportunity to do that when the confirming Bill comes forward. Secondly, my Department advises me that, if we were to go for a route to the north of the town, the inspector's report on the line order could be expected to be with the Department by 1989. The inspector's report on the compulsory purchases order might be with us by the end of 1991, assuming that there were no difficulties. It would then take three years to construct the road. The earliest completion date would be about 1994.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Absolute rubbish.

Mr. Ridley: If the inspector were to consider the route to the north at a public inquiry and report that the route should go to the south, as his predecessor did, it is highly likely that we should spend eight or nine years only to find ourselves in the same position without any route for Okehampton.

The hypocrisy of the Labour party sickens me. The bypass means jobs. There will not be jobs in Devon and Cornwall unless I get the bypass built. If the hon. Lady cares about the unemployed, she will be true to what she knows is the right decision.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a Back-Bench day. I ask hon. Members to put their questions briefly.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, if the Department of Transport had obeyed its own policy guidelines as laid out in paragraph 58 of the 1976 circular—

"no new route. . . should be constructed through a national park . . . unless",

in effect, there is no "reasonable alternative" — the bypass could have been built along the northern route long ago? Further, will he take aboard the fact that by so arrogantly overruling his own policies and reversing a decision that had been carefully considered by a Joint Committee he is creating a constitutional precedent that will undoubtedly arouse a great deal of criticism in this place, in another place and outside? Have we not had enough banana skins in recent months, and have not inspectors and Departments come to wrong decisions before?

Mr. Ridley: I understand that my hon. Friend took the opposite view to mine in the Joint Committee. I must complete his quotation from the national park circular. It continues:

"Application of the policy to some parks does, however, give rise to particularly difficult considerations because of their geographical location."

This is an example of just that. The Statutory Orders (Special Procedures) Act 1945 lays down the procedure for the report of a Joint Committee to be considered by Parliament. Therefore, it is not unconstitutional to follow the carefully laid down provisions in the Act. Furthermore, my hon. Friend may not be aware that, on 4 May 1949, the then Labour Government introduced a confirming Bill to alter the report of a Joint Committee on the Mid-Northamptonshire Water Board Order. There is nothing unique or unconstitutional about what the Government are doing.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Is it not a fact that the national parks are vested in this House and it is for the House to decide whether to accept the Minister's judgment, which many of us believe to be wrongly based in terms of its historical perspective and in terms of the estimate which he has given to achieve the northern route? Exaggerating his claim will not help his case when it comes to the House. Will he confirm that no Whip will be placed on Conservative Members and that the issue will be judged on its merits? Will he confirm also that there will be no attempt to impose a governmental view on what should be an environmental choice for all right hon. and hon. Members?

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that it is for Parliament to take a decision upon reports prepared by the Committees of Parliament. This issue can be resolved only by Parliament. Committees do not make decisions; they make recommendations to Parliament which, in the end, has to decide one way or another. We are giving Parliament an opportunity to do that. As to what guidance is given to my right hon. and hon. Friends, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. I shall be interested to hear what guidance the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) gives to his hon. Friends.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): As the hon. Member whose constituency is affected, I congratulate my right hon. Friend and the Cabinet on their decision. I am sure that he will know that the people of Okehampton and Cornwall are delighted as well. This is a courageous decision and the right one in the circumstances. I ask him to urge the Government forward, enabling the Bill to have a speedy passage through Parliament, so that the sufferings of the people of Okehampton and Cornwall will be ended finally. The Leader of the Opposition came to the west country recently and said that there would be hundreds of thousands of new jobs under a Labour Government. It is extraordinary that the very action that would help unemployment and the economic situation in the south-west is now being frustrated by the Opposition and the alliance.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am sure that he is right that we must consider the interests of his constituents and the people of Devon and Cornwall. It might interest the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) to know that, when her Government consulted the people of Okehampton and its surrounding area in 1976 in a comprehensive questionnaire to which 1,030 people filled in the answers, 55 per cent. expressed themselves unquestionably in favour of the southern route. The people concerned, whom my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) represents so ably, are clearly in favour of the Government's decision.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): Does the Minister appreciate that, while we recognise the importance of jobs and the need for a bypass at Okehampton, his statement will be seen as shameful? He has come to the House on the last day of this term to make it and, for the sake of two years, he is prepared to desecrate one of our national parks. This is final proof of the Government's complete disregard of things environmental.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must check. I was willing to make the statement yesterday, but it was agreed between the usual channels, including his own usual channels, that I should make the statement today instead. I was determined to make a statement to the House rather than answer a written question, and it is hard to be hauled over the coals when I have taken the trouble to come here when the House is sitting.

The hon. Gentleman is constructing an argument on a false premise. He said that adopting the northern route will take two years longer, and his case and that of the right hon. Member for Devonport rests on that proposition. However, that is not true. The northern route would take eight years at least, and perhaps still longer. I have no intention of short-circuiting the proper procedures for consulting and for public inquiries, and I am sure that he would not wish me to do so. Are the Opposition suggesting that we would cheat the people of Okehampton of the opportunity of consultation on a northern route? There is no northern route, and we should have to start from scratch. I advise the hon. Gentleman to get a better argument before he comes to discuss the merits of this when we debate the confirming Bill.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the events in the Joint Committee, while within the letter of the original law, were not within the spirit of it, and that a small alteration to the proceedings of the House would stop a rehearing of a public inquiry, which is what took place on this occasion? I hope that my right hon. Friend will use whatever muscle he has to help that change take place.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. The orders were referred to the Joint Committee because it was proposed to take open space, not national parkland. The 1945 Act is relevant only where open space land is taken. It was held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that inadequate open space land could be offered in return for the land that was to be taken. The Joint Committee was asked to look not at national parks or the route of the bypass, but at the quality and quantity of the replacement land. Therefore, it greatly widened its remit —I am not criticising it—by going into the issue of where the bypass should be, as that had been determined by a public inquiry endorsed by my right hon. Friend and myself.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Given that the Secretary of State knows that there is general agreement that something must be decided soon

for the people of Okehampton and Cornwall, will he nevertheless accept that people are opposed to his attitude because he knows that the Government will change the procedures for planning inquiries in major legislation to be introduced in the coming Session? He knows that he is creating a precedent of breaking into national parks, which many people regard as extremely distasteful.

Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the question put to him by my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)? In the knowledge that this is not a party political issue, will he confirm that there will not be a party-political, determined, steam-rollered vote on a matter of vital importance for jobs and the environment? This is a matter not of Government policy but of local government policy, and hon. Members should be left to decide freely on it. The Government should not be dictating what some of their Members should do on a decision with which they fundamentally disagree.

Mr. Ridley: I quite see why the hon. Gentleman does not want to whip the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon)—he has apologised to me for not being here—who is keen that the road should be built. I repeat that questions on what is done by my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary are not for me to respond to.

I take the hon. Gentleman to task on his suggestion that there is something improper about the proceedings, which are strictly in accordance with the 1945 Act. The decision was referred to Parliament when it was decided to put the matter before the Joint Committee. The procedure is laid out in the Act and all the Government are doing is scrupulously following procedure. As the high court of Parliament has now made this decision, nobody can complain. The democratic nature of what I am suggesting is patently clear and obvious. The House can decide by vote and that is the right way to settle the matter.

Mr. Harris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his decision will be received with massive relief in Cornwall, not least in my constituency, which is the most westerly and remote in the south-west peninsula, because poor communications are the biggest problem that Cornwall faces in trying to attract jobs? Should not the so-called environmentalists, and those who misguidedly support them in the House on this issue, stop and think what enormous damage they are doing not just to Okehampton, which again this weekend will suffer its usual horrendous traffic jams, but to the whole economy of Cornwall, to every industry, to farming, to fishing and, not least, to the tourist trade?

Mr. Ridley: I strongly agree with my hon. Friend that this is a matter of vital importance to the local people of Okehampton, Devon and Cornwall. For the House to ride roughshod over their economic interests is tempting our tolerance too far. I hope that hon. Members who are not certain about this matter will take the opportunity of the recess to go down to Okehampton and discuss it with the people living in the south-west. I am sure that my hon. Friend can arrange for them to meet the people who are vitally affected by these decisions.

If we are at all serious in our desire to find more employment in any part of the kingdom, we must not stand in the way of doing away with impediments to the growth of business and the improvement of the tourist trade. The general economic position of the south-west is grievously threatened by the absence of this road. If jobs mean anything, they have to be provided by uncorking this bottleneck.

Many people, including the inspector who held the public inquiry, believe that the southern route for the road would do less damage to the environment than a northern route would. It is not as if there is a solid opinion on the environmental aspect. There are two views on that, too. I am certain that the balance of advantage lies in the route that the Government propose, and I hope that hon. Members will take heed of what local people want.

Mr. Steen: I think that the House knows that I have a sneaking admiration for my right hon. Friend and for the way in which he has handled the bus and aviation Bills. However, does he realise that he is wasting time by pushing for a route through the national park because his officials have said that that route can be built by 1988 whereas the northern route cannot be built by 1990? Will my right hon. Friend check during the recess with officials who are against the northern route to see whether they are right in saying that that route will take eight or nine years longer? Officials have made that claim, but experts who have been involved on work on other motorways and dual carriageways have said that there would be only a two-year difference between the two routes.

Will my right hon. Friend also please realise that if the southern route were built through the national park, a bottleneck would occur at the other end of the dual carriageway because there is only a single carriageway from Okehampton to Launceston? All that we shall do is to move the bottleneck to the other side of Okehampton.

Does the Secretary of State realise the damage that he will do to the Conservative party by uniting the environmental and conservation lobbies throughout Britain who will be determined that the southern route should not proceed? Does he really want to drive a coach and horses through his own side?

Mr. Ridley: We hope to complete the Launceston part of the road in roughly the same time scale as the southern bypass could be completed. If we went for a northern route for the bypass, there would be a long period when the only bit that was not proper double-track bypass would be the centre of Okehampton where the present road goes. That would produce chaos in the town as well as for those who are trying to pass through to Devon and Cornwall.

I have checked endlessly with all concerned and the times that I gave for the completion of the line order and the CPOs by 1991 is the fastest that my officials think that it could possibly go if all goes well. I must take my hon. Friend through this likelihood. An inspector of great repute, having considered the matter at great length and heard all the evidence over 96 days, has come down in favour of the southern route for environmental as well as economic reasons. Therefore, if another equally impartial and wise inspector were to consider the evidence again at a public inquiry into a northern route, it seems prima facie likely that he would come to the same conclusion as the first inspector. If that happened, we should have gone through six years or so and still no decision would have been taken and no possibility of taking a decision would exist. The matter has been put to the high court of Parliament and must be resolved by Parliament.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I thank and congratulate my right hon. Friend, whose decision will

[Mr. Gerrard Neale]

bring relief and reassurance to many local government organisations and other groups in the west country and particlarly in Cornwall. I have no doubt that in my constituency, as in other parts of the county, there will be horror among those who thought that they might support the alliance, and the prospective Liberal candidate for my constituency will be thunderstruck when he hears what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) have said.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the extension of the dual carriageway from Whiddon Down to Okehampton takes several miles out of the national park as well as putting some back in? Will he also confirm that, if he had not proposed to introduce the Bill and had tried to accelerate the procedures on a northern route, there would have been an outcry, because all the people to the north would expect all their rights to be honoured and to have full consultation and a public inquiry? The time scale that my right hon. Friend puts on a northern route is too short rather than too long.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the RAC should be congratulated on sending a leaflet to all its members? I have an RAC leaftlet sent to people planning to drive to Cornwall which says:

"Driving to Cornwall? The A30 bottleneck at Okehampton can mean long summer delays."

Cornwall cannot tolerate that continuing hassle and the continuing burden on its tourist and other industries. I congratulate my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I look forward to hearing whether the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) will be whipping the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)——

Mr. Simon Hughes: He will not.

Mr. Ridley: —or whether it will be the other way round. We are told that it is an alliance, so presumably it will behave as an alliance. It will be interesting to see which way it breaks.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) rightly says, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is trying to pontificate on what is in the interests of the people of Devon and Cornwall. It is worth finding out first what people think.

I agree with my hon. Friend that if we sought to accelarate the procedures in investigating a northern route we should attract the full ire of the environmental lobby and of the people who have interests on that route. That would be intolerable. Just because the environmental lobby has decided that it wants to sacrifice the nothern route, that does not mean that people who have interests on that route should not have their rights properly considered.

I have not seen the RAC leaflet that my hon. Friend mentioned, but I hope and pray that it will not be for too many more years that people have to queue for hours before proceeding to their holidays in Devon and Cornwall.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the time taken by the statement on the Okehampton bypass, I suggest that the debate initiated by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) should continue until noon and that the debate of the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) should conclude at 12.30 pm.

11.27 am

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Today is the last day of term for hon. Members and it ought to be the last day in public office of the governor of the Bank of England. His responsibility and culpability are awesome. He has presided over a fantasy so bizarre that it is believable only because it is true. He has supervised a bank that has financed fraud and provided money for the purposes of criminals.

It is no wonder that a number of peope to whom I have spoken in the City of London believe that the appropriate course for the governor of the Bank of England would be for him to tender his resignation. Certainly the sort of people whom I represent can only view with incredulity the behaviour in this dreadful affair of those who claim to be their betters.

My investigations have tended to show that Johnson Matthey lent money to people who were known to have been dishonest, or would have been shown to be dishonest if Johnson Matthey had carried out even the most elementary inquiries. It seems to me that all the members of the credit rating committee of Johnson Matthey Bankers are liable to be sued for breach of their fiduciary duty at common law, which duty is to act in the best interests of their company. I ask the governor of the Bank of England why the members of the credit rating committee have not been sued for a breach of their fiduciary duty and why they have not received writs of negligence.

When I said some days ago that Mr. Mahmoud Sipra, whose El Saeed empire was the basis of the collapse of JMB, had committed fraud and that JMB ought to have known about it and ought not the have lent his empire vast sums of money, Mr. Sipra appeared on BBC television and Channel 4 news and said that he was a man of great integrity. If Mr. Sipra believes that, he is living in a fantasy world of his own and his memory must be extraordinarily defective.

Only last year, on 9 October 1984, a judgment for fraud was given against him in the New York district court by Judge Kevin Duffy. I have a transcript of that judgment with me, so of course I can repeat it outside should the Whips ask me to do so. The judge said:

"The callous indifference to the law exhibited by Dr. Galin and Sipra from the inception of these actions in 1979 to the day of trial is only one example of their bad faith."

He also said:

"Dr. Galin used Rascator and Sipra used Intra-Span in order to further their fraudulent plan."

He began his summing-up by saying that "old-fashioned piracy" and "extraordinary greed" were at the heart of the case.

The governor of the Bank of England must explain to this House how a British bank supervised by the governor of the Bank of England could be lending money to a man who, throughout the period of the lending, was, according

to the judiciary, acting with callous indifference to the law in relation to fraud. That question lies at the heart of the Johnson Matthey collapse.

When Mr. Ian Fraser, a director of Johnson Matthey, was put on warning about Sipra in 1982, he said that Mr. Sipra would perform — that the man known to his friends as the Cobra and to his enemies as the Devil would meet his contracts and repay his loans. How on earth could Mr. Fraser have said, and believed, that?

We know now, in relation to Mr. Sipra's empire, that since the collapse of Johnson Matthey these companies have been wound up or have had a receiver put in by the governor of the Bank of England: Nitemed, Monostick, Eurostem Maritime, Bulk Ferks, Trans-Gulf Lines, the Khyber Horce Company and Brooke Oil. They have all failed to perform, and Johnson Matthey must have known that they would fail to perform. Many millions of pounds have been lost to Johnson Matthey as a result. I could go on speaking about frauds by Mr. Sipra, but that might take us outside the subject.

What can one say about the behaviour of Mr. Ian Fraser, a director of Johnson Matthey? He, clearly, is in breach of his fiduciary duty at common law — I understand that he is a rich man—and should be sued for negligence because of that breach. But can we leave it there? We are talking about the loss of vast sums of money, and it seems that there are only three explanations for Mr. Fraser's behaviour. The first is that he might be a simpleton, the second is that he has turned a blind eye to fraud and the third is that he is a party to fraud. I believe that we can reject the first—that he is a simpleton—so that we are left with two alternatives. Either he has turned a blind eye to fraud or he is a party to fraud.

Mr. Fraser should be subjected to the most vigorous examination, and we may have to conduct a special investigation in this case and certain witnesses may have to be given immunity. My private inquiries into what is going on reveal that the fraud squad accepts that there was massive fraud and that the directors of Johnson Matthey were involved. However, there are enormous evidential problems and it is beginning to look as though no one will be brought to court because of those evidential problems.

The governor of the Bank of England may bear some responsibility for that — for giving these people nine months in which to lose documents, to sort out affairs with their accountants and get their alibis fixed up. It is an appalling state of affairs and the governor of the Bank of England is the man who primarily should answer for that.

I come to the case of a loan made to Ravensbury Investments to purchase Provincial Properties Wales, to enable that company to develop a piece of land in Barry and carry out a property development. Mr. Michael Hepker, who is the beneficial owner of Ravensbury Investments and Provincial Properties, has publicly said that I am being unfair to him, that he, too, is a man of great integrity and that he is a respectable business man.

What kind of respectable business man, when he is reported to the takeover panel and evidence is given against him to that panel—as it was on 12 July 1985—has friends who will telephone the person giving evidence and say that his legs will be blown off if he does not behave himself? What kind of respectable business man makes a fool of 12 police officers and sends them on a bogus raid to discover illegal firearms? That was last Friday.

What kind of respectable business man tries to ruin a man's life by reporting him to the licensing authorities when he has previously worked for Mr. Hepker? What kind of respectabley business man makes allegations of fraud and then has to withdraw them in writing to the police? What kind of respectable business man so frightens solicitors for the companies to which I referred that they must put the documents in a safe because, on Mr. Hepker's record, they fear that they will be raided?

It has been put to me that some attempts might be made to shut me up or encourage me not to talk in the House. People such as the Whips say, "Say it outside." The Islington police have been warned in relation to one of the men. Yesterday I took the trouble to warn Commander Hunter at the Hackney office about any possible consequences for my ex-wife, my son and myself.

Mr. Hepker's background, which Johnson Matthey apparently never investigated, is that he is a tax expert and drew up schemes originally on tax avoidance and then went massively into tax evasion. He set up a company called Marchmont Associates Ltd, which at one time shared offices with Rossminster, a company advised by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. That company is massively involved in tax evasion — in shipping large sums of money out of the country to offshore islands— and the non-payment of tax. Marchmont Associates is also associated with a company called Supersaver.

Only yesterday, Mr. Hepker appeared in the Companies Court. This case will smash offshore tax evasion. Mr. Hepker's time is running out. Indeed, he is under investigation and there are several files inches thick in the possession of the special investigations branch of the Inland Revenue. The special investigator who is hunting him down is Mr. Bryn Jones, who works for the Treasury, so no doubt the Minister can confirm that those investigations are taking place.

Mr. Hepker goes to Johnson Matthey and says, "I want to borrow this money. Provincial Properties will carry out a property development in Barry." What he forgot to tell Johnson Matthey was that the Tesco property development fell through before he borrowed the money. In other words, he borrowed the money by fraudulent misrepresentation and committed an extraordinarily serious crime — in effect, the theft from Johnson Matthey of £1·5 million.

How can I prove that Mr. Hepker knew that the Tesco deal had fallen through? I can prove it because I have counsel's opinion — not counsel for Mr. Hepker's enemies, but counsel for Mr. Hepker. He had to admit to counsel that he knew that the deal had fallen through. Worse than that, he not only knew that it had fallen through, but he went to Johnson Matthey and said that the deal was still on. That was a major fraud.

Matters become even more extraordinary because, once Tesco had withdrawn from the deal, the price of the land plummeted. The price that it had been agreed should be paid for the land was ridiculous, but Mr. Hepker carried on with the deal and bought the land. Why? The only money that has been passed over in this case—£393,310 —was passed over on 8 July 1981. That was over the odds because another £110,000 should have been paid later. It was not.

That still leaves £1 million-plus, which was borrowed. hThat £1 million-plus has never been used for the benefit of Ravensbury Investments Ltd or of Provincial Properties Wales. It has been transferred through a series of companies for Mr. Hepker's personal use. That is a

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

massive fraud. There are two frauds — a fraud on Johnson Matthey and a massive fraud on Ravensbury Investments.

How did Johnson Matthey behave? How did that British bank under the supervision of the governor of the Bank of England behave? It never discovered that the Tesco deal had fallen through. There is no Tesco store on the land in Barry. Johnson Matthey never checked, either then or in the years that followed, on the value of its security. It was told that the land was worth £1 million. When the bank was recently forced by the company to carry out a survey, it appeared that the land was worth £200,000. The bank never monitored the activities of Ravensbury Investments Ltd or of Provincial Properties Wales. Business men all over this country who have borrowed £50,000 from a bank, who have to fill in debenture forms every three months and whose companies are rigorously monitored will gawp at the fact that Johnson Matthey did no monitoring in relation to these loans.

The loan was made by way of overdraft and was on call. At no time in all those years did Johnson Matthey ask for the money back or ask for a repayment schedule. In other words, the bank handed out £1.5 million and then forgot about it. It did nothing. It provided no banking services whatsoever. This is a disgrace. It is not just negligence; it is very suspicious.

It is no wonder that the solicitors to these companies have been saying to Mr. Graham Mark and Mr. Robin Collier, "What does Mr. Hepker have over Johnson Matthey? Why do you not call in these loans?" When Johnson Matthey Bankers collapsed, the chief executive of Ravensbury Investments Ltd and the solicitors to that company wrote to Johnson Matthey saying, "Both these companies are insolvent. They have been insolvent for a long time, and there is no possibility of their ever making money. Why don't you get back your security?"

I have a file containing a bundle of the correspondence going backwards and forwards between the solicitors, the chief executive, Mr. Michael Hepker and Mr. McGregor from Johnson Matthey. Mr. Hepker has said, "Give me a fortnight and I shall stitch up a deal for you." Then he has said, "Give me another fortnight," and "Give me another fortnight." That is what I meant when I told the House that we were being taken for a ride.

At one stage, Mr. Hepker said that he would come up with another property deal. The only problem is that he would have to borrow some money to carry out that deal. What kind of negligent fantasy world is this? This point has been put to me by professional advisers to the company. In the first place, they thought, "Perhaps there are bigger and more serious cases than this £1·5 million loan from Johnson Matthey and that in the end these people at the Bank of England will deal responsibly with it." They have not dealt responsibly with it, because they have done two things. First, by not winding up the company, they have put the other creditors of the company in jeopardy. The other creditors who are owed £300,000 will never get a penny of the money that Mr. Hepker has taken. They have put them in jeopardy by not winding up the company. Secondly, there is roll-over interest on this loan and, in the end, that will increase the amount of money that the Bank of England has to write off. That money is being written off on our behalf. It is a loss not to the Bank of England but to the members of the public. I want to know how the governor of the Bank of England has justified the behaviour of his staff during the last few months.

It goes without saying that I have letters from the companies registration office showing that Mr. Hepker was in breach of section 1(7) of the Companies Act 1976 and sections 124 and 126 of the Companies Act 1948 over the production of documents. That is, however, a minor point.

What happened when the solicitors started to put pressure on Johnson Matthey to get Mr. Hepker to pay the money back? Mr. Hepker took out a curious option agreement and then tried to dismiss the solicitors and chief executive. In the middle of all that, he produced a document that showed a photostat copy of a Bank of England one pound note. I do not know what hon. Members know about criminal law, but it is illegal to photocopy Bank of England one pound notes and to produce bogus option agreements to silence solicitors. I gather that Mr. Hepker will come back to that aspect in time.

Where do we stand in relation to these matters? People have made large sums of money fraudulently and companies have gone bankrupt. There is Mr. Hepker and his company. Johnson Matthey was not performing any banking service. It was not carrying out its duty. There are also the directors of Johnson Matthey who were responsible for the preparation of the accounts. It is not the auditors but the directors who are responsible for the preparation of those accounts. The auditors merely say whether the accounts present a true and fair picture. Under section 393 of the Companies Act 1985 it is a criminal offence if a director

"knowingly or recklessly makes to a company's auditors a statement . . . which . . . is misleading, false or deceptive in a material particular."

Anyone who cares to study Johnson Matthey's accounts will know that, whether or not the directors knew that they were making misleading comments, they were certainly reckless, because there is barely a statement in those accounts that has not been made recklessly. Why has not criminal action been taken against those directors who were responsible for the preparation of the accounts?

It is up to the governor of the Bank of England to decide whether he has the integrity to resign. We need an independent wide-ranging inquiry into an extraordinary act that has led to the loss of £248 million and to the public having, in effect, to put up £100 million to bail out a bank. I have taken the House into a fantasy world. It has nothing to do with banking but is about fraud and greed. If we believe that the integrity of public and private life is important, we cannot just let this matter rest. We must ensure that it is investigated ruthlessly so that all the facts are known.

11.48 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has extended some of the arguments that he put forward some days ago in a brief statement. It is important for us to make it absolutely clear that the British taxpayer is likely to foot the bill not only for all the money that has already been lost and put in by the Bank of England but for other bills. It now transpires, from some of the comments made by my hon. Friend, that the bills will get even larger. As I said some days ago, the

chances are that, because of the dilatory fashion in which the Chancellor and the governor of the Bank of England have acted, many of those people to whom hon. Members and the newspapers have referred are likely to get off scot free, as has happened in many other City scandals of the past two decades.

Who will pay these additional bills? Will the Economic Secretary ask the parent company what happened? Will he say, "Why did you allow your errant youngster, Johnson Matthey Bankers, to run wild and deal with all these people? Why is it that you are not taking some responsibility for these massive losses to the taxpayer?"

What about the governor of the Bank of England? Should he not be personally responsible for some of the money that has been lost and the ensuing losses that are likely to occur? My guess is that we shall not be talking about £100 million from the taxpayer; the eventual sum may be double that.

My hon. Friend referred to Mr. Fraser. Should he not bear some responsibility, instead of lumping it all on the taxpayer? I thought that this Government believed in the policy, "You make a profit or you die." I thought that they believed in market forces and entrepreneurs. What was the purpose of all the argument about closing pits, steel works and the rest of the manufacturing base? Was it not all part of the policy, "If you can't make a profit, don't come to the Government for a subsidy. Don't expect us to bail you out. You make a profit or you die"?

There are now more than 3 million unemployed people on the scrap heap. They are witnesses to the Government's policy of making a profit or going under. Yet the crooks in the City can somehow or other launder their way from one fraud to the next, getting away with it, with tax avoidance schemes, and running to Johnson Matthey Bankers and saying, "Give us some more money—at the end of the day the taxpayer will bail us out".

Will Mr. Shamji—the friend of the Prime Minister—pay some of his money back? He should. He has companies up and down the land. I discovered another that he set up not long ago in Strood. Will the Economic Secretary to the Treasury make inquiries about that? If Mr. Shamji can find his way into an enterprise zone at Strood before it is announced in Parliament, somebody must have tipped him off. He already had a derelict factory there months before the area was declared an enterprise zone on 16 November 1982. Mr. Shamji's firm is Gomba UK, and he turned up at the factory in a Rolls-Royce one day early in 1982. Did he get the money from Johnson Matthey? Is that part of the £20 million that he owes? It has been a litany of scandal from one end of the story to the other.

The British people should demand that, instead of the taxpayer being called upon to foot the bill, it should be paid by the people to whom I have referred. The British taxpayer should not be expected to bail out the Chancellor of the Exchequer for all his legal expenses. They should be paid by him or some of the culprits who have been referred to this morning.

11.52 am

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): A large number of questions remain unanswered about Johnson Matthey Bankers and the Bank of England's supervision of that bank, and the subsequent problems.

I will take one example of the bank's main debtors—Mr. Abdul Shamji's Gomba group of companies. As the *Financial Times* reported last Saturday, several companies in the Gomba group face court actions over debt claims and Mr. Jim Sharp, the group's financial controller, is urgently seeking a refinancing package.

Since the master company in the United Kingdom was incorporated in May 1982, companies associated with Mr. Shamji have amassed large borrowings. Accounts up to 1982 of the companies in the group show borrowings of £32·5 million. There may have been other loans from JMB since then, but without up-to-date balance sheets it is impossible to know. Accounts have not been filed in Companies House since 1982. Mr. Shamji also has loans from the Credit and Commerce International Bank, Barclays and the Punjab Bank. His assets are said to be worth about £40 million.

One of the companies, Gomba Stonefield, based at Strood, Kent, in an enterprise zone, was bought from the receiver in 1981. It ran up net losses of £2·7 million in the three years 1982-84, according to Price Waterhouse's special audit. It owed £100,000 PAYE in June, but after a threat by the Inland Revenue to auction 32 containers and their contents, the debt was paid. It is possible that other PAYE debts are outstanding, and also that Gomba did not pay national insurance contributions and PAYE contributions for employees, now redundant, of one of his Scottish companies. Its asset base is strong but earnings of many of the companies in the group are low, suggesting low returns on assets. That could mean that Mr. Shamji now has very real problems. He will need either a refinancing package or a major programme of disposal of assets.

JMB now has problems with Gomba. The *Financial Times* reported last Saturday, and *The Observer* on Sunday, that Gomba missed the first payment under the debt rescheduling agreement, and that this still has not been paid.

With regard to loans made to Gomba by JMB, Gomba's accounts filed at Companies House go up only to 1982. What information did JMB have about the accounts of Gomba companies when loans were made? What information was made available to them then?

Is the Bank of England satisfied with the security for the loans? Gomba engages in the not unusual practice of buying property, revaluing it upwards and then borrowing against the new value. Did JMB put its own valuation on Gomba's assets. Has the Bank of England carried out its own valuation since then?

Why should companies such as Gomba Stonefield that default on payments be allowed to continue in existence when so many other companies are forced by the bank into liquidation for similar faults?

Not only Gomba's loans may be doubtful. There is a vague reference in the Bank of England's report describing four anonymous doubtful loans totalling £119 million. There was also very little information about the remaining £129 million. That makes a total of £248 million in doubtful loans, some of them very large. What action is the Bank of England taking to recover those loans? Is £248 million still the correct figure? After all, that figure was given when the Bank of England said that there was no fraud involved. Then the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week announced a fraud investigation. What guarantee have we now that £248 million of doubtful loans is the correct figure, and that it will not continue to grow and grow with further recourse to the taxpayer?

I turn to the question of the Bank of England's supervision both then and now. Is it true that the Bank of

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

England had, in effect, restricted its monitoring programme, before the collapse of JMB, to the clearing banks? Is it true that its supervision of the smaller banks was lax?

In the autumn we expect a White Paper proposing to give the Bank of England new powers, but it will take time for legislation to go through Parliament. May we be sure that the measures that the Government have taken so far —strengthening the banking supervision department at the Bank of England—are sufficient? Will the Minister give his assessment of those new procedures? May we be assured that there is no other JMB in the offing?

As the public have a right to know what happened with JMB, will the Minister arrange for the publication of the Price Waterhouse report? That report should, at the very least, be made available to a suitable committee, and the Minister should reconsider setting up a committee of inquiry under the 1921 Act. No doubt the Minister will recall that two days after the Prime Minister refused an inquiry in a letter to me dated 15 July the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the fraud investigation. The Prime Minister said that she could see no purpose in such an inquiry, but on the very day that the letter was written the governor of the Bank of England said that fraud was suspected. We need a thoroughgoing inquiry. Will the Minister assure us that, once the police investigations are carried out, we shall have that proper full public inquiry?

11.59 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I have only a very short time in which to respond to the debate. I cannot, of course, comment on the affairs on individual customers of JMB or of any other bank. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) knows that. Equally, I cannot comment on whether or not a particular person is being investigated by the Inland Revenue.

The hon. Member has produced a great deal of information about customers of JMB, much of it in the form of allegations. I should draw the attention of the House to the difference between information and allegation. If the hon. Gentleman has information that he believes to be relevant to the police inquiry, I hope and assume that he will pass it on, because it is important to follow up any available information.

My right hon. Friend's and the Treasury's response is the subject of the debate. My right hon. Friend has reported promptly and fully on matters that are his responsibility. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) welcomes the fact that he reported last week at the first opportunity.

The decision to mount the rescue operation was taken by the governor of the Bank of England on his own authority. He was acting correctly within his discretion and has since published an account of events leading up to the collapse and his reasons for undertaking the rescue. That is a reflection of the traditional relationship which exists between the governor and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is a point which some hon. Members appear to have found difficult to grasp.

I have no further time to respond to the points which have been made, but I repeat that there is a considerable difference between allegation and information and between information and evidence upon which fraud can be pursued.

I hope that, having taken the opportunity of this debate to put forward those matters, the hon. Gentleman will be equally diligent in ensuring that he and any other hon. Member who has information will provide it to the police so that the police inquiry, as the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) asks, can be as effective as possible and can deal with all the relevant matters.

Package Holidays

12.1 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): To say that this summer the package holiday industry has been going through a bad time would be a major understatement. Having enjoyed for some years a slowly rising market, having built up its brochures each year in the expectation that that rising market will continue, and having encouraged the practice of last-minute bookings by offering substantial discounts, the tour operators were faced with not just an estimated 15 per cent. reduction in the expected market, but a substantial shift away from Spain as the preferred holiday destination. What has been regrettable about that pattern and what has occasioned me to raise the subject for debate is the fact that it is the customer who has suffered.

This season has highlighted three practices that exist within the tour operator section of the industry, all of which operate to the detriment of the holidaymaker. The first is the power of the tour operator to make material alterations to a holiday which has been booked and paid for, and to make those alterations up to the last moment before departure without infringing the regulatory code of the industry's governing body — the Association of British Travel Agents Limited. A holidaymaker may discover at the last minute that he or she is going to a different hotel, a different destination, a different resort or, in extreme cases, a different country. The only rights that the customer has are a woolly claim to compensation or the right to cancel the holiday and receive a refund, although with no holiday in prospect.

The second practice is known as consolidation. It enables tour operators to cancel flights, often with virtually no notice, to fill up other flights which have vacant seats. The holidaymaker is thus subjected to many extra hours of travelling and delay and a great deal of what can moderately be described as inconvenience at a time when the holidaymaker is paying for the reverse. Again, there is only a woolly right to compensation if the tour operator chooses to pay it, with the right to cancel and have no holiday.

The most pernicious practice occurs where a tour operator anxious to expand his share of the market puts out brochures containing flights and destinations which he must know he has no hope of fulfilling, thereby hooking the customer who can then be consolidated later onto another flight or another resort. That practice, which is known as ghosting, is known to be widespread and many people have suffered from it.

In all those cases, ABTA is powerless to prevent the abuses to which I have referred. Unless it rapidly sets its house in order, the industry will be defenceless against the major changes proposed in the EEC draft directive that we are discussing.

Since I first showed through the media my interest in this subject, I have had what can only be described as a fairly substantial postbag. To illustrate the need for rapid action, I should like to quote a few of the many cases that have been brought to my attention from all over the country.

Mr. Guthrie of Strathclyde booked a return flight from Malaga to Glasgow. He was informed at Malaga airport one hour before the flight was due to leave that it had been cancelled. He was left at the airport for 12 hours and the following morning was flown to Birmingham, which necessitated a further nine-hour journey to Glasgow.

Mrs. Purchase from Taunton booked last November to fly from Bristol to Austria on 2 June. She paid the final account on 3 April and was then informed that she would have to fly from Luton on 30 May to a different and less attractive destination.

Mr. Whiting of Leicester booked seven days in Corfu with Sunmed holidays and was told the Monday before departure that the resort had been changed. He was offered a substitute resort which was changed the following day. He eventually ended up at inferior apartments which were already occupied.

Mr. Stevens of Wokingham booked to go to Minorca in January. He was forced by consolidation to cancel in April. He booked with Horizon and made the final payment in June. He was again forced to cancel because of consolidation and is now due to travel to Majorca with Thomson Holidays. He has his fingers crossed.

Finally, from my constituency, Mr. Penny and Miss Bartlett, who are getting married on 7 September, booked in March with Thomson Holidays to go to Benidorm from Gatwick during the early afternoon of Sunday 8 September. In June, they were offered a flight change to 7.30 am on the Sunday morning. That would have meant them leaving Bristol at 2 am on their wedding night. They were eventually offered an evening flight on the Sunday to Torremolinos from Bristol at 10.15 pm. for which it was suggested that they should be charged about £100 more.

In the light of those and many other incidents of which I have been informed, many of which were predictable and predicted at the beginning of this year, ABTA should surely by now have announced steps not just to prevent further such problems this summer, but to reorganise its members for the future, yet I understand from Mr. Kenneth Scott, the chief executive officer of Ilkeston Consumer Co-operative Society Limited, who has done considerable research into this problem, that while it is generally accepted that next winter's holiday market might increase by about 10 per cent., Thomson Ski has increased its advertised programme by 33 per cent. and Horizon by 20 per cent.

The problem is not peculiar to this country because, according to a survey by the EEC Commission, out of the 25 million holidaymakers in Europe this summer, approximately 6 million—24 per cent.—will face some disappointment.

If this summer's chaos had been wholly unexpected, and if the need to tighten the package holiday industry's rules to protect the consumer had been sprung on the industry at the last minute, ABTA's inaction in doing no more than enforce its existing code could have been understood. However, the appalling position of bookings for this summer was known in January and many companies faced with the eventual need to consolidate their flights did such consolidations in the early months of the year, and so enabled their customers to have adequate time to rearrange their holidays.

In addition, it was known towards the end of last year that the holiday places available and being offered by ABTA members for this summer exceeded the maximum possible market by anything between 25 and 33 per cent. The proposed EEC directive further to regulate the industry for the benefit of the holidaymaker has been

[Mr. Michael Stern]

around since at least January this year, but it has never once, to the best of my knowledge, been opened by ABTA for public discussion.

In those circumstances, it is not surprising that the EEC Commission has felt the need to step in and propose a draft directive to improve the regulations of an industry which has, by this summer's experience and this winter's prospective experience, showed itself at least insensitive to the desires of its customers.

The proposals in the draft directive are, in many respects, draconian. As a result, while my hon. Friend the Minister may feel, with considerable justification, that the directive as a whole is inappropriate, I hope that he will still look at some of the provisions contained in it with a view to encouraging the industry to adopt them on a voluntary basis.

For example, article 6(2)*(m)* of the draft directive calls for the automatic disclosure to the customer of the name and address of the local representative of the tour organiser. Such information would be, and would have been, very welcome to many holidaymakers. It is not a requirement of the present ABTA code.

Article 10(1)*(c)* provides that the holidaymaker is entitled to cancel and obtain a refund if the holiday is modified significantly—a provision that already exists under the ABTA code—but says that the definition of a significant modification is to be resolved by reference, in part, to the holidaymaker's view of what is significant. So the holidaymaker should have a say in whether or not he is entitled to be protected under the ABTA code—and on that the code is silent.

Article 10(4) provides that, on cancellation of a holiday, the holidaymaker should also be entitled to damages for the loss of his holiday, whereas under the present code he is entitled merely to a refund. Article 5 provides that a deposit on a package holiday should not be more than 10 per cent. of the whole price, again a matter on which the ABTA code is silent.

It cannot be said that there is no precedent in Europe for the package holiday industry to be subject to statutory regulation where all else fails. Draft legislation currently going through the Netherlands Parliament proposes entitlement to damages similar to that contained in the draft EEC directive—something that is already believed to exist in the United States. In addition, the draft Netherlands legislation suggests that all contracts between travel agents and tour operators should be open to public inspection in certain circumstances — a proposal that would flutter a few dovecotes in the travel industry. I understand that the Bill has reached the equivalent of Report stage in the Netherlands Parliament, and is therefore close to the statute book.

Apart from the proposals in the directive or in the proposed new Netherlands law, there are other ways in which the holidaymaker could receive greater protection. I cannot see any reason why, if a customer is obliged to pay the full price for a holiday eight weeks before departure, he should not then be guaranteed that he will get the holiday for which he is paying. Indeed, it would take a great deal of heat out of the issue if ABTA were to announce—and I invite it to do so—that no further consolidations would be put into effect by its members unless they are advertised to their customers within the next seven days.

I appreciate that in that area ABTA has considerable difficulty in self-regulation because it is a body containing, almost in equal measure, two entirely different interests —the travel agents who genuinely want their customers protected and want to retain their customers' goodwill, and the tour operators who want to preserve the maximum freedom of action. Nevertheless, ABTA should be aware that, if it does not set its house in order, more stringent provisions of the sort that I have been discussing will become inevitable.

In view of the publicity that the media have rightly given to the issue already this summer, and in view of the size of my postbag, it is worth putting it on record that this summer many tour operators have adopted an entirely reasonable and responsible attitude to their customers. They have not stuffed their brochures with holidays that they could not possibly sell in sufficient quantities. They have taken adequate care and availed themselves of adequate local knowledge to prevent many overbookings at resorts. Where consolidations or material alterations in holidays have been necessary, they have given their customers ample time to reconsider.

The horrors that I have been describing, the horrors that we have heard of in the media, are not the fault of the whole of the industry, but unfortunately many companies within the industry have not taken the attitude that I have just described. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will impress upon the industry that it is the actions of the latter companies — some of which I have mentioned — that have created the need for EEC legislation to be considered, at least. Similar actions in the Netherlands have created a similar need there. Such actions will continue to feed the need unless the industry puts its house in order and thereby renders an EEC directive unnecessary.

12.15 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) for bringing the subject of consolidation to the attention of the House. I can well understand the disappointment experienced by travellers who find themselves consolidated at the very last minute. My hon. Friend cited some interesting and sad case histories from his postbag.

My hon. Friend's recommendations are good. I know that the travel industry will be grateful for his constructive approach in the debate, and especially for his remarks complimenting the vast proportion of operators on their responsible approach to the problem. However, if the practices that my hon. Friend described continue, the Government will find it difficult to resist any action proposed by the European Commission. I must point out that no proposals for a directive on package holidays have yet been made to the Council of Ministers by the Commission. However, I believe that the Commission does intend to make a proposal for a directive on package holidays later this year. Until the Government see this proposal, the House will understand that it is difficult for me and the Government to comment on it.

However, the Commission has held meetings of both national experts and the Consumer Consultative Committee to discuss possible draft articles, which might form a draft directive broadly aimed at harmonising that legislation within the Community which affords consumer protection to people taking package holidays. It is to these preliminary draft articles that my hon. Friend referred.

Despite the fact that most member states in the Community do not see the need for such a draft directive, either from a consumer protection view point or as an instrument to stimulate tourism between member states, the Commission still intends, I believe, to submit a revised proposal to the Council of Ministers. Although we have not seen any revised proposal from the Commission, I understand that the current draft would have wide implications for United Kingdom law and practice on package holidays.

European Community legislation has all too frequently been thought by some to be the answer to consumer problems in many areas. I am not convinced that this is the case. The Government firmly believe that the interests of consumers, whether on a package holiday or not, are not served by increasingly rigid legislative controls on the providers of goods and services. Most problems, including any associated with package holidays, are better dealt with at a national level and often the answer lies not in legislation but in effective voluntary, self-regulatory action by the trade involved. Package holidays are a good example of where a voluntary code of practice can and should achieve a high level of consumer protection.

My hon. Friend was accurate, as he invariably is, in reminding the House of the potential conflicts of interest within ABTA. Nevertheless, the ABTA codes of practice, which were drawn up in consultation with the Office of Fair Trading, prescribe rules to be observed by its members, both tour operators and travel agents, in those areas such as descriptions of holidays, booking conditions, alterations, cancellations and price variations, to which my hon. Friend referred in particular. These codes are binding on all ABTA members, who may be fined or expelled for non-compliance. My hon. Friend will no doubt be aware that ABTA members account for the vast majority of package holidays from the United Kingdom.

Provision is also made in the codes of arbitration and conciliation procedures in the event of a dispute between a member and a customer. Although over 7 million package tours were taken last year, ABTA reported that, of the 9,683 complaints dealt with by its conciliation department, only 418 went as far as arbitration. This level of complaints is far lower than that found by the EC Commission in its survey. I might add that many member states disagreed with the findings of the EC survey. The Office of Fair Trading periodically monitors the codes and I understand that the office is currently in the process of doing this.

These codes, coupled with the protection afforded to package holidaymakers by bonding and insurance schemes, mean that the protection offered or available in the travel trade is greater than that in many other sectors.

Consolidations, the practice whereby tour operators, through lack of demand for a particular package tour, may have to transfer travellers to another flight, perhaps from a different airport, have, as my hon. Friend said, been the subject of considerable comment recently. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State responsible for corporate and consumer affairs, when answering a question yesterday on this subject from the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), explained that the Office of Fair Trading will include the question of the consolidations of holiday arrangements in its monitoring of all aspects of ABTA's code of practice. The office has expressed its concern to ABTA about the reported volume of consolidations this year and has asked the association to inform the office of what action it intends to take to deal with this problem. I am confident that we can look to ABTA to continue to enforce its members' adherence to their codes of practice. Already, I am aware that members of ABTA have been fined for breaches of the code.

Some people have argued for legislation to prohibit consolidation, but that is not the answer. The travel trade already has the means to regulate its own behaviour, so that the service it provides is acceptable to its customers. An overall ban on consolidation would no doubt lead to an unacceptable increase in the prices of package tours, so placing them beyond the reach of many people.

Apart from the ABTA codes of practice, the consumer also has the protection of the law. Although in the United Kingdom there are no laws which specifically and exclusively govern rights and duties between consumers and the providers of package holidays in particular, the basic legal position is primarily governed by the ordinary, general law of contract and, in some circumstances, by the law of tort. In both cases the law is based on common law and equitable principles developed over a long period by judicial decisions and modified from time to time by statutory provisions. In both cases, it is open to a party who has suffered loss or damage through breach of contract or other act or omission to seek redress, usually in the form of financial compensation, in the civil courts, although some statutes impose criminal penalties on the wrongdoer.

One of the most important statutory provisions is the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982. This Act, in England and Wales, specifies implied terms embodying the respective rights of providers of goods and services and consumers, extending many long-standing provisions relating to the sale of goods to the provision of services. Providers of services, who include tour operators and travel agents, have an obligation to do so with reasonable care and skill, within a reasonable time and for a reasonable charge. Redress for aggrieved consumers is by civil proceedings for damages.

Perhaps I may return to the draft European Commission proposals. When the Commission puts its final proposals for a directive on package holidays to the Council, the document will be available to all member states. When these proposals are received, the Government will of course provide a copy to the House together with an explanatory memorandum. My hon. Friend gave a detailed analysis of the various proposed clauses he has studied, centring in particular on entitlement to damages. It was helpful to hear his comments about the proposed Netherlands law.

The Government will also consult all other interested parties, including representatives of both holidaymakers and the travel trade, about the implications of the proposal. Meanwhile, both the Government and the Office of Fair Trading will continue to look to ABTA effectively to control any practices by its members which are detrimental to the holidaymaker.

Blackmill Hospital, Ogmore

12.28 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am grateful for the allocation of time during the last sitting before the summer recess to place on record the objections of my constituents in Ogmore and other people in the catchment areas of Aberavon, Bridgend, Pontypridd, and the Vale of Glamorgan, all of whom will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed closure of Blackmill hospital in the Ogmore valley.

It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for my speech. Blackmill hospital is on the side of the Ogmore valley near the small and delightful hamlet of Blackmill. It overlooks a beautiful area and a picturesque valley covered with trees at one end, and the area spreads out into well maintained sheep farms and grazing areas. The valley starts from Nantymoel and stretches through narrow terraced streets through Tynewydd and down to Blackmill. It is one of four similar valleys in my constituency. Access is mostly by secondary roads, which are convenient and of the sort that one would expect to find in the coalmining area of south Wales.

It is well known throughout the world that the Welsh people are friendly, hospitable and responsive and treat their visitors as members of the family, and their qualities of compassion and care are of a high degree. Against that background and description of the area, all those who will read the debate will realise why it is essential to make every effort to save Blackmill hospital for the service that it provides, for the people it serves and in recognition of the wonderful work and dedication of all the staff for the people they nurse.

Blackmill hospital is renowned throughout Mid-Glamorgan and the Principality of Wales and, I suspect, even further afield. Elderly people are nursed by relatives —sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters—and in some instances by neighbours. We all know what is entailed in the nursing of elderly people, and those who do it welcome the respite of a week or fortnight or even longer when their elderly charges are allowed to go to Blackmill hospital and the home nurse can have a holiday.

This social facility is essential. There is a real community need. There is an overwhelming demand and that becomes clear as one reads the statistics for Mid-Glamorgan about the increased number of elderly people. The problem is on the increase and, instead of reducing these facilities, we should be increasing them. We should be developing more Blackmill hospitals and not reducing this vital social facility.

I catalogue all the facts so that everyone, including the Minister, will realise the extent of the feeling and concern and the real rebellion among thousands of my constituents over the decision to close this hospital. The way to describe this feeling is to compare it with the rebellion this week of 100 Tory Members against the Government's proposals to increase top salaries. We all know the extent of that rebellion, and I claim that my constituents are equally concerned about this hospital closure, if not more so.

Over the years the Minister and I have on many occasions expressed our opinions and debated general hospital services in Mid-Glamorgan. The *Official Report* could be referred to repeatedly from 1979 onwards. However, I feel that no mileage can be gained from that. I also have with me the draft consultative document on health services in Mid-Glamorgan published in March 1984. This strategic plan for 1984 to 1993, containing 137 pages, would be ideal ammunition for an all-night sitting of a Committee, but it would not be ideal for today's debate.

However, I must refer to the March 1984 document on the reorganisation of the health services in Ogwr. It was published as a draft consultative document, but, despite many meetings convened by the Ogwr community council all over the borough and the objections to closures from Mid-Glamorgan county, Ogwr borough, 23 community councils and a petition containing 9,937 signatures, the whole planned closure programme will be implemented if the Government are not prepared to relent on their decision to close Blackmill hospital. Surely the significance of this amount of protest will not go unrecognised by the Government.

No doubt the Minister will recall the Adjournment debate on the subject of Bridgend hospital on 22 March 1982—it is now called the Princess of Wales hospital. Hon. Members will find the report of that debate in *Hansard* of 22 March 1982, at columns 771-78. I ask the Minister to read his reply to that debate and his answer to an oral question on 27 June 1983 on phase 2 of the new hospital.

It is all to do with the closure of many hospitals in Ogwr borough — and the loss of beds, not the increase in accommodation — when waiting lists are getting longer and the elderly are living longer. If I had not secured this debate today I should have been attending a birthday celebration for Mr. Arthur Beaty, in Dwfrig ward at Maesgwyn hospital, Brynceithin, who is celebrating his 100th birthday today. I am sure that the House will want to record its birthday greetings to him. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Yesterday, I read through three full files of letters and reports dealing only with Blackmill hospital and the work of the hospital league of friends under the chairmanship and stewardship of Councillor Mrs. Muriel Williams, MBE, JP. I was overwhelmed by the public response to fund-raising efforts to provide for the hospital so many extra facilities and needs not usually available from any other source. I commend Mrs. Williams and her committee for all their untiring efforts. Only last week my wife opened the league's summer fete, which raised well over £500 in one afternoon and was supported by hundreds of the valley's residents.

To view objectively the proposals to close Blackmill hospital, one has to consider the historical background and the significance of the hospital to the community that it serves. The hospital was built in 1903 by the Ogmore and Garw council for the treatment and nursing of infectious diseases. Until 1948 it was used mainly for this purpose, treating outbreaks of infectious diseases such as measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, scarlet fever and many others. An improved programme of immunisation and vaccination, coupled with advanced medical treatment for prevention, resulted in a fall in bed occupancy at the hospital. To improve occupancy, a pre-convalescent ward was established.

I should like to place on record my appreciation of the work of the Ogwr community health council — Chris Johnston, the Secretary, Megan Butcher, last year's chairman, and Jack Thomas, the present chairman,— and the efficent and constructive way they organised

public meetings and a petition which carried 10,000 signatures. I object to the contemptuous way in which they have been treated by the health service's planning officer, Mr. D. M. Chapple. They were not kept fully informed of Welsh Office decisions.

I should like to read a letter dealing with a series of Welsh Office decisions which was sent to Mr. Boulton, the general manager of the Mid-Glamorgan health authority. It said:

"In my letter of 7 May I informed you that the Secretary of State has approved the first part of your proposals for the reorganisation of health services in Ogwr. The purpose of this letter is to tell you that he also accepts as part of that reorganisation your proposal to close Blackmill Hospital.

The hospital is obviously held in affection by many people in the area and the Secretary of State fully appreciates the regard in which the hospital is held and understands the feelings of those people in the community who have expressed concern at its future. In particular he was impressed by the sincerity of the Friends of Blackmill Hospital who presented officials with a petition to keep the Hospital open.

He has concluded nevertheless that the reorganisation of health services which your Authority has proposed are in the best interests of all the people in Ogwr."

The penultimate paragraph is the most important:

"The Secretary of State has noted that the Health Authority would prefer not to dispose of the site immediately, in order to allow further exploration of the potential for its reuse in the local interest. The Secretary of State, having noted the strong local affection for Blackmill Hospital, is agreeable to a delay in disposal, but being conscious of the cost of maintaining the site in a reasonable condition after closure, encourages the Health Authority to have concluded its considerations by 1 November 1985."

Earlier today the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), was congratulated by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hayries) on his 40 years' service to this House and to the nation. I urge hon. Members to read his article in today's edition of *The Times* and to reflect upon the achievements of the Labour Government of 1945. The Nye Bevans of this world, and others, fought long and hard to introduce the National Health Service. It is our duty and responsibility to protect this national asset and prevent the privatisation of medical care. Private medical care is escalating because American-based firms are falling over themselves to cash in on this gravy train.

Are the Government reducing the role of the National Health Service? Do they intend to provide only a substandard service for those who cannot find the cash to pay for private care? We will not tolerate this any further. We shall not allow these uncaring, unscrupulous monetarists to smash the National Health Service, as they have been trying to do since 1979. In June 1983 the Prime Minister said that the National Health Service was safe in her hands. Not only the Opposition but also, I believe, many Conservative Members doubt this.

I am sure that the Under-Secretary is not included in the real hard core of those whom I have just criticised. Therefore, I ask him to show a little compassion and to consider the proposal to salvage at least one hospital from the slaughter of the services that I have outlined by the area health authority. I ask him to consider the decision of the area health authority on 22 July 1985,

"that before taking steps to dispose of Blackmill Hospital and site they would look favourably at any constructive and feasible proposition to retain the hospital for the benefit of the community if such proposals were to be presented to them. The Secretary of State has allowed until November 1985 for such propositions to be presented to the Authority."

May I suggest to the Minister two areas which might be suitable for the undertaking of a feasibility study for the future use of hospital facilities by a local charitable organisation, which would be much-needed community projects. First, one ward could be converted into a flexible day care centre for the elderly. The advantages of such a centre would be to allow greater use of the facility and allow patients to remain in care for longer periods. Secondly, it could use another ward to provide a short-stay holiday home unit for the elderly. If such a short-stay unit were provided, it would go a long way towards allowing relatives some respite for a week or two and would encourage them to accept their family responsibilities. If the proposals were accepted by the health authority and the social services department, referrals could be agreed and funded by the DHSS. I am sure that my proposals would mean that the costings of Blackmill hospital for the year ended 13 March 1984 could be substantially reduced.

Last, but not least, the child welfare clinic, the chiropody clinic and other community-based functions are sited at the hospital. They were sited at the hospital because alternative accommodation was not available in the area. Those functions could be retained at the hospital. This local charitable organisation would be able to make repairs and renovations of a high standard without the liability of unreasonable cost.

Finally, may I ask the Minister to give some help to the socially and industrially deprived area of Ogmore by at least allowing this community-based charitable organisation to continue the essential work of Blackmill hospital. If he will do that, I shall willingly and eagerly wish him a pleasant and restful summer recess.

12.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I am happy to join the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) in sending good wishes to his constituent, Mr. Arthur Beaty, on his 100th birthday. I also congratulate the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) on his 40 years' service to the House.

The House will be aware that the procedures relating to a hospital closure provide ample opportunity for up-to-date consideration of the proposal for change and of any viable alternatives. They applied in the Blackmill case. I must dissent from the hon. Gentleman and assert that we have noted local feeling, but the weight of reasoned argument on service needs must also be weighed. In this case, the balance lies in favour of the authority's proposal.

Blackmill hospital is a unit of 30 beds. In recent years it has provided a pre-convalescent facility, generally for elderly people, some of whom move on to other accommodation. As the hon. Gentleman said, the buildings date from 1903 and occupy a site of about two acres. No beds are designated for consultant supervision. Patients are supervised by general practitioners. Additionally, the hospital is formally described as an isolation facility for infectious diseases.

The health authority wishes to close Blackmill hospital, which costs about £250,000 a year to run. It judges that this revenue could most usefully be transferred as a contribution to the running costs of a reorganised service for Ogwr district, which includes comprehensive care of the elderly. Provision for the elderly would then make appropriate use of the Bridgend general and Maesgwyn hospitals, which are both near the new Princess of Wales

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

hospital, which is just being commissioned. Whatever the hon. Gentleman may say, the fact is that the reorganisation will provide more beds for the elderly than are presently available. Therefore, it is not true to say that we and the health authority are reducing the number of beds available for the elderly.

The health authority has been thinking about the future of Blackmill hospital for some time. Its first consultative document on the proposed reorganisation of hospital services in the Ogwr health district was issued in July 1979. It drew a significant response during public consultation and the authority duly decided to delay making any firm decisions until much nearer the opening of the new Princess of Wales district general hospital.

I am sure that that approach was right, because the new Princess of Wales hospital at Bridgend will form the focal point of very substantially improved health services for the people of Ogwr. When it opens in October of this year, the new hospital will provide the most modern forms of health treatment. In many respects it will be second to none in Wales. Indeed, extra funds made available by the Welsh Office to the Mid-Glamorgan health authority reflect our strong desire to secure such major improvements in health care

At one point, the Mid-Glamorgan health authority expressed concern that existing guidance on cost allowances for a hospital of the size of the Princess of Wales did not fully recognise the special needs of the district. There was some feeling that this guidance would not permit the introduction of the most recent technological advances. However, I am happy to say that we were able to provide the required funding to satisfy the overall requirements at the new hospital. More than £6 million has been provided for up-to-date equipment items, and an extra allocation of just under £4.8 million recurring revenue moneys has been added to the health authority's allocation especially for the new district general hospital.

All of this is additional to money for the capital development, costing in excess of £13 million, so our commitment to funding the health services in Ogwr should be crystal clear and unmistakeable. But I want to say something in a little more detail about the effect that this multi-million pound investment will have upon the actual health services provided to the people of Ogwr. It is this that has conditioned the authority's approach to the future of Blackmill hospital.

It is axiomatic that services for the elderly should be provided on the soundest possible basis. The development of services for the elderly is given priority attention by my Department. Among other things, health authorities are required to reinvest "good management" efficiency savings amounting to 0.5 per cent. of their revenue allocations for the priority groups of elderly, mentally handicapped and mentally ill people, who are among the most vulnerable in our society.

In this case, I believe that the reorganised health services proposed for Ogwr are likely to be of real benefit to elderly people in the community over and above the services available already. The needs of the elderly in hospital do not just demand concentrated medical and nursing care. There is also a requirement for a range of other specialised services. We look for significant improvement in this area, because, without it, and without the well-judged service intervention that they can provide, elderly people would otherwise be unable to retain their health, their independence and thus the society of their family and friends. These specialised facilities are precisely those that are available at a general hospital and are unlikely to be available elsewhere.

In saying that I certainly do not mean to disparage the work of the staff at Blackmill hospital. Their devotion to their patients is widely known locally and very well appreciated. However, there can be no doubt that the facilities being made available at Bridgend general hospital, Quarella road, as well as in the associated Maesgwyn hospital, are both superior in themselves and capable of meeting the total needs of the area in a way that Blackmill cannot.

That said, we have agreed with a suggestion from the Mid-Glamorgan health authority that any alternative proposal for the use of the resource represented by Blackmill should be given very careful consideration before any decision is taken on disposal of the hospital site. We fully recognise the great affection which the local community has for the hospital, and we are conscious of the excellent voluntary support that it has received. There is no intention to overlook the service that either has been or could be provided to the elderly at Blackmill. But it is up to the authority to see whether local initiative could support the development of a viable plan for some further future use. I am sure that it will be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the ideas that he has presented this morning and that it will consider what he has had to say.

The closure of Blackmill will, of course, have consequences for the pattern of service provision generally within the area. For example, general practitioner services are themselves very significant in providing a primary health care service for the elderly. Here, it is the intention that general practitioner beds should be located near to the diagnostic and treatment facilities at Bridgend. This cannot but have a positive influence on the effectiveness of the GP services.

Again, the treatment of infectious diseases will also be subject to reorganisation. When the Blackmill hospital was originally built by the Ogmore and Garw council it was for the care of patients suffering with infectious diseases. Since then there has been a massive decline in the incidence and severity of these diseases to such an extent that a major isolation facility is no longer necessary. The new Princess of Wales hospital has itself been planned to enable the proper treatment of infectious diseases to be undertaken.

It may be said that, despite the care with which the Mid-Glamorgan health authority has planned and consulted, the new arrangements for the whole of Ogwr, which themselves imply the closure of Blackmill, should still not go ahead. It may be said that the 30 beds and Blackmill hospital should be retained. In that event, the further development at Bridgend general hospital about which I have spoken would have to be materially revised. Retention of Blackmill would mean that the resources expended on it would not be available for use elsewhere in Ogwr. This would affect the area plan, and some element of the intended provision for the elderly—planned to be in the region of 120 beds at Bridgend—would have to be omitted to balance the supply against likely demand. By retaining a relatively isolated GP unit, the planned capacity to provide comprehensive care for the

elderly would be limited. Proposals for providing GP access to major diagnostic facilities and other specialist support at Bridgend general would be affected adversely.

It is difficult to see how any authority could justify having such beds in isolation from major support and acute specialties and outpatient services. Nor do I think that even the most ardent supporter of the notion of retaining Blackmill hospital would suggest that such a GP service at Blackmill should actually be replaced at Bridgend. Moreover, there are clear advantages of maintaining beds for the elderly in the most central and accessible location in relation to population. Bridgend general meets this requirement far more effectively than does Blackmill.

Again, so far as beds for the elderly in general are concerned, there must be doubt that Blackmill hospital could possibly hope to offer a service to elderly people of Ogwr superior to that proposed for the new Bridgend general and Maesgwyn hospital. The whole concept of the care envisaged for the elderly in Ogwr is to create a large number of beds in Bridgend with immediate access to major diagnostic and rehabilitative facilities. I make no apology in supporting Mid-Glamorgan health authority in working towards positive patterns of care for the elderly and for Ogwr as a whole. The most fruitful way ahead can only be charted by developing facilities around the Princess of Wales hospital.

I know that some of the few elderly people cared for at Blackmill hospital will initially be concerned at the thought of moving to an alternative location. It will of course be up to the health authority to ensure that this is managed with the care and sensitivity that we have come to expect from staff at Blackmill. Patients will fortunately not be asked to move great distances. Bridgend is only four and a half miles away and Maesgwyn hospital is only three miles away. At either place the distance from close relatives and friends will not differ substantially from that which exists now. They will be assured that all modern techniques available for their treatment and well-being would be close at hand.

All these developments in Ogwr take place against a resource background which Labour Members consistently refuse to recognise and occasionally misrepresent. As I have said many times in the House, and elsewhere, the Health Service in Wales has enjoyed a 16·3 per cent. increase in available growth resources between 1979-80 and 1985-86. This is after taking account of the effects of inflation, and 1983 public expenditure reductions. It is this very growth that has enabled authorities like Mid-Glamorgan to begin to address the problems of old and relatively expensive facilities, and to begin the business of moving to more modern and effective ones.

I do not say that these adjustments can be made easily. They demand great sensitivity, careful planning and considerable thought. There are hard choices to be made, but they cannot be avoided. On any objective standard the improvement in performance across the whole Health Service in Wales since 1979 is striking. Many more patient cases are being dealt with quickly and with a greater range of treatments than ever before, but it will not be possible for authorities like Mid-Glamorgan to continue to enhance their performance—to tackle the problems that confront the service—if scarce resources are used in running facilities that are relatively ineffective in cost and service terms. To cavil at this is simply to close one's eyes to the realities of Health Service planning and resource needs. We cannot take a relaxed view of any arrangement that uses resources ineffectively and thus diverts them from more and better patient care, particularly when modern, improved and accessible services are available

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I very well recognise that the pressures on the funds that he has made available to the district health authorities are always strong. They are caused, for example, by new technologies and new methods of treatment as well as by pay increases. On this last point I will only say that these have been discussed at the recent round of annual reviews conducted by the executive committee of the health policy board within our Department.

There will be an opportunity for further discussion during the course of today when chairmen have one of their occasional meetings with the Secretary of State. Naturally, I cannot anticipate the course of this discussion, or indeed the Secretary of State's decisions as regards funding for 1986-87. What I will say is that we look to health authorities to continue to take effective measures to get the best value for money in the interests of patient care. I cannot imagine that anyone who works in the NHS would want to side-step that imperative. It is essential to the future of the service overall.

I do not in any way discount the financial and other problems of transition that Mid-Glamorgan faces. They confront all authorities to some degree. As things stand, Mid-Glamorgan has benefited from significant growth in its discretionary revenue resources in recent years. Moreover, additional cash loans of some £3 million in 1984-85 and £2·2 million in 1985-86 have been made to help the authority, which has also benefited from special central funding for particular service developments. We are also assisting a consultancy study designed to help the authority to manage the way ahead.

All of this is in support of the considerable efforts made by the authority over recent years to tackle the problems with which it is confronted. It is important to see the future of services for the elderly in Ogwr, and indeed the decision in respect of Blackmill hospital, in that context.

I do not believe that Mid-Glamorgan will be assisted in its effort—which will be to the long-term benefit of all those served by the authority—if every well-founded proposal for change is characterised as "cutting" health services, when in fact such changes represent further significant improvements in patient care. That can only reduce public confidence in the credibility of the service for both the present and the future—to the detriment of patients and the dedicated staff who work in the service.

I conclude by returning to the work of the staff at Blackmill hospital. I am sure that they will help in making the transitional period implicit in the transfer of services to a new location as smooth as possible. The staff's reputation for care gives me the strongest possible hope that the transition will be managed well.

I also acknowledge the work done by individual members of the local community and members of voluntary groups that have taken an interest in Blackmill over the years and the considerable support that they have given to the hospital. I hope that that goodwill will find its proper outlet in the facilities at Bridgend and elsewhere in Ogwr.

Southampton Economic Development Corporation

1 pm

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I welcome the opportunity to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to a sinister new development in local government—the abuse of companies limited by guarantee. The creation of such companies is often no more than a fraudulent sham and the use to which they can be put is grossly anti-democratic, an outrageous abuse of ratepayers' funds and a recipe for corruption on a massive scale. As not only ratepayers' but taxpayers' money is being siphoned into these companies, I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary shares my anxiety.

I shall illustrate the argument by referring to the recent establishment by Southampton city council of a company limited by guarantee, the Southampton Economic Development Corporation, which was incorporated on 20 March this year and has the widest possible terms in its memorandum of association. The report submitted to the city council said:

"A company which carries on an activity not permitted by its memorandum will be acting ultra vires and that activity will be void. It is therefore important that the memorandum must be drafted in the widest possible terms to enable a company to carry on any activity which it might wish to do in the future."

The objects of SEDCO enable it to do anything calculated to assist and promote the economic, scientific, technological and social development of Southampton; to carry on research; to stage conferences, exhibitions or plays and to provide leisure activities and amenities; to deal in property; to invest, borrow and deal with money and to take shares in other companies. The city secretary reported that that was not an exhaustive list of the company's powers and that there was also a blanket clause enabling the company to carry on any activity that is deemed to be incidental, necessary, expedient or conducive to its other specified powers.

Therefore, Southampton Economic Development Corporation has powers that are far wider and more extensive than those of the city council itself. However, unlike the city council, the economic development corporation is devoid of public accountability. Its members and directors are appointed by the city council, but need not be elected members of that council. Once appointed, they are accountable to the company and not to the public.

The public and press are denied access to agendas, supporting papers and minutes, thereby being denied all the public safeguards in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

The company board meets in private and, most sinister of all, councillors who are not on the board are denied access to information. Board members may be paid fees and the board may be so constituted that minority parties on the city council are not represented on it.

Although directors are governed by company legislation and the company must keep accounts and make and file an annual return, the controls on members of the board are a far cry from open accountability to the electorate and the public. Yet the company is wholly dependent on public funds or the guarantee of such funds.

Within a few days of incorporation, Southampton Economic Development Corporation was given £450,000 by the council. The payment was made under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, which enables local authorities to spend up to the product of a 2p rate.

The product of a 2p rate in Southampton is almost £700,000, but by the end of the last financial year only £250,000 had been spent. The remainder, instead of being returned to the ratepayers, was siphoned into the new company. All that the public know is that the money was invested on behalf of the company on 29 March, the day on which it was transferred. From now on, the ratepayers of Southampton have no control over the way in which that money is spent.

Not content with a mere £450,000, the directors of the company immediately started investigating ways in which millions of pounds could be produced for the company. The ingenious and sinister proposal that was considered was a back-to-back loan by which the company would borrow up to £3 million from a bank on the basis that the city council would deposit an equivalent sum with that bank. In that way, the council would not be deemed to be spending money, but would potentially be liable to use the money to meet the company's debts under the guarantee. Meanwhile, the company, meeting in secret, would be able to spend millions of pounds as it wanted.

The sham nature of that proposal is clear from a report to the directors that was given by Mr. Grey, who is not only a director of the company but the treasurer of the city council. The first sentence of his report reads:

"When considering the ways in which the City Council could provide funds for SEDCO, it was clearly important to bear in mind the limitations imposed by Statute and by Government regulations."

It may be apparent from that sentence that Mr. Grey was finding it difficult to separate his responsibilities as treasurer of the city council from the role which he was apparently playing at the time of making his report, that of a director of the corporation. Mr. Grey continued:

"If the revenue reserve for capital purposes of the Council continues to be the sole source of finance for this company, the present City Council policies, if maintained, would ensure that funds would be available for four to five years at the rate of £350,000 a year."

That was not enough, apparently, for the directors of the company. They wanted to consider alternative provision, and the city treasurer reported that he had conducted negotiations with two banks, Hambros and the Trustee Savings bank, and said that, in consideration of an investment by the council in the bank, the bank would make a loan to the Southampton Economic Development Corporation. He said in his report to the board of directors:

"An arrangement of this sort ensures that there is no direct link between the two transactions, the bank loan to SEDCO and the City Council's investment with the bank, both being in the normal course of business."

In my submission, that was nothing more than a sham, because it was clear that the bank would lend money to the corporation only if the city council agreed to deposit money with that bank, so giving a sort of back-to-back arrangement.

The report to the corporation went on to point out the costs of such loans. It said that the interest would be £130,000 a year for each £1 million borrowed. In other words, it would be up to £390,000. It went on:

"It is extremely unlikely that interest commitments will be met in the early years of operation, and the City Council will, therefore, need to act as a guarantor. In addition, provision will need to be made for repayment of the loan principal."

Mr. Grey said that the Hambros offer would cause little difficulty, because the loan would not fall due until the end

of the seven-year loan period. That was, of course, a long way ahead for those currently running the council, although it would be a potential millstone around the necks of Southampton's ratepayers.

At the end of his quite long report, Mr. Grey told the directors:

"On balance, I would suggest that taking a loan at the present time is premature."

One of the directors on the board was a Conservative councillor, Mike Andrews, an accountant. He thought that what was being proposed was of dubious legality, and he expressed the intention to vote against the proposal at the board meeting. He said that he would point out to the bank which was thinking of entering into this back-to-back arrangement that it might be entering into a matter of doubtful legality.

Within 24 hours, the city council decided that Councillor Andrews should be dismissed from the board. A special agenda item referred to using the powers in the Local Government Act to deal with a matter of "extreme urgency". The mayor stated:

"It has been brought to my attention by the leader of the council"—

I do not know where that leaves the question of confidentiality, because it appears that the leader of the council, who is a member of SEDCO's board, is free to discuss matters that take place at board meetings with his Socialist colleagues outside, but can criticise someone who is not a member of the Socialist party if he acts similarly.

The mayor went on:

"Councillor Andrews who is a council appointed director of this corporation has indicated his intention to take action by writing to certain banking organisations on lines which could detrimentally affect the board's ability to satisfactorily progress negotiations. This action, if carried through, could be construed as directly incompatible with continued membership of the board of directors."

The mayor said that he thought that the matter should be dealt with without delay. As a result, the council on which the Socialists have a majority voted to dismiss Councillor Andrews from the board. That meant that one of the two Conservative councillors who had been elected to the board was dismissed.

The corporation is so rotten that it appears that anyone who wishes to scrutinise what happens is likely to lose his position on the board. It is possible that no minority party representative will be allowed to serve on the board unless he agrees to be a silent stooge and cipher for the Socialists. As with all authoritarian and undemocratic councils, the voice of a minority is left with the expensive option of litigation in which the opponents will be funded by the ratepayers and the public purse.

The officers of the council are involved as directors of SEDCO. They are being put into an invidious position. The city treasurer owes a fiduciary duty to the ratepayers in his own right and, as an employee of the local authority, he should give his working time and undivided allegiance to that authority. What is he to do when conflicts of interest and duty arise? How can he remain, and be seen to remain, impartial, objective, politically neutral and professionally independent? It seems that pressure was imposed to make him agree to enter into a £3 million loan, despite his reservations. It has been suggested that another council officer has been faced with pressure to doctor the minutes of the board meeting to avoid potential embarrassment to the leader of the Socialist city council.

It seems that nothing can prevent the corporation from incurring liabilities of countless millions of pounds which ratepayers will have to meet in the future. Short of rate capping, there is no limited liability for ratepayers. They are rather like names at Lloyd's: they will have to pay up, if called upon to do so, in relation to bad decisions over which they have no control.

In the limited time available, I cannot go into the temptation of corruption to which directors of such companies limited by guarantee may be exposed. Money taken through the rates from commercial and residential ratepayers in Southampton can, through the device of this company, effectively be spent on anything that the company directors think fit. If, for example, the Widdicombe committee recommends a clampdown on local authority propaganda — I hope that it will — SEDCO will be able, under its memorandum, to spend ratepayers' money instead.

If a trade union or individual agrees to give a fixed sum of money to the Southampton Labour party, and is then to be rewarded with a soft grant or loan from the corporation, how will the press or public be able to learn about it? There is no way that the press or public would be able to learn about such matters. That is why I say that it is a recipe for corruption. I feel that all right-thinking people would regard putting local authority money and property beyond the direct control of the local authority as dubious in the extreme, and depositing or charging public money as security for the debts or other obligations of the company as grossly immoral.

Unfortunately, there are now elements in local government that are not right-thinking and are prepared to bend whatever rules and conventions exist to further their own party political objectives. The members of the board of the company have no experience whatever in investing in businesses, which is apparently the purported purpose of setting up the developmemt corporation. It will take money from existing thriving businesses in Southampton and give it to dubious businesses that may well not survive and are likely to collapse, but only after a good deal of ratepayers' money has been poured into the board.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give a message of hope to those who are desperately trying to resist these sinister developments in local government.

1.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) for raising the question of the activities of the Southampton Economic Development Corporation. The specific case that he has raised in turn raises general issues of principle concerning the activities of local authorities. He touched on the potential conflict of interest facing local government officers who find themselves acting for the council but also for bodies that are at arm's length.

My hon. Friend raised a fundamental issue that we have asked the Widdicombe committee to look at: whether the premise on which Parliament gave local authorities very wide discretionary powers — in the belief that they would honour the convention to use them responsibly— is still valid at a time when, unfortunately, a growing number of local authority councillors exploit to the maximum the framework of the law to use ratepayers' funds for purposes that were never intended by Parliament. One of the most valuable things that I can do is to refer

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my hon. Friend's speech to the Widdicombe inquiry, together with any supportive evidence that he has, particularly from the minutes of the board.

My hon. Friend likened the Southampton ratepayers, whom he represents so ably, to those who are named at Lloyd's, but if one is named at Lloyd's one has the option at the beginning of deciding whether to enter into that obligation. Short of moving out of Southampton—and denying themselves the benefit of my hon. Friend's representation in this House—those who live there do not have the option that members of Lloyd's have of deciding whether to take on a particular liability.

My hon. Friend raised several matters on which I am not able to comment in detail. I should like to reflect on them and seek further advice from my Department, but it might be helpful if I outlined to my hon. Friend and the House the Government's general philosophy about the relationship between local government and the funding of economic activity in a particular local authority area.

I think my hon. Friend will agree that responsible local authorities have a legitimate role to play in the economic development of their district. When my hon. Friend was leader of Wandsworth council, he worked closely with my Department to bring to fruition many worthwhile urban programme schemes directed at creating employment and improving Wandsworth as a place in which to invest. But Wandsworth council was answerable for its proportion of the programme, and there was the element of accountability, whereas in Southampton the link of accountability is somewhat weakened.

My Department's 1982 consultation paper, "Local authority assistance to industry and commerce", stated:

> "Local authorities have a key contribution to make to the development of small firms—and indeed to the encouragement of enterprise generally—through the proper exercise of their statutory powers, and especially in ensuring that enterprises are not unduly hampered by bureaucratic delays, over restrictive planning policies or unnecessarily heavy rate burdens".

In the past weeks two major Government reports have been published. The White Paper "Lifting the Burden" specifically drew attention to how local authorities can help local enterprise to flourish by minimising controls and bureaucracy and by adopting a positive approach through the planning system. Secondly, the publication "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs" which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has sent to all local authorities outlines one important area of economic growth—tourism—and the important role that local government has to play in developing it.

I must qualify that support with a reservation which I am sure will meet with my hon. Friend's agreement: that local authorities must avoid conflict with central Government's priorities towards regional and inner city development and the control of public expenditure generally.

Local authorities are not capable of taking on and should not be expected to take on the whole burden of reviving the economy. They must work with the grain of national policies and not cut across them. Assisting industry locally should not be used as an excuse for experimenting with doctrinaire economic theories, imposing political conditions on employers, pursuing political propaganda campaigns or side-stepping expenditure controls.

If ratepayers' funds were used through the board to fund party political campaigns, every right-minded person would see that as an abuse of those funds. In the end, a high-spending policy, brought about by a local authority, designed to revive the local economy, will inevitably be self-defeating because of the high rates burden which is added to the costs of local firms.

The Government have also made it clear that they are not opposed in principle to the setting up of enterprise boards. They are still a fairly new feature, and are one way in which local authorities can organise themselves to help industry. I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government will watch carefully how they develop — the crucial point that he made — and how the parent local authorities exercise control over their activities. My Department has already learned a great deal about the enterprise boards funded by the GLC and the metropolitan counties because we have power and control over their expenditure, which is exercised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Some of those boards have adopted sensible, commercially minded approaches. I am sure that my hon. Friend does not object to that. I have to answer another debate later about the role of the Greater London Enterprise Board. Enterprise boards can offer potential advantages and, as my hon. Friend said, potential disadvantages. For example, an enterprise board, by concentrating local authority services in one body, separated from day-to-day political pressures, may be able to work more closely with the private sector, build up its own special expertise and identify gaps in local private sector provision whether in sites, services or capital. A body operating like that, using commercial criteria but with a regard to local employment needs, seems to me capable of fulfilling a useful role, not least in fostering the birth and growth of small firms in inner city areas.

There are obvious dangers, as my hon. Friend said, if the board diverts local government from what it can do to help in basic policy areas, in assembling land for example; or if it leads to additional bureaucracy with its own priorities, merely adding to industry's rate burden and imposing excessive conditions on the firms receiving aid. Problems would also arise if the scale and nature of the operations worked against national or inner-city priorities. Those dangers, while not inevitable, depend upon the guidelines that are set for the board by the elected members, how its performance is monitored and how it is made accountable.

As I said a moment ago, the Government have set up a committee of inquiry under the chairmanship of David Widdicombe to consider a number of aspects of local authority affairs, including the use of local authorities' discretionary spending power under section 137. As my hon. Friend made clear, it was the use of section 137 which enabled Southampton at the end of the year to use the margin available to it to fund the enterprise board. The Widdicombe inquiry will be looking at the clarification of the limits and the conditions governing the existing powers under section 137. There is a particular reference to bodies set up and largely funded by local authorities. Therefore, I expect the activities mentioned by my hon. Friend to figure quite prominently in the committee's deliberations.

My hon. Friend will understand that we want to have the benefit of the views of the inquiry, as an independent,

impartial body, on the difficult issues that he mentioned before we can consider what policy changes are appropriate.

I come now to particular issues concerning the Southampton city council enterprise board, SEDCO. One of my hon. Friend's concerns is that it could be used to evade the normal Government controls on local authority expenditure. He described the transaction of the £3 million deposit with the £3 million advance.

It is certainly true that there are no constraints on the amount of money that an enterprise board may spend, other than those that apply to any commercial undertaking. Such expenditure is outside Government control on local authorities and could be brought within it only by primary legislation.

Grants to the enterprise board under section 137 would score against the authority's prescribed expenditure allocation. Likewise, revenue grants by Southampton to its board would count towards total expenditure for target purposes. My hon. Friend touched on the guarantees to the enterprise board and the potential long-term commitments that might be inherited by a city council of a different complexion.

As a matter of principle, I welcome private sector capital injections to a board as an indication that it is acting along sound commercial lines. The guarantee provided by the local authority does not score against expenditure until the guarantee is called. If it was called, a guarantee of a revenue nature would count towards total expenditure, but a guarantee of a capital nature would be prescribed expenditure only if the authority thereby came into beneficial occupation of a capital asset.

My Department is now reviewing the whole system of capital expenditure controls in consultation with the local authority associations, and the question of local authority controlled companies will be examined. It is a complex area and I listened with special interest to what my hon. Friend had to say about Councillor Michael Andrews, who was appointed to the board by the city council but subsequently dismissed in the circumstances outlined by my hon. Friend.

If Councillor Andrews was simply being censured for acting responsibly as a guardian of ratepayers, that is something that I would roundly condemn. I would want more details about the case before going further than that; however, there are grounds for anxiety. It raises the point of principle, on which I touched earlier, of the conflict of interest between accountability to the local authority and accountability to the enterprise board to which one is appointed as a director.

In the light of what my hon. Friend has said, we will continue to maintain a close watching brief on the operation of the boards, not least the one in Southampton. The points that my hon. Friend has raised are material to that monitoring exercise. When the recommendations of the Widdicombe inquiry are available, and when the exercise on capital expenditure controls is finalised we will be in a better position to decide whether any changes are required to the legal framework in which they operate.

In the meantime, I commend my hon. Friend for his diligence—which we have grown to expect from him—in bringing to public attention the potential abuse of the position in Southampton. My Department will keep a close watch on the position that he outlined.

Borders Region (Social Fund Assistance)

1.28 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the effect on the Borders region of the European Community's decision to withdraw priority status for social fund assistance.

I apologise to the Minister for having interposed myself between him and his holiday. However, I hope that he will agree that this is a subject worth considering because it has been causing some concern to my local authority. I hope that we shall have a useful half hour's debate.

New guidelines were issued by the European Community on 30 April this year on the management of the European social fund for the years 1986-88. These new guidelines exclude the Borders region from priority for most, though not all, forms of European social fund assistance. Before the change in the guidelines the Borders region was eligible for most types of European social fund assistance, because it came within the "priority" region which at that time encompassed the whole of Scotland.

The EC has now decided to change the geographical coverage of European fund assistance to cover smaller units based on local authority regions and counties which are undertaking industrial restructuring or have a particularly high unemployment rate or, alternatively, many long-term unemployed. Since the guidelines change, only two local authority regions in Scotland are without European social fund assistance priority—the Grampians and my own region of the Borders.

It has been made clear to the Government by me and by my right hon Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) as well as by people in the Borders region that employment by itself is not a good measure of economic well-being in a rural area such as the Borders, to the exclusion of everything else. The total number of unemployed in the Borders region in June 1985 was 3,460, giving an average rate of 9·1 per cent. I fully accept that in other parts of the country unemployment is much higher. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there has been a slight but significant increase in the level of unemployment since June 1984, when it was 8·6 per cent. That is the direction in which the trend is going and it is causing concern in the Borders.

Within the regional average there are wide local variations in unemployment rates. For example, in the Berwickshire travel-to-work area within the Borders region the June 1985 unemployment rate was 13·3 per cent., which is only slightly lower than the current Scottish average and slightly above the current United Kingdom average. The situation in Berwickshire will deteriorate still further after the civil work stage at the nearby power station at Torness is completed. It seems unfair for the Borders, and Berwickshire in particular, to have European social fund priority withdrawn when other parts of Scotland with lower unemployment rates are being allowed to retain priority status.

The main thrust of the European social fund objective is to provide for the needs of two classes of people, those unemployed under the age of 25 and long-term unemployed. The April 1985 figures for the Borders show that one third of those out of work locally are under 25

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years of age. In addition, the number of local long-term unemployed has quadrupled since the late 1970s. In the Borders, 29 per cent. of the unemployed have been out of work for more than a year. In the bigger industrial areas, such as Hawick, 34 per cent. of those out of work have been unemployed for more than a year.

There are other factors that the Government should recognise when they take policy decisions, whether exclusively or in concert with the European Community, about the status afforded to different regions under any development or regional assistance scheme.

The continuous loss of population from areas such as the Borders is a problem. If those in the economically active age groups find difficulty in getting work, they move elsewhere. The Minister may take the view—and it is a view that others Ministers have taken—that there is nothing wrong with that. People may well get on their bikes, but one must consider the enormous problems created by imbalanced population distribution and the knock-on effects in other parts of the community when working age families start to leave the area in significant numbers. One very quickly realises the high price that has to be paid when active families quit the area.

The lack of employment opportunity is another factor which must be taken into account. The regional council in the Borders is doing its utmost to encourage and promote new, diversified industry to create new jobs from within the region and to encourage inward investment. I am pleased to say that it has been extremely successful, but changes, such as the new directive issued in April, mean that the council will be operating in future with one hand tied behind its back. I suggest to the Minister that the high incidence of low pay is another important factor in the Borders economy. Many families there need to have both parents working if they are to have a tolerable standard of living. The existence of two wage earners in a family in other parts of the country often signifies a desire to indulge in luxurious living, like the soft-living people who live in the south-east of England, but in such places as the Borders it is necessary to have both parents working to enable families to keep their heads above water.

There are also difficulties in getting guidance and advice to those out of work in a geographically disparate region such as the Borders. There is no access to commercial job agencies, as there often is in urban areas.

I have been pressing the Government, principally the Minister's colleagues in the Scottish Office, ever since I was elected to the House to recognise that areas such as the Borders have problems. They may not be the same problems as those in the more urban areas and they may be less easily quantified and recognised, but in their own way they are as real and as urgent. In my opinion, they are frequently ignored by Governments.

I strongly urge the Minister to hold urgent talks with his opposite numbers in the Scottish Office. I understand that it is not entirely within his responsibility, but I ask him to discuss these matters with his colleagues with a view to bringing forward early proposals to set up a rural development plan that could be used in conjunction with the Scottish Development Agency's powers and those available already to regional council planners to give a real boost and stimulus to appropriate types of commerce and industry in the landward areas of the United Kingdom.

I accept that the grand, capital-intensive projects that have been considered in regional development schemes in the past may not be appropriate to smaller areas, but there is every opportunity to set up a sensitive and sensible amount of programming and planning within the remit of a rural development plan. It would not cost an enormous sum of money, but it would make a significant difference to the economic activity in such places as the Borders. In my view, no other single initiative could do more to generate real and beneficial economic activity in rural areas.

I remind the Minister, because he is responsible for the Department of Employment, that we in Scotland do not have the benefit of an organisation such as COSIRA, which has set up a rural development area south of the border in Northumberland. From north of the border we look across with envious eyes to what is happening there. Real and positive developments are taking place. The position is made worse from our point of view because Border Television straddles the border area. I get nightly reports on activities in north Northumberland, and my constituents telephone me asking why I am not getting this for them. It does nothing but engender and foster nationalism of the very worst sort, and the Government ignore that at their peril. The work that COSIRA has been doing is commendable. There is a great deal to be said for it, and it should be mirrored north of the border. If we had it, it would go a long way to mitigate the effect of the withdrawal of European social fund assistance.

The Borders lost its assisted area status in August 1982. It meant, among other things, that the Borders was no longer eligible for assistance from the European regional development fund. The loss of priority for European social fund assistance means that the region no longer has effective access to the most important forms of EEC funds available to local authorities. I am aware that restricted eligibility to European social fund assistance still obtains, but my local authority reports to me that it is difficult to use the categories that remain available because they are so very restricted.

I am also aware that to date no real use has been made of the European social fund's schemes. The Borders region has not been able to benefit from the funds but it had begun to mount a series of training initiatives for about 300 unemployed persons through the Borders college of further education. They would have been looking for financial assistance from the European social fund. It is a great tragedy that these efforts, which were well advanced, may be prejudiced if not entirely thwarted by the decision to withdraw priority status from the Borders region.

The Minister therefore owes us answers to a few salient questions. First, what influence, if any, do the Government have over the Commission in Brussels when it takes decisions of this kind? I am as ardent a European as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, but nothing is more likely to sour pro-European feelings than decisions of this kind being visited upon us. I quote from *The Scotsman* of 12 June 1985 and pray in aid the Conservative Member of Parliament for the European seat of South of Scotland who said:

"According to the Commission's own table of areas with regional problems, the Borders come within the top one fifth, along with regions like Tayside, Central, Fife and Lothians. There must therefore be evidence for including the Borders on the list of regions qualifying for ESF's assistance."

Since the regional authority, the local Members of Parliament and the European Member of Parliament agree that the fund needs to be retained, what influence, if any, do the Government have over the Commission?

Secondly, what representations were made by the Minister on this issue? I accept that negotiations with the authorities in Brussels do not revolve around the needs of Hawick and that policy decisions have to be taken on a much wider basis than that. However, the Government should have considered the implications for regions such as my own and for Grampian when the strategic decision was taken, which predated the April announcement, to withdraw priority status from these two regions.

Finally, will the Minister give an assurance that, if he cannot deliver a rural development plan and if he is unable to have discussions with his colleagues in the Scottish Office about a rural development set-up in Scotland, he will seek to have the Borders region reinstated as an area that qualifies for European social fund grants? Because of the problems faced by 300 youngsters who had expected to be provided with extra assistance for the employment projects of the Borders college of further education, can the Minister assure us that the Government will consider the problems caused by the withdrawal of European social fund assistance? Nevertheless, I hope that he will be able to say something positive about the establishment of a rural fund for the Borders area.

1.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) has not interrupted my holiday. It was not supposed to start until next week. In fact it is being interrupted by other matters. One of the encouraging aspects of being an Employment Minister is that not only is one able to listen and pay a great deal of attention to representations but one is also able to learn about success stories in the various regions of the United Kingdom. Too often we refer only to the failures. The hon. Gentleman has done well to point to many of the successes in his constituency and in the Borders region. I hope the message will go out that, even if he does not get what he is asking for from the European social fund, although Ministers may occasionally have to say no, we are just as keen as is he to ensure that the 300 young people to whom he referred are provided with the best possible opportunities. All those with the power to influence events —those on the regional council, Members of Parliament and those in statutory or voluntary organisations, or in commerce and the public sector — should try in every way to encourage people to do more for themselves and for others. The idea of such a self-improvement society unites most hon. Members. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) here. There is hardly a Scottish debate in the House without his presence, and often his interventions.

In simple terms, special schemes to meet needs are bound to create problems. Last night, I replied to a debate about the definition of a travel-to-work area. It was said that if a ward could be placed in a different travel-to-work area, extra help would be available. With any scheme people on one side of a boundary say, "We want to be on the other side because our problems are worse than others realise." In the Borders, incomes are lower than they are in some areas. The hon. Gentleman said that that should be taken into account when looking for priority areas under the European social fund. I would not claim to be an expert on whether it is taken sufficiently into account, but if it was given a higher weighting than the unemployment figures I could not guarantee that the Borders would come top of the list for receiving more favourable consideration.

The Government make representations to the European Commission, and we have views on some areas which we believe, rightly, should be included for priority treatment. The Borders is not at the top of that list. Other areas are in a much worse position than the Borders. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's constituents will realise that, however persuasively he has made their case, I must say bluntly that the Borders does not come top of the list of areas that should be given the highest priority. I hope that they will realise that we must work out our priorities and try to do something for the worst afflicted areas first. No doubt all of us would wish to treat the entire country in the same way, but if we did that we might lose assistance. We must exercise some common sense.

The hon. Gentleman asked about our influence with the Commission. I should tell him that the Commission has the legal right and, I expect, the duty under article 6 of the Council decision on the tasks of the social fund to set the priorities for assistance from the fund for each financial year by means of guidelines. The priority areas are part of those guidelines. Member states, including the United Kingdom, are consulted about the contents of the guidelines before publication, and although the Commission will listen to representations that we make, it is not legally bound to accept them. It is responsible for making the final decision. We put in strong representations on behalf of the areas that we believe should be included, and we must then wait to see what the Commission says. If it says something that we believe to be illogical or inconsistent, we can return to the Commission and say so.

It is worth remembering that the United Kingdom does relatively well from the social fund. That is because we deserve to do well. However, we also try to ensure that we take advantage of all the opportunities available to us. The guidelines are there for a purpose — to meet special needs—and if we can organise ourselves and put in the appropriate applications, we shall do well. Those who do not do what the social fund is designed to achieve will not do as well. Occasionally, we are unhappy with changes in allocations, but perhaps any comment about that should be left for another time.

I pay tribute to the officials in the Department of Employment who deal with social fund matters. They have a high reputation with Commission officials in Brussels for the quality of their work and for their knowledge of what we and the Commission are trying to do. They also have a good reputation among applicants from the United Kingdom for their helpfulness and knowledge. That is well reflected in the number of allocations made by the fund to the United Kingdom during the past few years. I should tell the hon. Gentleman that anyone who is thinking of developing a scheme should contact the European social fund section of the Department of Employment. Even without priority status, there are opportunities to help people to put in applications that meet some of the other guidelines.

It is worth saying — and not too loudly — that I suspect that the changes in the guidelines for the European social fund will make virtually no difference to the Borders region. In future, people may think that the schemes that they have worked out would have been accepted under the

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

old arrangements, but that is looking some way forward. In another debate, which did not come off, another region would have been mentioned which thought that the changes were frightful. That case was not precisely the same, but even under the changes it got twice as much in the subsequent year as in the previous year. Therefore, the changes are not quite as bad as they appear.

I should like to answer some other questions that the hon. Gentleman asked towards the end of his speech. First, he asked what the Government were doing about the position of the Borders in the priority list. We have made it clear to the Commission that we disagree with some parts of the new priority list. We shall continue to make representations. Frankly, that does not mean that we believe that the Borders has been unfairly treated in its position on the priority list. It is worth noting the unemployment rates in some of the new priority areas—for example, 11·3 per cent. in Derbyshire, 12·4 per cent. in Lincolnshire, 10·7 per cent. in Nottingham and 14·6 per cent. in the Isle of Wight. Although I am not going into the details of the level of income and the difficulties of a relatively small population, well dispersed, I think that most people regard it as reasonably fair that there should be some order of priorities.

The reason for having priority regions is that the social fund supports employment and training schemes in the member states, and is invariably oversubscribed. Many of us would have views on the balance of spending in the European Community, but given the size of the social fund as it is now, there is a need for priorities. To ensure that the money available goes to the areas of greatest need, regions with the highest unemployment are given priority for funding. There is a more restricted range of employment and training schemes supported in non-priority regions, as the hon. Gentleman acknowledged.

How are priority regions determined? Before the fund review undertaken by the Council of Ministers in 1983, they were defined in the United Kingdom as standard regions with the highest unemployment. The term "standard region" could have been better phrased because the whole of Scotland was regarded as a single standard region and given priority status. Those standard regions were considered too large because, as the hon. Gentleman said, pockets within them that might be seen as having lower priority qualified and some areas where unemployment was high were not in standard regions. The new system allows fund aid to be more precisely targeted, although not as much as some people would like. A balance needed to be struck between targeting aid and the administrative nightmare of splitting the Community into thousands of small areas.

The Commission proposed that the new system should be based on a statistical mechanism. In the United Kingdom, at county or regional level, it would list areas on a hierarchical index with those with the highest unemployment and lowest income placed at the top and those with the lowest unemployment and the highest income at the bottom. Then it would be necessary to find the appropriate cut-off point to determine who had high priority status. That is self-evident.

There has been a delay in introducing the new system because of normal difficulties in working out the statistical mechanism. The Commission was not able to introduce the league table system until 1986, old priority regions having been retained on a transitional basis for 1984 and 1985. Although the final statistical mechanism has not yet been agreed by the Council of Ministers, the Commission considers the system equitable enough for introduction in the next round of applications and the Government agree in principle that a more rational means of determining regional priorities is necessary.

What is the effect of the change? It is pretty small from the United Kingdom's point of view. Some areas such as the Borders have lost priority and others have gained it, some of which I have mentioned. It is worth noting that the United Kingdom has gained relative to most other member states.

We should not regard the social fund as a great football match in which we try to grab the greatest share that we can. However, it is important to maximise the gain for the United Kingdom. At the same time, it is necessary to consider the underlying purpose of the fund and to ask ourselves whether our targeting is right and whether the existence of the fund encourages us to do things that we might not otherwise have undertaken, especially in the local authority and voluntary sectors.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of the unemployment rate in the Borders and the possible effect on the region of its removal from the priority list. It is worth noting that in 1985 there was just one application, which was successful. The application was submitted by a charitable organisation that is directed to the employment rehabilitation of the mentally handicapped. The project is likely to continue to be eligible for social fund assistance despite the change in status of the region. One cannot be absolutely certain but that is the presumption.

The removal of priority status does not exclude the Borders from access to social fund grants. There is scope for applications to be given priority under guidelines that are not subject to regional limitation. Vocational training schemes for new technology skills for those aged under 25 years is one of the target groups. We are as concerned as the hon. Gentleman to ensure that there is as much help for them as possible. We cannot claim that new technology skills are the answer for every young person, but it is important that as many as possible who can benefit from the schemes are able to do so.

The fund is still able to consider training where exceptional measures are being taken to assist industrial restructuring; training-linked jobs in small firms involving certain new technologies; schemes for women, migrant workers or the disabled and innovatory projects. The Department is keen to assist any organisation in the Borders or anywhere else that is contemplating applying to the social fund for assistance. Applications to the Department should be submitted by 31 August. This may mean that some people will not get the holidays that some hon. Members may be expecting.

I turn to the main area in which the hon. Gentlman can help positively, as he is doing, which is to consider whether more can be done perhaps to encourage the establishment of a system that is similar to COSIRA in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman talked about a regional development plan and the creation of appropriate schemes but I cannot provide the answer. In this instance the Department is not the expert and it is not in control. I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's comments are passed to my colleagues in the Scottish Office or even the Department of Trade and Industry. I am sure that he will persist in trying to ensure that with or without public

funding there will be the same kind of encouragement, the accumulation of expertise and the finding of means to build and reinforce people's confidence and competence.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of the migration of active families and made some mention of dual income households. It is worth noting that I am one part of a dual income household. The hon. Gentleman made a polite remark about my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), which she put in her local newspaper. Unfortunately, his name was misprinted—he was given a female christian name. One of the newspaper's readers wrote asking whether she did not know that the hon. Gentleman was a man. The newspaper printed the letter and it was a week later when it bothered to acknowledge that it was responsible for getting his name wrong.

Apart from examining schemes that have already been agreed, such as the social fund, and pressing for other schemes to be created that will assist in the development of industry and employment in rural areas, we must recognise what is happening outside the social fund, although these developments may be assisted by it. I hope the hon. Gentleman will encourage those who might be referred to as community signposts to learn about the details of the enterprise allowance scheme. It allows many of those who have been out of work for 13 weeks or more and who can produce £1,000 to set up in business while retaining basic benefit for a year. The scheme has been found to be a good way of getting people to fill gaps in the market and to bring together unused resources—often their skills and labour—to meet unmet needs.

It is worth giving encouragement to the youth training scheme. It is knocked sometimes, but it is recognised by those on it to be of great value. The same is true of developing the community programme.

There is a partnership of opportunity and responsibility. We in the Department are glad to play our part and I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has given me the opportunity to explain that fact. I wish his constituents well in finding employment and creating a better future for themselves.

North-Western Regional Health Authority Plan

2 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I have been hoping for some time that my name would be drawn out of Mr. Speaker's hat so that we could debate this subject and I am pleased that it has happened at last, though I am sorry for my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security who has drawn the short straw of replying to the penultimate debate before the recess.

I hope that, although my hon. Friend has a carefully prepared brief from his civil servants, he will throw away some parts of it. I hope that he will not start by telling me that the NHS in the north-west has done relatively well. I know that, and I spend a lot of time telling people that fact. The growth rate in the north-west is 23 per cent. in real terms and is above the national rate. Those who live in Preston, Salford, Wigan, Blackpool, Burnley, Blackburn, Leigh, Bury, Oldham or Tameside will find new hospitals to prove it.

I also do not need to be told that the resource allocation working party system is very good for the north compared with the south, that an extra £52 million has been devoted to the north-west since 1979 and that RAWP is a good system for diverting resources. I know that, too.

I also hope that not too much of my hon. Friend's speech will be devoted to the fact that south Manchester is relatively well off and has 11 per cent. more than the RAWP average for other places in the area. I know that it is the third best in the north-west after Rochdale and Trafford on a hospitalisation index. I mention those facts to get them out of the way. They are agreed and we do not need to debate them.

Let us turn our attention to the nitty-gritty. The regional health authority plan says that Manchester is too attractive. Therefore, it is planned to reduce the number of patient treatments by 9,000 or 10,000—from about 76,000 in 1984 to about 66,000 in 1993. It follows that, with the removal of patients, there will be a removal of beds and of the staff and resources that go with them. The 9,000 or 10,000 patients are to be treated elsewhere in the north-west and the money will go to those districts. We are talking about a localised problem, but one of some magnitude.

While the loss is taking place, south Manchester, like other districts, is witnessing a growth in patient care, reckoned to be 2 or 3 per cent. However, unlike other districts, we are not getting extra money. Indeed, we are losing money. We shall have to deal with additional local patients by squeezing the service provided to them or by sending even more patients elsewhere. That is the basis of the problem.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment recognised in yesterday's statement on the rate support grant that some authorities have less fat to remove than others, because they are already more efficient. We should apply the same principle to the NHS. Compared with other health authorities, the south Manchester authority is efficient and the fat does not exist.

Over the three years up to 1985-86, south Manchester has increased patient treatments by 11·5 per cent. and increased bed throughput by 13 per cent., at a time when

[Mr. Fred Silvester]

its revenue has fallen by £3 million. It is the only district in the north-west that has managed higher activity on a lower budget.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security claimed in his latest letter to me that south Manchester's efficiency was the result of a massive increase in Government investment. It is true that £5 million capital was spent in the district between 1982 and 1984. However, let us be clear what that means. About £1·25 million of that is going on the cardiac and renal services, which are regional specialties. About £2·8 million is going on the Duchess of York new pediatric unit.

That is being paid for out of the savings—which will accrue by changing from the old service to the new unit—of £600,000 a year. All that the district is obtaining, therefore, is the bridging facility while that money comes in. Meanwhile, to pay for the other on-going expenses at the district level, capital expenses—for example on maintenance—are being severely cut.

The improved cost per patient of the district is due not so much to Government investment, as the Under-Secretary claimed, as to good management and increased efficiency. I emphasise the point about efficiency because the district has the second lowest management costs of the region, at under 3 per cent.

The support costs at the Withington and Christie hospitals are low compared with similar establishments. The staffing at the nursing levels is traditionally lower in the district than in hospitals generally, and the cost per activity in the district is the lowest in the north-west. One might compare, for example, the Royal Marsden with the Christie, two cancer hospitals of international repute. The cost per patient at the Royal Marsden is twice that at the Christie.

To meet the targets and budgets set for the district, the people there have not been idle. We have already closed one geriatric ward, having been told that the region has facilities elsewhere. Let us hope it has. One children's ward is being compressed for a year until the new unit opens. We can live with that. Two chest medicine wards have been closed. Again, the region says that it has scope elsewhere, and we hope it has. The maternity arrangements have been completely reorganised to make savings. Other savings have been made and yet others are projected.

The first of our units has gone out to competitive tender, and that represents a continued search for slimness in an already fit athlete. Nobody denies that those efforts should continue, and they will, but what is currently proposed is, frankly, daft. The Under-Secretary had the cheek in his letter to me to say:

> "We are not, in fact, asking South Manchester Health Authority to reduce its services. We are requiring it to live within its means."

He should not insult my intelligence or that of the people of south Manchester. The regional plan precisely and overtly requires south Manchester to reduce its services, and the budget allocated is based on that premise. Therefore, we can live within the means set by the region only by reducing services.

The district has struggled and has managed, on the whole, to maintain services to the patient. Despite much local propaganda, it is generally true that services to the patient have not been badly affected and are still very good. However, we are storing up severe long-term problems. Some of our facilities are now under great strain and matters such as maintenance will get progressively worse.

However, even what we have accomplished is not enough. The original deficit for the current year was £3 million. By the prodigious efforts that I have described, the authority got it down to £900,000. We now have the pay award which, on our calculations, will add £750,000, so that the deficit will rise to £1·5 million. To achieve that, we are having to look at a 4 per cent. across-the-board cut in services. That will affect the medical as well as the support staff and other facilities. To pretend that this is not a cut in south Manchester is to debase the Government's case. This cut is taking place in a region which is expanding and doing well, but it is certainly a cut and no semantics will overcome that fact.

Is this policy sensible? The Government are undoubtedly right in saying that people on the whole would rather be treated locally so that they no longer need to go into Manchester. However, this takes time. We are not responsible for GP referrals. We cannot be responsible for the speed or the absence of facilities in neighbouring districts. We cannot help it if, as is apparently the case, Christie hospital is bogged down with smear tests referred to it from Merseyside and all over the north-west. The hospital does not have the ability to cope. If these reductions occur, our ability to cope will be diminished. If there is to be a transfer to other parts of the north-west, there must be a link between the transfer and reduction of resources.

There is a grey area between those treatments that are purely local and can be treated in district hospitals elsewhere in the north-west and those that are recognised as regional specialties. The reputation of teaching hospitals, especially these hospitals, continues to act as an attraction. Why not? It is difficult to argue that there is any point in destroying excellence simply because it fits into an administrative pattern.

A new element has entered this confusion. We are told that the reduction in the number of patients in south Manchester will no longer be 9,000 by 1993 but will be only 1,200 because Trafford will no longer have its new general hospital. Instead of losing only 3,500 patients, Trafford will lose 9,000 and the additional patients will come across the border to the Wythenshawe hospital.

By 1993, the reduction in south Manchester will be less than originally imagined. Will there be more money? So far, there has been a resounding silence on that question. Will my hon. Friend the Minister guarantee that revised higher budgets for south Manchester will be rapidly produced between now and 1993 to take account of the fact that the case load will be different? We must have that information as soon as possible.

The facilities which are being closed to meet budgetary requirements will be needed if there are to be additional patients by 1993. Do we really envisage that we will remove facilities, with good teams and people working together, in order to have a downturn in the late 1980s, and that we shall try to reconstruct these facilities in the early 1990s? Does that make any sense? Will my hon. Friend urgently consider the programme with the region and the district between now and 1993 in order to avoid breaking up this year teams which will be needed later?

My hon. Friend the Minister and I are good Tories. One of the aspects of being a good Tory is to be sensitive to the speed of change. They may not think that in the GLC, but it is generally true. No amount of accountants' rhetoric can change that. Even if the region is right—I have doubts about some of its policies—there is no way in which this change can take place at this speed. The change will be too quick and unmanageable.

The co-operation which was supposed to occur between the region and the district has not taken place. The regional chairman, Sir John Page, has clearly said that, if he had more money, he would not give it to the south Manchester district. There are 19 districts and, if 18 benefit and one loses, it is no good taking the matter to a vote. But the Minister has ultimate responsibility for it, which he cannot overcome.

I remind my hon. Friend that in 1983 the Government gave a special grant to Tadworth Court hospital over and above its regional allocation direct from the Department. It then gave £890,000 for each of three years. Far be it from me to suggest that that occurred because it was in the south of England and because there was intense media interest in the matter. I am sure that nothing of that kind occurred to influence the decision. But I will not even ask for the £1·5 million that we are short of; I will settle for the same as Tadworth Court. Will the Minister give us £890,000 or some other suitable sum which will help us through the transitional period?

I am very serious about these matters and I should be more than grateful if the Minister would put away his Civil Service brief and look at the problem seriously for himself, remembering my three questions. I am sure that he desires, as I do, not to tarnish a very good record in the National Health Service, and particularly in the north-west. But we cannot make that stick if we allow the region to inflict severe and unnecessary damage on one of the finest centres of medical skill, care and research in the country.

2.16 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Despite the kind words of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) at the outset about my having drawn the short straw in being here at this time, I am glad that he has had the opportunity, thanks to his luck in Mr. Speaker's draw—or whatever other mechanism is used for deciding when the debates take place—to bring this subject before the House this afternoon. It enables me to pay a well-deserved tribute to the assiduity with which my hon. Friend advances the cause of his constituents and brings the arguments before the House and before Ministers. It also gives me an opportunity to make some comment on the points that he raised.

My hon. Friend will realise that, in pre-empting some of the points that he expected me to make, I shall not be entirely diverted from some observations about what I take to be the record of the present Administration in providing resources for the Health Service in the north-west, but I shall also try to make some response to my hon. Friend's specific questions.

I do not need to tell my hon. Friend that resources in this area are undoubtedly not limitless, any more than are resources in any of the other fields with which Ministers are concerned in this or other Departments, but often the demands can be limitless. Clearly, there is a very large demand for health services, particularly when we take account of the increased number of things that can be done with modern techniques and modern knowledge. One of the main reasons for some of the pressures that we face is the very success of modern medicine, with the much wider range and scope of treatment that it can offer.

It is remarkable that south Manchester, like many other districts throughout the country, is treating many patients today who a few years ago would have had no hope whatever of being treated. That is part of the background to our debate. Even allowing for my hon. Friend's comments, that record has been assisted by a very considerable investment in the south Manchester district. Health Service resources will always—it is probably in the nature of things—be catching up with medical advance, but there has been a considerable investment and it has played a part in the achievements to which he referred and which I want to emphasise.

Equally, I accept that our job as Ministers in the DHSS is to look at all the demands, taking account of and making a judgment about priorities. We have to make as fair and just decisions as we can among the many competing claims. More specifically, we have the responsibility—I refer particularly to the Minister for Health and the Under-Secretary of State dealing with health matters—of dividing the money available to the Health Service between the 14 regional health authorities in England. My hon. Friend will understand how sorry my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary are that they were unable to be here this afternoon.

It is the job of the regional health authorities to divide their share among the district health authorities that manage local health services. That allocation of resources to districts must be taken at regional level because at that level are the people who have some genuine understanding of regional and local needs—the people close to the coal face, to use a fashionable metaphor. It is the job of districts to spend prudently the money that they are allocated, as a result of their judgment of what is needed, and not as a result of a decision imposed by Ministers from the centre.

Whatever adjustments one might make to the balance of that decision-making process, it is clear that it would be wrong and unacceptable for south Manchester, or anywhere else, if Ministers attempted to second-guess every decision made at regional or local level.

We are well aware that historically the north-western region has been a deprived area and needs our special attention. My hon. Friend fairly acknowledged that the Government have made great strides towards reducing the inequalities that have existed since the NHS began. Our plans are largely to complete a redistribution of health resources among the relatively well off and relatively poor areas within the next 10 years. The total additional revenue allocation for the north-west this year is £43 million—5·5 per cent above the 1984-85 level. As my hon. Friend is aware, the region is moving quickly towards its revenue target within that framework and will be only 1·8 per cent. below it this year. That should be compared with the fact that it was nearly 11 per cent. below its target in 1977-78 under the Labour Government.

I wish to emphasis the fact that the capital allocation in the north-west this year is the second highest in England. The north-western region receives about 11 per cent. of the national cake for new buildings. About £1 billion-worth of new hospital schemes are being planned, designed and built.

[Mr. Tony Newton]

I hope that it will be common ground between my hon. Friend and I that the north-western region is better off now than it was; it is being more fairly treated in relation to other health regions; it is treating more patients and, I understand, receiving fewer complaints about services than ever before.

I recognise that the implications of all that for south Manchester are of interest to my hon. Friend. The district development for teaching has continued rapidly. A number of facts, some of which my hon. Friend has mentioned, should be emphasised. There has been £5 million of capital spending within the district during the past two years. A new day unit for elderly, mentally infirm patients is in operation. My hon. Friend referred to the £1·25 million in revenue that has been spent on cardiac services and kidney dialysis. Those services are of great importance to many people. He also referred to the new paediatric unit at Withington hospital and an acute leukaemia treatment unit at Christie hospital which are due to be started this year at a cost of £3·6 million.

The district is one of the best funded in the region, and it is the highest funded per head of the population of the north-western region's three teaching districts. In the light of what my hon. Friend said, I do not wish to place great emphasis on that, but in south Manchester it is easier to gain hospital treatment quickly than in many other districts in the north-west, such as Bolton and Blackpool.

Looked at from one point of view, the challenge facing the region—it has its difficulties—is to move other districts towards south Manchester's position. That is the task to which the region has been directing its attention in its new strategic plan. I am in difficulty this afternoon because that new plan was submitted to the Department only recently, and clearly neither officials nor Ministers have had the opportunity that they would wish to consider it.

I am inhibited from giving clear-cut answers to my hon. Friend. It is too early to give a considered reaction to a plan that has only just been received. Against the background of the regional priority, it is clear that south Manchester will continue to develop. This year alone, 50 more open-heart operations are planned at Wythenshawe hospital, making 900 in all, and 41 more renal dialysis treatments are planned at Withington, making 268 in all. That is the sort of development of which we can all be proud, especially those living in south Manchester.

To come closer to the heart of what my hon. Friend was saying, there is the problem that some of that progress could be endangered if the district continues to overspend its cash limits. I understand that £2·8 million is likely to be overspent this year. Unless that is checked, that is money pre-empted from the development in south Manchester and other districts. Under any Government, not just this Government, health authorities must live within their budgets. The regional health authority is therefore working with the district to find ways to reduce the accumulated overspend while continuing to provide the current excellent level of service. They are trying to bring spending under control in ways that go beyond the present arguments and genuinely wish to lay the foundations for future developments in south Manchester. It is important that that should be achieved because, unless it is, it could put in jeopardy the progress that has been made to make south Manchester the centre of life-saving surgery, which undoubtedly it is.

The district authority has set a budget for 1985-86 that can be contained within its cash limits by making better use of its facilities and cutting out waste. In all of that, the proposals are being carefully monitored by the region to minimise the impact on patient care. As far as possible, the region and district hope to reduce the deficit.

Some of the proposed changes may have an effect on the number of beds in certain specialties. For example, a reduction in the number of chest medicine beds might mean that chest medicine would have to be absorbed by neighbouring districts. But, as my hon. Friend acknowledged, if people can receive the care they need closer to their homes, that is an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

I want to pick up the specific questions raised by my hon. Friend. He referred first to guaranteeing revised higher budgets to take account of changes occurring in the plans in other parts of the north-west. He mentioned preserving teams for facilities that might be needed to meet the outcome of the first question. He raised a point about being sensitive to the speed of change. I thought that he was chancing his arm with his parallel with Tadworth, but I understand the spirit in which he put that forward.

I acknowledge my hon. Friend's questions and their importance. He will not expect me to respond specifically this afternoon against the background that the Government are considering the region's strategic plan that underlies his questions. However, I undertake to ensure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will carefully consider his questions; I will ensure that they are brought to their attention. I have no doubt that they will have those questions in mind when considering the region's plan, as they have a duty to do, and when reaching conclusions upon it.

I thank my hon. Friend for ensuring that these concerns are fully and properly brought to the attention of Ministers. I appreciate the spirit in which he has done that. In spite of the fact that there is a large task for us all in this matter, I see no reason to believe that south Manchester, together with the region—and I hope with the help of Ministers—will not succeed in dealing with the difficulties to which my hon. Friend adverted. There will be good cause for the local community and everyone concerned in the north-west, and south Manchester in particular, to be grateful to them for doing so and to my hon. Friend for his efforts to ensure that these considerations are properly taken into account.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That in respect of the Weights and Measures Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Greater London Enterprise Board

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

2.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It seems most appropriate that the last debate before the House finishes for the summer recess should arise from the subject which has so dominated our proceedings in the current Session. I refer, of course, to the abolition of the Greater London council which concerns a piece of legislation more misconceived and despicable than any other to pass through Parliament in recent years. It also seems most appropriate that answering the debate will be the familiar ministerial figure of the political odd-job man from Marsham street. If work-rate alone is any guarantee of political success, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is well on course to take over from the Secretary of State, now seemingly reconciled to his own abolition in the much-awaited Cabinet reshuffle.

The implications of the GLC abolition, despite what Conservative Members may wish to think, will keep coming back to the House right up to the next general election, because we in the Opposition will not allow Ministers to escape the consequences of their politically motivated butchery of a great council and the democratic rights of Londoners.

The Greater London Enterprise Board is an industrial development and job creation agency set up by the GLC. I should like to pay tribute to Michael Ward, the chairman of the GLC's industry and employment committee, who devised the structure, and to the chief executive and staff who run the board. There have been difficulties, and one understands that immediately, but GLEB was succeeding in its efforts to bring the prospect of work to some of London's 500,000 unemployed, who are on the dole without any hope of a job because of the Government's economically illiterate policies and their wilful refusal to understand the appalling social consequences of such policies.

GLEB exemplifies in practice what an alternative economic strategy should look like, and it is perhaps because dogmatic Ministers cannot tolerate the notion that there are constructive and viable alternatives to hand for the British people that they have done just about everthing that they can to try to undermine the stability of GLEB's operations. It is bad enough that the Government should be denying Londoners the right to elect their own government for the capital city, without at the same time trying to destroy one of the most exciting and widely appreciated initiatives taken by local government in job creation and economic development policy.

I should like to spell out the immediate situation facing the GLC and the enterprise board as a result of the tactics adopted by the Secretary of State for the Environment and his Ministers. During the first two years of the enterprise board's existence the Greater London council provided a total annual budget of around £30 million, made up of some £20 million section 137 funds and £10 million section 3 mortgage loan facilities. The section 137 fund essentially provided the enterprise board with the investment capital that it needed to preserve jobs and help restructure industry in the interests of the community. During that period the enterprise board has invested in some 200 projects, including more than 100 enterprises, creating and preserving between 3,000 and 3,500 jobs.

A recent report by the independent accountants Thornton Baker has confirmed that GLEB has been preserving and creating jobs in London at an average cost of around £4,000 per job. That is significantly less than the amount it costs the nation to keep one male adult unemployed for a year, not to mention the fabulous cost of job creation in the Government's own enterprise zones. Quite apart from direct investment in enterprises, the Greater London Enterprise Board has also implemented a path-breaking strategy in harnessing new technology to the production of goods and services needed in the community to provide long-term viable jobs, and is also implementing enlightened social policies, including encouragement for industrial democracy and greater equal opportunities at work.

The establishment by GLEB of five technology networks, which can harness the creative ingenuity of London's academic sector for the creation of new products and services for industry, has received widespread national and international praise. About one third of all GLEB's investments are in new forms of social ownership, notably in worker co-operatives, whose commercial survival rate is significantly better than the average for new private business start-ups.

It is accepted that neither the Greater London council nor GLEB can solve London's economic problems, since that will take the Socialist policies of the impending Labour Government. But GLEB offers one way that it might be achieved and, since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, I am proud to say that regional and local authorities in West Germany, New Zealand and Australia are actively examining the establishment of GLEB-type bodies.

For the current year, the Greater London council made a commitment comparable to the two previous years in allocating GLEB a budget of just under £20 million. However, under the paving legislation in anticipation of the abolition of the GLC, the Department of the Environment was given powers to veto expenditure under section 137. From the very beginning of the current financial year the Government have consistently refused to release the full amount approved by the Greater London council for the enterprise board's budget. I remind the Minister that this is not Government money. It is not money put up by his Department. It is money made available by the Greater London council out of the rates raised in Greater London.

Ministers have put objections and obstacles in the way of the enterprise board throughout the whole of this sorry period. First, they said that they wanted to see a system of accountability instituted with the London boroughs. GLEB is quite prepared and ready to do this. Indeed, it is already doing it now in conjunction with the Greater London council.

So the Government adopted another tactic. They started to drip-feed GLEB by allowing the GLC to put a little of its own money into GLEB. But such an unhelpful policy inevitably will lead to a loss of confidence by financial and commercial institutions in the future of the enterprise board and its supported companies.

Matters became even more difficult when the Secretary of State made it clear that a condition for drip-feeding was that the board called a complete halt to any new investment

[Mr. Tony Banks]

work. As a result of that decision, some 20 major projects involving a potential of about 1,000 jobs which could have provided some hope for London's unemployed have had to be abandoned by the enterprise board as a result entirely of the Government's malicious attitude and obstructive tactics towards the functioning of GLEB.

Still more serious were the indications of increasing nervousness by the banks which have been helping to finance these enterprises, as they perceive the refusal by the Government to release GLEB's entitled funding as a clear signal to withdraw their support from a number of GLEB companies. The Government are responsible for that, and the Minister should hang his head in shame. It has only been the dedication and expertise of the professional staff of the enterprise board which has prevented a series of GLEB companies from being destabilised this summer as a result of the Government's mixture of malevolence and ignorance in the way that they have handled GLEB affairs.

The Minister for Local Government has now told the GLC and the enterprise board that unless a scheme is put to him by the end of this month—Wednesday of next week—he will not even be willing to consider the release of the remaining £10 million of funds due to the enterprise board from the GLC. I underline yet again that this is not money coming from the Minister's parsimonious Department, starving local authorities of cash. It is money coming from the rates already raised and provided by the GLC.

It is well known that a large number of Labour and Tory boroughs want to continue to support GLEB. But the financial uncertainty surrounding the abolition of the GLC, together with rate capping and all the other penalties and controls which the Government now impose on local government, makes it difficult for the boroughs to commit themselves irrevocably. True to form, the Department of the Environment has said nothing about what Ministers consider to be an acceptable level of borough support. The boroughs are told to provide guarantees, but they are never told what guarantees would be acceptable to the Department. I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will elaborate on this matter.

In "Streamlining the Cities" the Government said that they wanted to transfer responsibility for industry and employment from the Greater London council to the London boroughs. During the proceedings in Committee on the Local Government Bill we said that such a proposal was economic nonsense. We remain of that opinion. London desperately needs a regional strategic authority which is able to make plans for jobs and industry in the few difficult years that lie ahead for this Conservative Government. I do not wish to insult the London boroughs, but they do not have the resources and the expertise to deal with these matters.

At least in the early stages of the debate Ministers recognised that in order to take on the additional responsibilities for industry and employment which the Government are to push on to the boroughs they would need increased resources. We were told that the present section 137 2p rate might be doubled to a 4p rate for London as a whole. When the Greater London council is abolished, London will lose the product of a 2p rate. However, no sooner was the ink dry on the White Paper than the Government abandoned their promise to increase the resources made available to the boroughs for industry and employment purposes. They gave that promise in order to get out of a difficult corner, but they have reneged on their hint that they might provide additional resources.

The boroughs and the Greater London Enterprise Board are therefore in the position that even if the great majority of London boroughs agree to support GLEB they will be unable, with their present resources, to do so. They will be unable to raise the funding to the level that is necessary to maintain, even at an acceptable minimum standard, the board's investment programme. The Government should provide most of the resources for this programme.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will be able to tell us whether the Government intend to honour their promise to raise the section 137 limit. If the Government are not prepared to raise it, I hope that he will be able to identify other resources which the Government will make available to the boroughs. I hope that at least the Government will be able to pledge an amount that is equal to the amount raised by the boroughs. Without such a commitment there will be a serious question mark over GLEB's ability during the next few years to maintain its investment and its operations.

The Government do not directly criticise the Greater London Enterprise Board, but they carry out cynical and careful manoeuvres to ensure that they will not be held responsible for the financial strangulation of the future operations of the board. However, the Government will not be allowed to escape from their responsibilities. The Government must release the money that is owed to the board. That money has already been provided for it by the ratepayers of the Greater London council.

The Department of the Environment must also accept that it has a responsibility to help the boroughs to find the necessary resources, including those that are provided from the Government's coffers, so that adequate funding of the board can be ensured during the period after the abolition of the GLC and before the next general election. After the next general election the incoming Labour Government will translate the commitment of the Labour party to the board into a major priority in terms of its new economic reconstruction programme. They will pledge significant national resources for the investment and job creation activities of the board.

The jobs of many Londoners are being jeopardised by the irresponsible attitude of Ministers to the Greater London Enterprise Board. That attitude is inspired more by political malice and hatred of the GLC than by concern for the job prospects of Londoners.

2.44 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in asking for some guarantees from the Government, even at this late stage, on the future of the Greater London Enterprise Board. My hon. Friend's case illustated the problem. The Government are not worried because the GLEB has been a failure; they are worried because it has been a success. Just as they hammered into the ground the GLC's fare's fair policy, which proved to be successful, popular, economical and sensible, so they are hammering into the ground the Greater London Enterprise Board because it has been extremely successful in creating jobs cheaply, in a way that puts to shame the

enterprise zones which the Government have promoted and their lack of enterprise in creating jobs in any other area.

As my hon. Friend said, the Government's attitude to the Greater London Enterprise Board or to any success which conflicts with their irrational, Victorian and stupid economic policies is vindictive and malicious. That characterises the Government's attitude to the future of the board when the GLC is abolished.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, it is appropriate that the last debate before the House rises should be on the subject that has dominated the business of both Houses this Session. Of course, it was inevitable that he and I would have to conduct that debate.

There was something symbolic about the hon. Gentleman's solitary stand on this matter today. Until recently he led armies of people round the streets of London, determined to defeat the Government. In Committee he had an army of speech writers, press people and aides at his right hand, and a huge budget available to publicise his case. But now he stands almost alone, apart from the cuddly figure of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). His armed forces have deserted the field. His commander-in-chief is negotiating surrender terms, and I suspect that he had to write the speech that he delivered. The hon. Gentleman resembles the Japanese soldier who emerged from a Pacific island not long ago convinced that the second world war was still in progress.

The hon. Gentleman made a series of remarkable claims about the achievements of the Greater London Enterprise Board. I think he said that it was widely appreciated. I have here a letter from the Consultative Group of Greater London Chambers of Commerce and Trade, which states:

"We are of the opinion that GLEB should be wound up, and that viable assets should be transferred to a new company with an effective management. As a first step we would like to see a completely independent valuation made of the assets of GLEB . . . we do not wish to see major amounts going from ratepayers to continue the expansion of GLEB or to keep in being enterprises that can only be sustained by continuous public funding."

The hon. Gentleman also said that the board was supported by the London boroughs. I have a letter from the clerk of the housing and works committee of the London Boroughs Association, which states:

"We are . . . highly critical of much of the work that has been undertaken by the GLC and some of the London boroughs in this area of economic development . . . In spite of the large budget GLEB have only created a relatively small number of predominantly short-term jobs, and have done nothing to encourage the removal of restrictive practices, overmanning, and the maintenance of artificially high wages. Unless there were significant change in the composition of the management of GLEB and its policies and activities. I do not see any possibility of our members wishing to be involved with it."

That hardly suggests a body that is widely appreciated.

May I deal with some of the figures mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. We could spend the rest of the day debating the cost of the jobs created by the board, but other councillors at County hall, who share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the economic problems of London, have calculated that the jobs created by the board cost, not the £4,000 that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but between £17,000 and £22,000 each.

The hon. Gentleman's problem is that he is trying to say that the GLEB is a responsible body backing worthwhile commercial enterprises in a businesslike way, but he also says that unless the life support system of County hall is continued after 1 April next year the board will collapse. He must make up his mind. Is the board a viable commercial proposition, or not? If it is, there will be no problem, in his words, of convincing the London boroughs that it is worth pursuing. If, as I suspect, it is not a commercial organisation, but an organisation which has funded many projects which can survive only with continual injections of public money, the London boroughs will have understandable reservations about picking up the commitment which the GLC has undertaken.

The achievements of GLEB were compared by the hon. Gentleman with those of the London Docklands Development Corporation, the London Enterprise Agency and other bodies. However, he did not make those comparisons on a common basis. While GLEB's substantial costs to London ratepayers compare with some of those initiatives, its achievement in terms of creating secure, long-term jobs is relatively insignificant. Despite the strenuous efforts made by the council, the hon. Gentleman and GLEB itself, all that we have is a large amount of hot air, a range of political activities of very dubious benefit to Londoners and precious little in the way of a real contribution to the economic well-being of Londoners.

GLEB is almost friendless, in spite of the hon. Gentlemans' claims. The future of the board is quite properly in the hands of the London boroughs. They have told the GLC that they are unable to express support for the board, that they entertain doubts about the wisdom of its policies and investments, and that they may wish to call for a genuinely independent assessment of the board's activities. They will meet my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government on Monday to enlarge on those views. I am sure that he will want to pay close attention to what they have to say. Some London boroughs have gone quite a long way. They see no merit at all in the board, and no justification for expenditure of ratepayers' money on its activities.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister said that the boroughs had asked for an independent audit. If they get it, and if that audit says that GLEB is worth maintaining, will the Minister make extra resources available to the London boroughs so that they can maintain support for GLEB?

Sir George Young: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been listening to what I have said. I have made it clear that the decision rests not with the Government but with the London boroughs. It is they who have to decide whether they wish to continue to support GLEB. It is not a decision in which the Government have any specific role to play.

One of the most damning of the representations that we have received about GLEB is from a company that went to GLEB seeking help to expand its activities and create new jobs. Its approach failed, not, apparently, because it did not have a good case for support, but because the company's energies were exhausted by the excessively

[Sir George Young]

bureaucratic and detailed procedures of the board's staff. I am also tempted to speculate that the board's reaction was prompted, not out of concern for proper investment appraisal, but because the company did not match the board's irrelevant social and political requirements concerning trade union membership and the like——

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: No, I must make progress.

One of the difficulties that faced that company was that at a crucial point in the negotiations the GLEB official concerned was in Tahiti for three weeks, and at another critical stage he disappeared to America for another three weeks.

Against the background of criticism from the boroughs, the chambers of commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and individual companies which have been in touch with GLEB, hon. Members may consider that the Government have been reasonable to the point of generosity in our response to the GLC's application for consent to its proposed funding of GLEB in the current financial year to the tune of £20 million, in addition to the £30 million to £40 million that had been provided in the previous two years. The locus of my right hon. Friend in relation to GLEB is narrow, and it is totally misleading of the hon. Gentleman to claim that the board's future is prejudiced simply because he has not without question given his approval to the expenditure concerned.

The problems that now face GLEB and the uncertainty about its future are not of the Government's creation. It is clear from what I have said that those difficulties arise out of the way in which the board has pursued its activities on both the political and investment fronts. Its declared aims include such matters as

"creating novel methods of social ownership and control"

and

"pursuing radical methods of worker involvement in production.".

The impression that one gets when one looks at GLEB is very much that the objective of investing in economic development is subordinated to such political aims to the extent that they are an impediment to what might be achieved. Even when the board's investment policy can be divorced from the overriding conditions about trade union membership and so on, it seems that both the property developments and the company investments have, in practice, been made in such a way that they will not be viable without repeated and substantial subsidies from ratepayers. As I have said, GLEB appears to want it both ways. It wants to be a successful commercial company, but it cannot survive without constant injections of public money.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister wants to kill it off.

Sir George Young: The Government are not against local authority involvement in economic development. We recognise that there is a role for local authorities to play, such as the provision of sites and the use of the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978. There is a legitimate role for local authorities to play in providing direct financial assistance to new and expanding companies. However, such activites must be based on a professional and realistic assessment of the market and of local needs. They must be undertaken in partnership with the private sector, which alone can identify the true requirements of industry and commerce and the particular areas where a public sector input can be be of assistance.

GLEB does not meet those tests, and I shall contrast the situation in London with that in the west midlands. It seems that the West Midlands Enterprise Board has concentrated on the job in hand and has attracted the full support of all the district councils in the area, which will take control of the board when the West Midlands county council is abolished. At a cost of £12·5 million to the county council and its ratepayers, the WMEB has created over 4,000 jobs. In these circumstances, I am pleased to announce that my right hon. Friend has today given his consent to a final contribution by the West Midlands county council of £3·5 million, which it seems will be sufficient to ensure the board's long-term future. Hereafter, it will continue with the help of the private sector and self-generating income. The WMEB has the green light, but for GLEB the light is still at orange. The WMEB has received all-party support, whereas GLEB has created difficulties for itself politically and with the investment fraternity. It is not an encouraging prospectus for the London boroughs, which might otherwise wish to fund GLEB.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the 2p rate for spending under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. He knows that the GLC has to use section 137 in circumstances where the boroughs do not have to because the boroughs have social service powers which they can use without resorting to section 137. The GLC and the metropolitan counties are not in that position. My right hon. Friend has said that he was willing to consider representations on this front. However, we are not yet convinced that there will be a real problem in any particular area, especially when some of the authorities which complain the loudest are spending large amounts of section 137 money on political propaganda.

The Government believe that to be responsive to local needs and conditions in London and in the metropolitan counties it is right for the boroughs and districts to assume, if they so wish, responsibility for the economic development activities of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. They have all the powers that they need to carry out such activities, and many of them already play an active role in this area. After abolition they will have the full rateable resources of their areas to devote to initiatives which their electorates consider to be necessary. Some of them may wish to join together in such initiatives, and they will be entirely free to do so.

The future of GLEB is therefore for the London boroughs to decide. The GLC reluctantly conceded as much only after my right hon. Friend said that he could not agree to the release of all the expenditure proposed by the council in the current year without satisfactory assurances as to GLEB's continuing accountability to London ratepayers for the large sums which it has received. As an independent company, the board is not affected by the abolition legislation. Only the rights of the GLC in relation to the board which remain in existence at 31 March 1986 will pass to successor authorities. We want to know what rights the GLC proposes to hand over to its successors.

In the meantime, we have gone out of our way to allow the board to continue in operation and to protect its previous company investments, however imprudent some of them might have been, while the GLC belatedly opened

negotiations with the boroughs about the future. Consent has been given to the entire staffing costs of the board for the first half year and to certain repeat investments. Indeed, we have gone further than that and the board now has sufficient funds to discharge all its contractual liabilities throughout the year, and a separate consent has been promised to secure the future of the five technology networks until next July.

The fact that the board's horizons may have been foreshortened is due entirely to the GLC and the policies that it has adopted. It is for that reason that there is uncertainty about the board's future.

Mine is the last speech before the House rises for the summer recess, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will shortly be putting the milk bottles out in Parliament square, cancelling the newspapers and locking the door. The occupants of the Chair and the staff of the House have had a difficult time during the summer Session and I am sure that their humour and patience have been tested to the full. I hope that I end on a note of unanimity by saying that the entire House wishes the occupants of the Chair and the staff a long and happy summer recess.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I am grateful to the Minister. His good wishes are reciprocated, of course, especially to hard-working Ministers who reply to so many Adjournment debates.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock till Monday 21 October, pursuant to the resolution of the House of 24 July.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 15 July 1985.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Official Opposition

Mr. Cartwright asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will set out *(a)* the number of employees, *(b)* the machinery and equipment and *(c)* other benefits in kind provided to the Official Opposition from public funds in addition to the assistance to opposition parties, indicating the estimated annual value in each case.

Mr. Biffen: In addition to assistance provided to Opposition parties as Short money, assistance from public funds for the Official Opposition is provided in the sum of £66,559 for four office staff; £1,747 for office machinery; and £53,970 for other benefits in kind which include postal services, telecommunications and travel.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will indicate the average time taken by his Office to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Photocopiers

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will list those offices of opposition parties in the House in which photocopying equipment is provided at public expense other than through the funds allocated by the House to opposition parties.

Mr. Biffen: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 9 July at column *424* to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

ENVIRONMENT

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Minister with responsibility for sport will discuss the safety of sports grounds and how future measures might be financed with members of the British Greyhound Racing Board.

Mr. Macfarlane: My working group considering the financing of safety improvements at sports grounds is concerned only with new and existing designations by the Home Secretary under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act. I will consider the need for specific discussions with the British Greyhound Racing Board.

Local Government Ombudsman

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many complaints there have been to the local government ombudsman in each year since the post was established; how many of them referred to cases arising in the city of Liverpool; and whether the complaints can be categorised as to their nature.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The hon. Member should seek this information from the Commission for Local Administration in England.

Social Security Review

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the proposals in the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security." on *(a)* central Government payments to local authorities for housing benefit and *(b)* cuts in the payment for free school meals will be taken into account when setting the rate support grant.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Vehicle Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a full text of the European Economic Community requirements on vehicle exhaust emissions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The most recent full text of the Commission's proposals was published on 19 June (COM(85)288 Final). This is subject to further discussion on a number of points. The standards for vehicle emissions on which an agreement was reached at the Environment Council of 27-28 June are set out in my answer of 3 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) at column *395*.

Nature Conservancy Council (Minister's Speech)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of his speech at Peterborough on the opening of the new headquarters of the Nature Conservancy Council on Friday 5 July.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have arranged for copies of my right hon. Friend's speech to be placed in the Library of the House.

Willenhall (Deputation)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if a Minister in his Department will receive a deputation of tenants on Thursday 18 July from the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, Walsall, accompanied by the hon. Member for Walsall, North, to discuss funding for the modernisation by the local authority of its pre-war dwellings.

Sir George Young: Because of prior engagements neither I nor my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction will be available to receive a deputation of tenants from the Rosehill estate on that day.

As has been explained previously, the responsibility for deciding whether priority should be given to modernising these properties rests with the local authority. It is not a matter in which Ministers can intervene.

If, however, a deputation of tenants still wish to visit the Department's offices on 18 July, I shall see to it that my officials will be available to receive them and to listen to any points the tenants may wish to make.

Conservation

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards the protection of sites of special scientific interest; and under what circumstances or conditions the Government will authorise the development of sites of special scientific interest which meet the criteria for listing or protection under the Ramsar convention, Berne convention or directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government considers that sites of special scientific interest constitute an important part of the national heritage and wish to ensure that as far as possible such sites are protected from damage or destruction and their scientific features conserved.

United Kingdom obligations in relation to sites which meet the criteria for listing or protection under the Ramsar convention, the Berne convention and the EC Birds Directive are met by the site protection measures contained in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In considering proposals for development, the Government ensure that the conservation and wild life interests of the sites are fully explored and are given every consideration alongside other national interests such as economic, social or defence needs. Where after the fullest consideration it is concluded that there are overriding reasons why that development should be permitted, every endeavour is made to ensure that it proceeds in such a way as to minimise the effects on the nature conservation interest of the site concerned.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Information in the form requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, samples taken from records of correspondence dealt with during the period July 1984 to June 1985 indicate that the average time taken to reply to hon. Members' correspondence is approximately 3½ weeks.

Housing (Expenditure)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage reduction in real terms on public expenditure on housing since 1979.

Mr. Gow: Figures for net public expenditure on housing are given in table 2·6 of the White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans (Cmnd. 9428). But these take no account of the extent to which capital receipts have been available to increase investment. Gross capital expenditure by local authorities, new towns and the Housing Corporation fell by 19 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1984-85, compared with a reduction of 46 per cent. in the period from 1974-75 to 1978-79.

Discontinuance Orders (Compensation)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made funds available to local authorities to pay compensation following the making of discontinuance orders in relation to development *(a)* in national parks, *(b)* in areas of outstanding natural beauty and *(c)* elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: There is no statutory power for the Secretary of State to contribute specifically to the compensation payable by a local planning authority following the making of a discontinuance order.

Planning Control

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to apply planning control to intensive livestock and horticultural buildings in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Macfarlane: The erection of farm buildings is within the limits specified in class VI of the General Development Order "permitted development" under that class. I have published proposals to remove class VI rights from new livestock buildings near housing, so that planning applications would be required; and proposals to qualify class VI rights in respect of farm and forestry roads and buildings in the national parks.

Water Supplies (Quality)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those water supplies which do not meet any of the requirements of the EEC directive on water quality, effective from 15 July showing in each case how many people are affected and for what reason —that is, nitrates, aluminium or lead.

Mr. Macfarlane: I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

North Pennines (Local Inquiry)

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is able to announce the detailed arrangements for the local inquiry into the order designating the North Pennines as an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The local inquiry will open at 10.30 am on Tuesday 8 October in the council chamber, county hall, Durham. The inspector appointed to hold the inquiry is Sir Stephen Berthon, KCB, and he will be assisted by Mr. G. A. Goulty, who will act as assessor on questions of landscape merit. We will ensure that the arrangements are fully publicised.

Government Contracts

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to allow local authorities to tender for contracts offered by Government Departments for such items as highway maintenance and buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985]: No. The Government have no intention of introducing legislation which will reduce the opportunities available to the private sector.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Alvey Programme

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how much Government money has been committed to the Alvey project aimed at developing technologies for fifth generation computers; how much has been spent; what progress has been made with the project; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many research applications have been approved by the Alvey directorate; and what is their total cost;

(3) how many of the research applications approved by the Alvey directorate have been waiting for more than *(a)* three months, *(b)* six months, *(c)* a year and *(d)* 18 months to receive some or all of the financial support which was agreed at the time of the approval; and what proportion of approved funding has so far been allocated.

Mr. Pattie: The Government are providing £200 million towards the Alvey programme of which £133 million has been allocated towards 192 projects technically approved by the Alvey directorate. In total £10 million had been spent by the end of June on these projects.

The work necessary to fulfil the objectives of the programme has been defined, and projects have been identified covering the greater part of that work. In general, progress has been satisfactory but there have been problems over the ability of the Science and Engineering Research Council to finance the academic component of some projects.

The number of research projects technically approved by the Alvey directorate but which have been waiting to receive a full offer of the financial support agreed at the time of the approval are:

a. waiting for more than three months 17.
b. waiting for more than six months 9.
c. waiting for more than one year 3.

A number of these projects and others upon which funding has been approved and offered still await the completion of collaboration agreements between the collaborating parties which is also a condition on the availability of funds.

Engineering Companies (Rhyl)

Mr. Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants are available to engineering companies located in Rhyl, north Wales.

Mr. Trippier: Firms in Rhyl, including those in the engineering sector, are eligible to apply for grants under the regional and national schemes of assistance operated by the Department of Trade and Industry, and described in the guide "Support for Business". A copy of the guide is available in the Library.

Vehicle Exhaust Emission

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that the European Economic Community requirements on vehicle exhaust emissions have now reached a satisfactory resolution on a number of outstanding technical points as mentioned in his reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield on 3 July, *Official Report*, column *318*; if he will list those technical points; and how each of them has been resolved.

Mr. Butcher: There have, since my right hon. Friend's answer, been a number of discussions in Brussels on these points and negotiations are proceeding, but there is still much work to be done before they are satisfactorily resolved. It would not facilitate these negotiations to detail the points under discussion; however the United Kingdom has made clear that they must be resolved before the directive can be adopted.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received from the British motor industry on the subject of the European Economic Community's requirements on vehicle exhaust emissions.

Mr. Butcher: Vehicle emissions proposals have been the subject of extensive Ministerial and official correspondence and discussion with interested trade associations and companies over many months.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated cost to the consumer of full implementation of the European Economic Community requirement on car exhaust emission of (i) a 1·6 litre car and (ii) a 2·5 litre car, including purchase price and running cost.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his estimate of the cost to the British motor industry in implementing the European Economic Community's requirements on vehicle exhaust emissions;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on the viability of the British car industry of the latest proposed European Economic Community rules on exhaust emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The technology required has been developed or is being actively developed by British vehicle and component manufacturers. The costs will depend, amongst other factors, on decisions still to be made by governments of some Member States about whether and when to implement the tighter standards to be permitted; on the commercial responses of the companies affected; and to some extent on outstanding points still under negotiation.

New Businesses

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has available regarding the number of per capita start ups for new businesses in both the last five and 10 years, respectively, from member countries in the European Economic Community; and if he will express the comparison in tabular form.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not readily available in respect of other members of the European Community. For the United Kingdom the figures available, which are based upon VAT returns, show that between 1980 and 1984 approximately 820,000 new businesses started up.

Hall Russell Shipyard, Aberdeen

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the final date on which he will accept offers to buy the Hall Russell shipyard, Aberdeen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No date has been set. British Shipbuilders was asked to dispose of all its warshipbuilding yards by 31 March 1986. It remains the Government's intention to privatise Hall Russell.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from hon. or right hon. Members during the 12 month period to the latest available date.

Mr. Tebbit: The full information which the hon. Gentleman requests is not available other than at disproportionate cost.

For the latest month for which full figures are available, however, letters addressed to the Secretary of State by hon. and right hon. Members, to which the Secretary of State replied personally, were replied to on average two weeks and two days from the date of the original letter.

European Community (Internal Market)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the advantages which would accrue to the United Kingdom if the proposals for completing the internal market submitted by Lord Cockfield were adopted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Government have broadly welcomed the Commission's White Paper on completing the internal market and will work for quick adoption of those measures identified as priorities by the Milan European Council. This is a massive task but a genuine single market in goods and services is of vital importance in safeguarding our long term prosperity and in providing the basis of greater competitiveness with the USA and Japan.

INMOS Plant, Newport

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he or any of his officials have had a meeting with the management of the INMOS plant at Newport about future employment prospects there.

Mr. Butcher: No. Employment prospects at Newport are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. However, officials from this Department's electronics applications division have always maintained regular contact with the company, and continue to do so.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Duty Solicitor Scheme

Mr. Corbett asked the Attorney-General whether he is satisfied with progress on the establishment and costing of the proposed duty solicitor scheme; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Government are considering urgently proposals from the Law Society, which is responsible for setting up the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme.

Mr. Corbett asked the Attorney-General whether the proposed duty solicitor scheme will include a nationwide telephone scheme to enable people held in police custody to contact friends or relatives to secure the services of a solicitor.

The Attorney-General: Decisions on this will be taken shortly.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Attorney-General if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department and the Lord Chancellor's Department, respectively, to provide a substantive answer to letters from hon. or right hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

The Attorney-General: Neither my Department nor the Lord Chancellor's Department is able to provide the information requested save at disproportionate cost. However, the tables following show the average time taken to send a substantive reply to letters received from hon. and right hon. Members during February and March 1985.

Number of letters received		*Average time to reply*
Lord Chancellor's Department	296	17 working days
Law Officers' Department	91	11 working days

PRIME MINISTER

Falkland Islands (Soviet Submarines)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what knowledge is available to Her Majesty's Government about the presence of a Soviet submarine in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands maritime exclusion zone on or about 1 May 1982.

The Prime Minister: It is not our practice to comment on submarine operations.

Falkland Islands (Ecology)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report*, the letter of 2 July from the Falkland Islands Foundation on Ecology in the South Atlantic and her reply.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to publish private correspondence that has been sent to me.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of *(a)* 16 to 18-year-olds and *(b)* 16 to 26-year-olds in Wales (i) are currently unemployed and (ii) have been jobless for one year or more.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The available information relates to 16 to 18-year-olds and 16 to 24-year-olds and is based on 1984 population estimates. As at April 1985 it

is estimated that 14 per cent. of 16 to 18-year-olds and 17·1 per cent. of 16 to 24-year-olds were unemployed in Wales. At the same date the proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds unemployed for over one year was estimated at 2·1 per cent. and that of 16 to 24-year-olds 5·3 per cent.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales have been unemployed for *a)* one year or more, *(b)* two years or more and *(c)* three years or more.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The duration analysis of unemployed claimants is available on the House of Commons computer. In April 1985, 75,573 claimants had been unemployed for over one year, 45,288 for over two years and 28,431 for over three years.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of jobless *(a)* 16 to 17-year-olds, *(b)* 18-year-olds and under, *(c)* 21-year-olds and under and *(d)* 26-year-olds and under in Wales at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The age analysis of unemployed claimants does not provide data entirely on the basis requested. The available information for April 1985 is as follows:

Cumulative total of claimants unemployed

Age group	*Numbers*
16 and 17-year-olds	8,446
18-year-olds and under	18,969
19-year-olds and under	30,040
24-year-olds and under	70,312

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Letters received from right hon. and hon. Members between 1 June 1984 and 31 May 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, received substantive replies within an average time of 17 days.

EMPLOYMENT

Work Permits

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state, for each day between 25 December 1984 and 10 January 1985, the number of applications for work permits under the special provisions for a limited number of places for unskilled and semi-skilled workers from the United Kingdom's dependent territories.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number of applications between 1 and 10 January 1985 which fell for consideration under these special provisions is listed below. Because we considered only applications made in 1985, no record was kept of applications made between 25 and 31 December 1984.

Number of applications made

Date	*Number*
1 January 1985	85
2 January 1985	50
3 January 1985	18
4 January 1985	10
5 January 1985	2
6 January 1985	2
7 January 1985	6
8 January 1985	10
9 January 1985	12
10 January 1985	10

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will indicate the date of application for each work permit granted under the provisions for a limited number of places for unskilled and semi-skilled workers from the United Kingdom's dependent territories.

Mr. Alan Clark: The date of application for each work permit issued in 1985 under these provisions is as follows:

Number of permits issued

Date	*Number*
1 January 1985	73
2 January 1985	42
3 January 1985	16
4 January 1985	4
5 January 1985	1
6 January 1985	0
7 January 1985	5
8 January 1985	6

Note: One of the permits issued has since been rescinded. Two applications made on 1 January 1985 and one application made on 8 January 1985 have yet to be decided. To date no permits have been issued for applications made after 8 January 1985.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Employment why managing agents for the youth training scheme are paid a fee for contracted places which are not filled; and what was the cost of fees paid in these circumstances in 1984.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission pays managing agents a fee for each contracted place on the youth training scheme as a contribution towards their administrative costs in setting up and running a training programme. This fee is paid in advance to assist managing agents to prepare schemes, but they may be required to refund the fee if they fail to offer the number of places specified in the contract. Where, however, places remain unfilled through no fault of the managimg agent, the Manpower Services Commission does not normally require payment.

Information on the cost of fees paid in 1984 for places which remain unfilled is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have registered as willing to work, giving details of their skill and experience, at jobcentres covering Sudbury and Haverhill at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985, 421 jobseekers were registered at the Sudbury jobcentre and 385 jobseekers registered at the Haverhill jobcentre. These figures include some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit. The numbers of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Sudbury and Haverhill jobcentre area on 13 June 1985 were 1,286 and 1,316 respectively. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a breakdown of the latest national unemployment figures according to standard under 18, 18 to 24, 24 to 44 and 45 years plus age groupings, by the standard under 26, 26 to 52, 52 to 104, 104 to 156, 156 to 208, 208 to 260 and 260 plus weeks duration of unemployment groupings as a total, and by sex.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information relating to 11 April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, is published in table 2.6 of the Department's *Employment Gazette* for June. This is available in the Library.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his recent official visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Tom King: During my visit to Liverpool on 12 July, I carried out a series of engagements including meeting trainees on a Royal Insurance youth training scheme and visiting the Liverpool unemployment benefit offices, J. Bibby, Edible Oils' new plant at Brocklebank Dock, Bootle, the Albert Dock development, International Management Consultants Ltd., who are providing two courses under the training for enterprise programme, and also a variety of businesses set up under the enterprise allowance scheme at the new enterprise workshops, Brunswick Dock.

Unions (Political Levy)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received alleging threats by union officials against members in connection with their voting intentions in relation to the political levy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have not received such representations. Under the Trade Union Act 1984, a trade union's political fund ballot rules must provide for every voter to be allowed to vote without interference from, or constraint imposed by, the union or any of its members, officials or employees. My advice to trade union members who experience any such interference or constraint would to raise this at a senior level within their union at the earliest opportunity. Any member in this position has a right of complaint to the courts. Should a court find that the ballot had not been taken in accordance with the rules, the union could be required to stop spending on electoral and party political matters.

EMPLOYMENT

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, a sample survey taken for all replies despatched in the month of June shows that the average time taken to reply was 15 working days. If the hon. Member is concerned about a delay on a particular case I would be very willing to look into the matter.

EC (Labour Statistics)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the reply by the Under-Secretary of State on 9 July, what are the main reasons for the reduction in the number of persons employed in the Common Market over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Jobs were lost in the Community mainly because of a decline in competitiveness, due partly to excessive increases in labour costs and labour market rigidities. Completion of the internal market, moderation in wage rises and the achievement of greater labour market flexibility would lead to growth in the number of jobs.

Job Creation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional jobs were created in special employment schemes and in *(a)* community programme and *(b)* youth training in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The numbers covered by the employment and training schemes and the estimated direct effect on unemployment at 31 March in 1983 and 1984 is set out in the following table:

	31 March 1983	*31 March 1984*
(a) Covered by Community Programme and Community Enterprise Programme	39,000	113,000
(b) Covered by Youth Training Scheme and Youth Opportunities Programme	240,000	285,000
(c) Covered by Other Schemes	378,000	247,000
(d) Total covered	657,000	645,000
(e) Estimated direct effect on unemployment	365,000	455,000

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment if the additional numbers employed in special employment schemes are included in his estimate for the additional jobs created in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: Participants in the community programme, young worker's scheme job splitting scheme, temporary short-time working compensation scheme, job release scheme, and training for skills, together with those on the youth training scheme who have contracts of employment are included in the estimates of the numbers of employees in employment. Those supported by the enterprise allowance scheme are included in the estimates of self employment.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional jobs have been created for *(a)* employees and *(b)* the self-employed in 1985 to date; and what proportion are part-time.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of the change in the numbers in employment in the first quarter of 1985 will first be available on Wednesday 17 July 1985. In 1984, the number of employees in employment in Great Britain is estimated to have increased by 142,000 and the numbers of self employed by 199,000. There was an increase of 184,000 female employees in part-time jobs in 1984; corresponding figures for part-time males are not available. The latest available figures subdividing self employment between full and part-time work show that nearly 80,000 of the 273,000 increase in self employment between June 1983 and June 1984 was among part-timers.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of 10 July, how many additional jobs created for employees in 1983 and 1984 he estimates to be second jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified. Estimates from labour force surveys suggest an increase of 60,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984 in the number of people with a second job as an employee; however, such estimates from sample surveys are subject to appreciable uncertainty.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many out of the total number of those still trading six months after completing the enterprise allowance scheme had been unemployed for more than a year at the same time of their entry on to the scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: A survey of those completing the enterprise allowance scheme in the pilot areas found that 18 per cent. of those still trading six months after leaving the scheme had been unemployed for more than a year prior to joining the scheme. The results of a later survey of people three to five months after completing a year on the national scheme found that 27 per cent. of the respondents who were still trading had been unemployed for more than a year at the time of their entry to the scheme.

Training Organisations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment which non-statutory training organisations have board or equivalent level membership for relevant trade union or education representatives; and which are governed solely by employer representatives.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *418*]: The composition of non-statutory training organisations is a matter for the particular industrial sector. I am informed by the Manpower Services Commission that the majority of non-statutory training organisations have consultative arrangements with trade unions and that

during the last year there has been an increase in the number of trade unions accepting invitations to be members of these organisations' committees and boards.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will detail which industry training boards and non-statutory training organisations currently operate more than three offices and training centres nationally; and if he will state how many they operate, and the number of industry training board offices and training centres which have closed since 1981, for each industry training board.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *418*]: This information is available only for the statutory industrial training boards which were retained in 1982. Training in those sectors of industry covered by non-statutory training arrangements is the responsibility of employers in those sectors and information is not held by the Manpower Services Commission.

The numbers of offices and training centres for 1981 and the present, for the industrial training boards which currently operate, are given in the following table:

	Offices now	*Offices in 1981*	*Training centres now*	*Training centres in 1981*
Clothing and allied products ITB	1	1	—	—
Construction ITB	64	68	6	6
Engineering ITB	12	15	6	6
Hotel and catering ITB	7	8	18	—
Offshore petroleum ITB	2	1	2	1
Plastics processing ITB	5	5	1	1
Road transport ITB	9	12	4	4

HOME DEPARTMENT

Air Weapons

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his assessment of the outcome of his Department's air weapon safety campaign launched in December 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: An assessment of the campaign cannot be made until the comparative statistics on air weapons offences committed during 1984 become available in the autumn.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables as to how many instances of cats and dogs being injured by air gun pellets were notified to the police during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consideration the Government have given to the recommendation of the 1973 Green Paper on firearms control to raise the age at which persons may be in possession of air weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have continued to keep the matter under close review and have decided not to introduce legislation to raise the age restrictions at present. We shall consider what, if any, further measures are necessary when the effects of the national publicity campaign conducted in 1983 have been fully assessed.

Citizenship

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of applications at his Department from people seeking British citizenship.

Mr. Waddington: About 35,000.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further proposals he has for the funding of local victim support schemes.

Mr. Mellor: We have at present nothing to add on this point to the Government's reply (Cmnd. 9457) to the report of the Home Affairs Committee on Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime (HC 43).

Prison Service (Chaplains)

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of full and part-time chaplains employed in the prison service in England in 1974, 1979, 1983, 1984 and 1985 at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: The number of full and part-time chaplains employed in the prison service in England and Wales on 1 July in each of the following years was:

	1974	*1979*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Full-time	61	69	84	85	86
Part-time	73	44	49	45	48

In addition each establishment has a Methodist chaplain on a sessional basis, and where the pastoral care of an inmate cannot be provided by the full or part-time clergy, or when an inmate asks to see a minister of another faith, the establishment will seek to provide the services of an appropriate visiting minister.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he is making to the request by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees for the establishment of a fresh quota for settlement in the United Kingdom of Vietnamese refugees currently in Hong Kong.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir Patrick Wall) on 17 May at column 239.

Police (Training)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the length of training for police officers to familiarise themselves about the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; what is the estimated cost of such training; and what extra funds have been made available for these training purposes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government set 1 January 1986 as the target date for the implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to allow sufficient time for forces to familiarise their officers with its provisions. Six months was identified by the service as the minimum period that would be needed to put all officers through the necessary training programmes, though in many forces preparatory work will have been going on for substantially longer. The length of time which each officer will spend under instruction varies from force to force but is in the region of three to five days.

Training material for use in provincial forces has been produced by the Home Office central planning unit at a cost to central funds estimated as likely to be in the order of £100,000. It is the practice to accommodate training for new legislation into the general cycle of training rather than to make separate financial provision.

Drugs (Rapid Testing Equipment)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the cost, reliability and availability of equipment designed to carry out rapid testing of compounds for possible content of heroin or cocaine; and what is his policy in regard to the provision of such equipment to assist the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Independent Local Radio

Mr. Parris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *284-85*, what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the Independent Broadcasting Authority's revised proposals for independent local radio in Derby and Nottingham received his approval in time to allow all intending bidders to reformulate their proposals and seek the necessary additional finance before the closing date for bids.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under section 19(4) of the Broadcasting Act 1981, the Independent Broadcasting Authority is required to publish a notice stating its intention to enter into a contract for the provision of local sound broadcasts in an area and the date from which the contract will take effect, and inviting applications for the contract. In each case, the authority aims to provide applicants with approximately three months in which to submit their applications, and I understand that this procedure was followed for the proposed Derby and Nottingham franchise.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Brittan: The information for the past 12 months could not be provided without disproportionate cost. A computer system has, however, been introduced recently which records the arrival of all correspondence from right hon. and hon. Members and monitors progress up to the dispatch of the substantive reply. Statistics for average handling times should therefore be available in due course.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his assessment of the change in the numbers entering the United Kingdom as a result of the amendments to the immigration rules which he is introducing to comply with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Waddington: It is not possible to make an accurate assessment. It is estimated that the change by which husbands and fiances are to be allowed to join women who are permanently resident here but are not British citizens would, taken alone, lead to about 600 more men from the Indian sub-continent being admitted a year for residence and about a further 1,500 from other parts of the world.

The other changes are likely to lead to a reduction in the numbers admitted but I cannot say by how much.

Police Act 1964 (Reports)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state *(a)* the number of occasions on which he has exercised his powers under section 30 of the Police Act 1964 to require a chief constable or the Commissioner of Police of the city of London to submit a report to him, *(b)* the number of occasions on which he has exercised his powers under section 12 of the Police Act 1964 to require the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to submit a report to him, *(c)* the matters that he specified should be covered in such reports, and the police forces concerned and *(d)* whether any such reports have been published in each of the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Section 30 of the Police Act 1964 is the general power under which the Department obtains information from the police forces on any aspect of police work. Information may be obtained in many ways, formal and informal, and no central record is kept of requests to forces. It is not the practice to publish written reports provided by chief constables in response to such requests. Section 12 of the Police Act does not apply to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

My right hon. and learned Friend requires reports from the commissioner under general powers in section 1 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1829. Under this power he receives and presents to Parliament the commissioner's annual report. In January this year the commissioner published his report to me on his future strategy for the Metropolitan police.

Philip Rapier (Inquest)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will apply to the courts for a new inquest into the death of Philip Rapier in March at Swansea prison, in the light of new evidence submitted to his Department by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for the right hon. Member's concern but see no reason to pre-empt the inquiries at present being made.

Opinion Polls

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any information on legislation extant in other European Economic Community countries on the banning of opinion polls for periods prior to public elections; if he has any plans to introduce such legislation in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The only information we have is for France, where in 1977 legislation was introduced banning the publication of opinion polls from the week before the first round of any elections. There are no plans to introduce similar controls in the United Kingdom.

Strangeways Prison

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 10 July, if he will take steps *(a)* to secure the removal from Strangeways prison of the 13 prisoners whom are mentally disordered within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983 and the three inmates who the medical officer considers to be physically handicapped and *(b)* to arrange for places to be provided for them in other more appropriate accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the right hon. Member.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of persons *(a)* against whom extradition proceedings have been taken or are planned in relation to drug-related offences and *(b)* are sought by police forces to assist them with inquiries into drug-related matters, who have sought asylum in foreign countries between 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *16*]: The available information relates only to persons who have been the subject of formal applications for extradition in respect of drug offences.

	Applications made to the United Kingdom by overseas Governments	*Applications made to overseas Governments by the United Kingdom*
1980	10	3
1981	9	3
1982	8	5
1983	9	4
1984	8	5
1985 (to date)	10	2

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. Jim McAlpine

Mr. Dobson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Jim McAlpine, following cosmetic surgery at the Ross Hall hospital, is to be held.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: A fatal accident inquiry into the circumstances of the death of James McAlpine, aged seven years, on 24 February 1985, commenced in Glasgow sheriff court on 17 June 1985. Following four days of evidence, the inquiry was adjourned until 21 October 1985.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from hon. or right hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Between 1 July 1984 and 30 June 1985 the average time taken to answer 227 letters was 18½ days. A further five letters still await reply.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

RMS St. Helena (Replacement)

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the application for a replacement vessel for RMS St. Helena was first made; when a decision will be taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: No application for a replacement for the RMS St. Helena has been made, although we have been aware for some time that the ship is nearing the end of her operational life. Consultants were engaged last year to advise on the options for the future of the shipping service. In the light of their report, I have agreed that detailed proposals should be prepared for a replacement vessel of roughly similar size to the existing ship.

Food Aid

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his most recent assessment of the priority objectives for food aid and its distribution in the drought-affected countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: Priority in the use of food aid should be given to direct famine relief. We are concentrating our bilateral food aid on those countries in Africa most seriously affected by famine, and have urged the European Community to do the same. It is also vital to get food from the ports to the people who need it and we are playing our part together with other aid donors in providing urgent assistance for this operation.

Tropical Forests

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will provide aid through the Commonwealth Development Corporation and Overseas Development Administration for projects in tropical forest regions which will encourage sustainable forestry.

Mr. Raison: In their different ways the Overseas Development Administration and the Commonwealth Development Corporation support projects for this purpose in more than 20 countries. Both are always ready to consider new proposals to encourage sustainable forestry.

UNESCO

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the extent to which the executive board meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation on 21 June made progress towards the objectives set out in his letter of 4 December 1984 to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Raison: The executive board reached a series of complicated decisions which we are now analysing as part of our preparation for the general conference. It is clear that there was some progress, particularly towards administrative improvement and towards a more efficient and less politicised programme; but we shall need to keep up the pressure for reform.

West Indies

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received the report commissioned by him from the Highlands and Islands Development Board on involving the private sector in the development of the West Indies; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The consultants' report has just been received and its proposals are now being studied. In my statement at the meeting of the Caribbean Group for Co-operation in Economic Development in Washington on 17 June, I said that we would be ready to consider with individual Governments whether some of our bilateral aid might be used to do more in the private sector.

Organisation of East Caribbean States

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had during his recent visit to the aid conference in Washington about the possibility of a conference in, or visit to, the Organisation of East Caribbean States; and what was the outcome of those discussions.

Mr. Raison: I was approached by the Prime Minister of St. Kitts/Nevis, on behalf of the Organisation of East Caribbean States, to seek a meeting at ministerial level to discuss general policy issues arising from our bilateral aid to the OECS states. I have since offered to meet OECS Ministers for this purpose in the Caribbean. I hope that a meeting can take place soon.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any progress has been made in identifying a site on St. Helena for use as an emergency landing strip.

Mr. Raison: A possible site, on Prosperous Bay plain at the eastern tip of the island, was the subject of an airborne reconnaissance survey by the RAF earlier this year. Civil engineering and cost factors, however, are still expected to present formidable problems. Arrangements are being made for these aspects to be examined on the island.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Broadleaved Woods

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will name the broadleaved woods in the Forestry Commission's North West England Conservancy which received felling licence approval for conversion to agriculture between 1982-83 and 1984-85.

Mrs. Fenner: The information is as follows:

		County
1982-83		
Woodlands on Howend Farm	Longtown, near Carlisle	Cumbria
Woodlands at Southwaite Lodge	Carlisle	Cumbria
Woodlands on Rainworth Estate	Rainworth, near Mansfield	Notts
Woodlands at The Firs	Farlow	Shropshire
Woodlands on Baldwins Gate Farm	Near Newcastle	Staffs
1983-84		
Woodlands on Waterloo Farm	Cockermouth	Cumbria
Piggin Wood, Locko Park Estate	Ockbrook, near Derby	Derbyshire
Woodlands on Ley Hill Farm	Cardington, Church Stretton	Shropshire
Woodlands at Harnage Grange	Cressage	Shropshire
Woodlands at Yarlet	Near Stafford	Staffordshire
Woodlands on Manor Farm	Asterley Abbotts	Shropshire
Bolas Wood, Heather View	Ercall Heath	Shropshire
Woodlands on Chilcote and Stretton Estate	Chilcote,Near Ashby-de-la-Zouch	Leicestershire
1984-85		
Woodlands at Brook Vessons	Pontesbury	Shropshire

Surplus Potato Stocks

Mr. Gale asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial support was provided from public funds to the Potato Marketing Board to enable it to take surplus potato stocks off the market in the year ended 31 May; how much he expects to be provided for the same purpose in the year ending 31 May 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government have so far advanced £13·24 million to the Potato Marketing Board towards the cost of its 1984 crop support buying operations and £0·359 million as a final payment in respect of 1982

crop support. A final cost-sharing settlement for the 1984-85 season will be made when information is available about the United Kingdom cumulative average ex-farm price for the whole season, the total cost of support and the level of the board's financial resources. It is not possible to provide an estimate of the cost of market support for the year ending 31 May 1986. This will depend on the size of any surplus to be removed. Joint support arrangements for 1985-86 will be limited to 500,000 tonnes.

New Potatoes

Mr. Gale asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the volume of new potatoes imported from France in the period May-June 1984; what was the volume of new potatoes imported from France in the period May-June 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: New potato imports from France during May and June 1984 totalled 1,144 tonnes and 14,751 tonnes respectively. Imports in May amounted to 2,590 tonnes. Official statistics from HM Customs and Excise are not yet available for June 1985. However, it seems likely that total imports from France this season will be below traditional levels. It is estimated that new potato imports from all sources will be around 75,000 tonnes less this season than last. Although the market is depressed throughout Europe, it appears that it is a high level of domestic liftings rather than imports that is having the main effect on our market at present.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the additional weekly cost to the food purchases of the average British family in consequence of Britain's involvement in the common agricultural policy; and what would be the effect on the retail prices of beef, butter, bread, sugar and flour if the import levies required by the common agricultural policy were abolished.

Mrs. Fenner: Estimates of the kind requested could only be attempted by making hypothetical assumptions about the policy which would have been pursued had we not been a member of the European Economic Community.

Grain Storage

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the cost of each of the five new grain stores agreed with the Intervention Board; and what discussions he has had with the Home-Grown Cereals Authority about the use of unutilised capacity in Clyde port authority's granary.

Mr. MacGregor: The cost of storage is commercially confidential and depends on contractual terms negotiated with individual storekeepers. Storage at the Clyde port authority's granary was offered to the Intervention Board but along with other storage in that area was not accepted because it is not close to grain-growing areas.

International Whaling Conference

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government will support any moves at the international whaling conference next week to postpone from 1990 to 1999 the zero catch limits on killing for commercial purposes.

Mr. MacGregor: Under paragraph 10(e) of the Schedule to the international convention for the regulation of whaling 1947 the zero catch limits for commercial whaling are of indefinite duration. This provision is to be kept under review and by 1990 at the latest the International Whaling Commission is to undertake a comprehensive assessment of its effect on whale stocks and consider modification of this provision and the establishment of other catch limits. We shall carefully consider any proposals in the light of developments.

Potato Marketing Board

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to abolish the Potato Marketing Board.

Mr. MacGregor: The power to abolish the board is vested in producers because it is a producer organisation constituted under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958. Producers can decide at any time to call for a poll to revoke the potato marketing scheme. Provisions for the protection of the public interest arising from any act or omission by a marketing board are contained in the 1958 Act. My hon. Friend will recall that proposals for amending the potato marketing scheme and for introducing revised potato support arrangements were considered at length and approved by both Houses in February.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria are used by the Potato Marketing Board to determine *(a)* the amount of potatoes to be withdrawn from the market in order to support prices and *(b)* the means by which they should subsequently be disposed of.

Mr. MacGregor: The board can intervene in the market in two ways up to a limit of 500,000 tonnes in any season. Between November and May, the board operates a system of pre-season contracts with producers, this season limited to 420,000 tonnes of potatoes. If the average ex-farm price is at or below the contract price for the month in question the board takes delivery of the potatoes under contract that month and removes them from the human consumption market. If the price is £2 or more above the contract price then producers are released from their contractual obligations and can sell the potatoes for human consumption. In any event producers can opt to be released from their contracts if they have a market at a higher price than the board contract.

In addition to these contract arrangements, the board may intervene directly on the market at any time during the season to buy up local surpluses to a limit of the balance between its contracts and 500,000 tonnes. Intervention is triggered if for three consecutive trading days ex-farm prices in a board district are below the trigger price for the period in question. The trigger prices are set well below the level of pre-season contract prices except in the first two weeks of July when special market circumstances apply. In disposing of any potatoes bought under market support arrangements the board is obliged by the Government to seek the highest value disposal outlets available. Over the course of a season most of the potatoes bought would be re-sold for stockfeed.

CIVIL SERVICE

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will indicate the average time taken by the Management and Personnel Office to provide a substantive answer to letters from hon. or right hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, the MPO aims to reply to letters from right hon. and hon. Members within 10 working days of receipt and this target is normally achieved.

THE ARTS

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will indicate the average time taken by the Office of Arts and Libraries to provide a substantive answer to letters from hon. or right hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. But the Office of Arts and Libraries aims to despatch a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members within 10 working days of receipt; this target is achieved in most cases.

TRANSPORT

M6

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what repair and renovation works of the road surfaces and supporting structures are currently planned to be carried out, when and at what cost, to junction 6 of the M6.

Mrs. Chalker: A contract for the installation of gutters beneath deck joints on a length of M6 including junction 6 is currently in progress; the total cost is estimated at £350,000. This contract will be followed by one to improve the quality of the joints themselves where they cross verges or central reserve and where gutters are impractical. As these contracts are for more than one viaduct costs are not identifiable to junction 6 alone.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on what date the latest report on structural damage or defects on junction 6 of the M6 was submitted to his Department; what works are contemplated when and at what cost as a result of any such report; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what recent indications of damage to seams or joints, or other suspected structural defects, have been found on junction 6 of the M6; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I must ask the hon. Member to await the promised interim report on the Midlands links viaducts which I shall shortly be placing in the Library of the House.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport for what reason traffic on junction 6 of the M6 was at a standstill at about noon on Monday 8 July; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: A major accident involving three articulated tanker vehicles occurred near Bescott at 11.20 a.m. on that day. The northbound carriageway was completely blocked and the southbound carriageway had to be closed until danger of an explosion had passed. The queue of northbound traffic extended back to junction 6. Diversions were introduced as soon as possible and the carriageways were reopened southbound at 12.15 p.m. and northbound at 5.15 p.m. I commend the police and emergency services for their prompt action and efficiency in these difficult circumstances.

Buses (Annual Inspections)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of private buses failed their annual inspection in 1983 and 1984; and what were the comparable figures for National Bus Company buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is as follows:

Operator	*Number of tests*	*Initial passes*	*Per cent.*	*Additional passes after rectification of minor defects*	*Per cent.*	*Fails*	*Per cent.*
1982-83							
Private	28,353	14,938	53	4,108	14	9,307	33
NBC	14,843	7,740	52	4,640	31	2,463	17
1983-84							
Private	28,634	16,040	56	3,828	13	8,766	31
NBC	14,173	8,509	60	3,973	28	1,691	12

The initial pass/fail rates for private operators' vehicles are similar to those for the NBC. An operator is permitted to carry out on the spot repairs on a vehicle which has failed for minor reasons. The vehicle is then given a "pass after rectification". The "pass after rectification" facility favours the larger operators, many of whose vehicles are tested on their own premises. Operators whose vehicles are not tested at their own premises—notably private operators—are usually unable to take advantage of the facility and this fact is clearly reflected in a higher fail rate for their vehicles as shown in the table.

M5-A30

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in constructing a link to enable southward traffic passing down the M5 to turn left into the A30.

Mrs. Chalker: The case for proceeding with such a link road is being examined by consulting engineers as part of their overall review of possible improvements to the A30 between Honiton and Exeter. The results of a recent traffic survey are being analysed at present and will guide the consulting engineers in the review of possible improvements.

Drink-and-Drive Campaign

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates in 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 the evaluations were available for the Christmas drink-and-drive campaign in 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983, respectively.

Mrs. Chalker: Evaluations of the Christmas drink-drive campaigns are formally published in "Road Accidents Great Britain" (RAGB). The dates of publication were as follows:

RAGB 1980—30 November 1981
RAGB 1981—17 December 1982
RAGB 1982—15 November 1983
RAGB 1983—29 November 1984

Dartford Tunnel

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in the *Official Report* the number of convoys escorted through the Dartford tunnel on average per week; for how long the tunnel is closed on average to facilitate their passage; what is the impact on M25 traffic flows as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Dartford tunnel is the responsibility of the Dartford Tunnel Joint Committee. I understand however that in two surveys carried out last year there were about 700 escorted journeys per working week in each direction. Entry to the southbound tunnel is closed by signals for about 40 seconds while a convoy gets underway. There is hardly any delay for northbound traffic. These escorted convoys marginally reduce the capacity in the tunnel and slightly delay traffic on the A282 approach roads but the effects do not extend as far as the M25.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department acquired No. 86 Church Manorway, London S.E.2, in connection with the proposed east London river crossing; how long it has been empty; and when it is expected to be occupied.

Mrs. Chalker: This property was acquired by the Department on 26 April 1985 with vacant possession. It was let on a short term lease to Greenwich borough council as from 17 June 1985. The question of occupancy is therefore a matter for it.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will delay the public inquiry into the proposed east London river crossing to enable it to consider the report of the engineering study on an additional river crossing at Dartford.

Mrs. Chalker: No. The east London river crossing is urgently needed irrespective of the river crossing capacity at Dartford.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent assessment of the volumes of traffic likely to use the east London river crossing *(a)* with the existing Dartford tunnel capacity and *(b)* with an additional river crossing in use at Dartford.

Mrs. Chalker: The most recent assessment indicates that, in the year 2001, two-way morning peak flows across the east London river crossing Thames bridge would be between 5,600 and 6,600 vehicles per hour with the existing Dartford tunnel capacity and toll arrangements, and between 5,200 and 6,200 vehicles per hour if an additional tunnel were provided at Dartford and no tolls were charged.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the total cost of the proposed east London river crossing including individual figures for *(a)* property acquisition, *(b)* bridge building and *(c)* road construction.

Mrs. Chalker: A breakdown of the total cost of £168 million in 1984 prices was given in the statement of reasons published on 9 July which was sent to the hon. Member. Taking account of updating and estimates for preparation and supervision, the figures are as follows:

	£ million
The bridge across the Thames	56
Other structures	38·5
Road construction	40·5
Land and property acquisition	19·6
Preparation and supervision	13·4

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Ridley: The precise information required is not held centrally and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, a study of correspondence received in May 1985 shows that 80 per cent. of letters from right hon. or hon. Members have been replied to with an average response time of 15·147 working days. My ministerial colleagues and I aim to deal with all inquiries in three weeks, but some complex questions do inevitably take longer.

Leeds and Liverpool Canal

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department proposes to provide any financial assistance towards the scheme to revitalise the Leeds and Liverpool canal in Lancashire.

Mr. David Mitchell: I will answer this question shortly.

ENERGY

Electricity Generation Costs

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the latest comparative electricity generating cost figures for coal, oil and nuclear powered stations.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board estimates that electricity generating costs are:

2·65p per kWh for Magnox stations;
2·63p per kWh for modern coal stations;
3·25p per kWh for modern oil stations;
2·64p per kWh for the first half of the coal-fired station at Drax;
2·45p per kWh for the AGR station at Hinkley Point B.

Deep-Mined Coal

16. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current deep-mined coal production per man-day in United Kingdom mines; and what were the comparable figures in 1983, 1979 and 1974, respectively.

Mr. Peter Walker: Deep-mined revenue output per man shift in 1985-86 to 22 June was 2·35 tonnes. Average figure for 1983-84 were 2·43 tonnes, for 1979-80 2·31 tonnes, and for 1974-75 2·29 tonnes.

Efficiency and Conservation

17. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps the energy efficiency office is taking to sponsor projects in schools and colleges of further education to promote greater interest in energy efficiency and conservation.

Mr. David Hunt: The Energy Efficiency Office is supporting a number of successful projects which stimulate interest in energy efficiency and promote wider knowledge about energy efficiency in educational establishments.

Coal Mining Industry (Employees Participation)

18. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in finding ways of giving National Coal Board employees more direct participation in the running of the coal mining industry.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government will look positively at any plans put forward by miners themselves to take a more direct stake in their collieries.

Cross-Channel Cable Link

19. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are his Department's forecasts of the energy implications of the pending completion of the cross-Channel cable link.

Mr. Goodlad: The link will help the electricity utilities on both sides of the channel to operate more efficiently.

National Coal Board (Chairman)

20. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received advocating the dismissal of the chairman of the National Coal Board.

Mr. Peter Walker: Primarily the predictable and politically motivated calls for dismissal from Labour Members.

National Working Miners Committee

22. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had from the National Working Miners Committee concerning transfer arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Transfers of men within the coal industry are matters for the National Coal Board.

Blidworth Colliery, Notts

23. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent visit of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) to Blidworth colliery, Nottinghamshire.

Mr. David Hunt: I was very pleased to have the opportunity to visit Blidworth colliery on 25 June with my hon. Friends the Members for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and Basildon (Mr. Amess) and to meet some of the Nottinghamshire miners who kept working through the strike.

I found Blidworth a good example of how the colliery review procedure can be used contructively by the unions working with management to improve results and overcome problems.

Offshore Oilfields

24. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those offshore oilfields currently in production which are now at or beyond the stage of peak production; and which fields he expects to have completed production in 10 years time.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's written reply to him on 10 May 1985 at column *507*.

Coal Sales

25. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the level of sales of coal to industrial users.

Mr. David Hunt: There is every prospect of level of the sales of coal to industrial users recovering well after the strike provided the industry as a whole is able to re-establish confidence in coal.

Energy Efficiency Office (Budget)

26. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to increase the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office for projects to mark energy efficiency year in 1986.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Energy Efficiency Office's budget for the current year represents a substantial increase over past expenditure. Expenditure by outside organisations on energy efficiency will bring spending directly related to the year to a very high level.

Scotland (Coal Mining)

27. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has had with the National Coal Board concerning the long-term prospects of coal mining in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend's and my discussions with the chairman and others from the National Coal Board are wide-ranging and have covered the substantial investment the board is making in the coal industry in Scotland.

Gas Industry (Privatisation)

28. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how he intends to ensure consumer safety in the gas industry subsequent to privatisation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The proposed legislation will contain the necessary references to safety. After privatisation responsibility for the gas safety regime will remain with the Health and Safety Executive.

Energy Efficiency Year

29. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report progress in planning initiatives for energy efficiency year in 1986.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have formed a strategy steering committee which includes the chairmen of the major energy utilities, chairmen of major industrial and retailing organisations and a number of industrial personalities connected with the energy efficiency industry.

A major compaign is being prepared in which advertising by the Energy Efficiency Office will be supported by promotional advertising activities by a substantial number of industries and concerns.

A major nationwide competition for domestic users will be launched.

A series of briefing conferences on the latest in energy technology will be organised throughout the nation.

We are preparing a calendar of events in collaboration with others and already more than 300 events are being organised.

Energy Secretary (USA)

31. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends meeting the United States of America's Energy Secretary.

Mr. Peter Walker: We have no plans to meet in the near future.

Electricity Supply Industry (Privatisation)

32. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: There are no present plans to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Coal Imports

33. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if there has been a significant reduction in coal imports since 1 March.

Mr. David Hunt: Coal imports reduced in May—the last month for which figures are available—but it is too early to judge the significance of this reduction.

Energy Study Competition

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the conclusions reached by the winners of the energy study United Kingdom competition; and whether his Department propose to take any measures in the light of those conclusions.

Mr. David Hunt: All the entries of the energy study United Kingdom competition winners showed that energy efficiency measures in the home are cost effective and can bring real benefits in cash and/or comfort to householders. This message is at the heart of my right hon. Friend's energy efficiency campaign, which will be significantly enhanced during 1986—energy efficiency year.

Insulation Programmes

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Energy what requests for information have been received by the Energy Efficiency Office from local authorities in the United Kingdom regarding domestic insulation programmes.

Mr. David Hunt: The Energy Efficiency Office receives a number of requests from local authorities on matters pertaining to domestic energy efficiency, and responds positively. Increasing energy efficiency in the home forms a vital part of my right hon. Friend's campaign to cut energy waste.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to the answer of 5 July, he will list the amounts of plutonium for civil purposes exported to each of the countries listed; and what was the origin of the plutonium exported not derived from fuel imported and reprocessed by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The information requested is commercially sensitive.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Walker: My ministerial colleagues and I aim to reply to most inquiries from right hon. and hon. Members within 10 working days, but some complex questions may take longer.

Miners (Redundancy)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy what guidance he has given to the National Coal Board about payments of redundancy benefit to miners who accepted voluntary redundancy and are not yet in receipt of unemployment pay due to the adjudicating officer's decision that such persons were not entitled to unemployment benefit.

Mr. David Hunt: My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security announced on 24 June that legislation was being introduced to maintain the policy that, for the purposes of unemployment benefit, those made redundant

should not be regarded as having left voluntarily, even though they may have volunteered or agreed to be dismissed; and that extra-statutory payments would be made to any claimant losing benefit on these grounds before the amendment is introduced.

Entitlement to weekly benefit under the Government's redundant mineworkers payments scheme is linked to eligibility for unemployment benefit. I am therefore arranging that where under these circumstances a man would be entitled to RMPS weekly benefit but for the fact that his payments of unemployment benefit were extra-statutory he will also receive an extra-statutory payment of RMPS weekly benefit.

Dismissed Miners

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will ask the chairman of the National Coal Board to report to him the outcome of its review of the cases of dismissed miners, whether all cases have been reviewed and whether each miner has had the opportunity to put his case.

Mr. David Hunt: The National Coal Board continues to review the cases of all miners dismissed as a result of the recent strike. The majority of cases that have been taken to industrial tribunals have yet to be heard.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Committees

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether a change in local authority standing orders which had the result that co-opted members of its education committee had fewer rights than elected members would be regarded by him as of such significance that the local authority would have to resubmit its education committee scheme under circular 8/73.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Act 1944 requires local education authorities to establish education committees in accordance with arrangements approved by my right hon. Friend. If an authority subsequently wished to change those arrangements, it would need to seek fresh approval.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many of the co-opted members of the education committees of each local authority are *(a)* co-opted teachers, *(b)* co-opted church representatives, *(c)* co-opted parent representatives, *(d)* co-opted political representatives and *(e)* co-opted others.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 11 June at column *425*. It is not possible to go beyond the detail given in that reply except at disproportionate cost.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Sir Keith Joseph: The best estimate that I can make is that during the past year the average time taken was 33 working days.

Higher Education (Expenditure)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will express expenditure on higher education as a percentage of total public sector education expenditure in each of the last 10 years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *30-31*]: The information requested is as follows:

*Expenditure on higher education as percentage of total public expenditure on education**

	per cent.
1974-75	17·3
1975-76	18·5
1976-77	21·9
1977-78	22·0
1978-79	22·2
1979-80	22·9
1980-81	23·2
1981-82	23·1
1982-83	23·5
1983-84	23·5

* The expenditure figures in respect of higher education have been necessarily estimated. These, and the figures relating to total education expenditure are consistent with those published in the White Paper on Expenditure (Cmnd. 9428), ie they relate to current expenditure by local authorities in England on schools, institutions of higher and further education, and the youth service; central Government expenditure on universities in Great Britain and voluntary and direct grant colleges in England; and student awards in England and Wales.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will express expenditure on higher education as a percentage of gross national product in each of the last 10 years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *30*]: It is more realistic to express such expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product. The following figures have been calculated accordingly.

*United Kingdom expenditure on higher education as percentage of GDP**

Year	
1974-75	1·0
1975-76	1·1
1976-77	1·2
1977-78	1·1
1978-79	1·1
1979-80	1·1
1980-81	1·1
1981-82	1·1
1982-83	1·1
1983-84	1·1

* The expenditure figures in respect of higher education have been necessarily estimated.

Higher Education

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the numbers, both in absolute terms and expressed as a percentage of the relevant age group going on to university or to degree term courses in central institutions, further education colleges or colleges of education or in other similar education

institutions in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales, for each of the last 20 years, giving figures for each year; and what percentage received degrees.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 July 1985, c. *352*]: The numbers from each country within Great Britain are not readily available and, therefore, no meaningful percentages of the relevant age group in each country can be calculated. The readily available numbers of first-year first degree home students in universities and public sector higher education studying in England and the numbers in universities in Wales and in Scotland are as follows:

Academic Year	*England**	*Wales†*	*Scotland†*
1983-84	102,799	4,432	9,681
1982-83	105,463	4,846	10,014
1981-82	104,035	4,805	10,517
1980-81	97,454	5,218	10,849
1979-80	94,423	4,881	10,286
1978-79	90,078	5,021	10,272
	England and Wales‡		
1977-78	94,279		9,872
1976-77	89,550		9,843
1975-76	76,357		9,552

* All higher education.
† Universities only.
‡ Separate figures for Wales for these years are not readily available. University and public sector higher education students are included. Public sector first degree courses in Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and since 1978 those in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

It is not known what percentage of entrants obtain degrees but the available numbers of first degrees awarded to home students by universities in Wales and Scotland and by universities and the Council for National Academic Awards in England are:

First degrees awarded in	*England*†*	*Wales‡*	*Scotland‡*
1983	80,200	4,700	9,500
1982	76,700	4,600	8,900
1981	73,100	4,500	9,000
1980	71,700	4,100	8,600
1979	66,600	4,200	8,600

* First degrees awarded to students in public sector higher education but validated by universities are excluded.
† The numbers of CNAA degrees awarded each year are estimates based on the numbers of degree results processed during the year which were provided by the CNAA.
‡ University degrees only.

SCOTLAND

Judges

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied that the increase in the number of judges in Scotland will prevent long delays in the Scottish courts.

Mr. Ancram: If the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order is approved, the increase of one in the number of judges, together with the saving of judicial time from the transfer of a substantial proportion of divorce proceedings to the sheriff courts and a number of other steps which are in hand, should contribute to the more satisfactory disposal of business, particularly in the Court of Session.

Ross Hall Hospital

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the medical safety standards at the Ross Hall hospital were last inspected; and what was the outcome.

Mr. John MacKay: Responsibility for the inspection of standards at Ross Hall hospital lies with Greater Glasgow health board, which last inspected the premises in November 1984. The accommodation and facilities were found to meet the required standards.

Forestry Commission (Meetings)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when officials of the Forestry Commission last met at a national level representatives of *(a)* the Council for the Protection of Rural England, *(b)* the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and *(c)* the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, to discuss forestry matters of mutual interest; and when they next propose to do so.

Mr. John MacKay: Forestry Commission officials met representativew of these organisations at the broadleaves seminar held on 8 May 1985. The Royal Society for Nature Conservation and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were also represented at a meeting between the commission and Wildlife Link on 17 June 1985. Further meetings are expected to be held in the course of the next two months.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when representatives of the Forestry Commission last met at a national level staff of the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss general forestry matters of mutual interest; and when they next propose to do so.

Mr. John MacKay: Officers from Forestry Commission headquarters have had a number of meetings over the past year with their counterparts in the Nature Conservancy Council to discuss particular topics. Formal meetings are held each year at national level in England and Scotland, and more frequently at regional level in Wales, to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest. The last such meeting at a national level took place in November 1984 and the next is planned for September 1985.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the chairman or director general of the Forestry Commission last met the chairman or director general of *(a)* the Nature Conservancy Council, *(b)* the Country Commission, *(c)* the Countryside Commission for Scotland, *(d)* the Council for the Protection of Rural England, *(e)* the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and *(f)* the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, to discuss forestry matters of mutual interest.

Mr. John MacKay: The chairman of the Forestry Commission is frequently in contact with the chairmen of the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Commission for Scotland. They met together on a formal basis last November to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest. The director general of the Forestry Commission met the general secretary of the Royal Society for Nature

Conservation in March of this year. No such meeting has taken place recently with the Council for the Protection of Rural England or with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, though the director general expects to visit the headquarters of the RSPB later this year.

Peterhead-Aberdeen Trunk Road

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to upgrade the Peterhead to Aberdeen trunk road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My replies to my hon. Friend's questions of 26 March 1985 at columns *82-84* listed the dual carriageway and other major improvement schemes planned on the A92 and A952. Other schemes are proposed at the North Donside road roundabout, Longhaven village and between Ivernettie and Stirling village. Start dates for all schemes will depend on the satisfactory completion of design and statutory procedures and on the availability of resources.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Younger: A precise reply could not be produced in respect of the period stated without disproportionate cost. A random sample, however, taken for the period from 1 May 1984 to 30 April 1985 suggests the average time from the date of a Member of Parliament's letter to the date of a substantive reply was about [illegible] days.

Health Contracts

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* laundry, *(b)* catering and *(c)* cleaning contracts in National Health Service hospitals in Scotland have been privatised in the last year; and how many National Health Service employees in each category have been made redundant following privatisation.

Mr. Younger: In the past year, besides re-letting a number of contracts for support services, health boards and the Common Services Agency have let three more contracts and are now preparing to seek tenders for other support services. I have asked them to report on these contracts as they are let. No redundancies have been involved to date.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the 1985 nurses' pay award in Scotland will be paid by the Scottish health boards from their current budget; and if he will express that proportion as a total amount.

Mr. Younger: The whole cost of this year's pay award to nursing staff in Scotland, approximately £28 million, will be met from health board's existing budgets.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of beds available in the National Health Service in Scotland expressed by specialisation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Younger: The information on the total number of beds available by specialty in the National Health Service in Scotland is published annually in Scottish Health Statistics (table 6.4 in 1979 and 1980 and table 6.3 in 1981, 1982 and 1983), copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients have been transferred from the Ross Hall hospital to National Health Service hospitals since the hospital opened.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Electronics Industry (Statistics)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what basis the statutory returns of the Engineering Training Board, and his own estimates, differ for the number of employees in electronics in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Industry Department for Scotland (IDS) estimates of the number of employees in electronics in Scotland and estimates produced by the Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB) differ mainly because they are based on different groups of activity headings from the 1980 standard industrial classifications. IDS estimates represent employment in activity headings: 3302, 3433, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3453, 3454, 3710 and 3732. The EITB has defined electronics to comprise activity headings 3301, 3302, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3452, 3453 and 3454.

If this difference in definition is removed, the difference in estimates from the respective sources in 1983 are relatively minor. They are likely to reflect differences in (1) the times of the year to which the estimates refer; (2) the classification of units to activity headings; (3) reporting by companies.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the staff levels for each year since 1979, inclusive, in the ambulance service in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: Staff numbers of the Scottish ambulance service, in whole-time equivalents, at September of each year, were:

Year	*Numbers*
1979	1,943·5
1980	2,018·8
1981	2,022·8
1982	*2,049·0
1983	2,073·5
1984	2,074·8

* Numbers of administrative and clerical staff in 1982 are estimated.

NHS Waiting Lists

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of patients in Scotland who are

on National Health Service waiting lists for *(a)* urgent treatment and *(b)* non-urgent treatment; and what were the numbers in each category for each year since 1979.

Mr. Younger: This information is not available in precisely the form requested. The numbers on waiting lists in Scotland at 30 September in the years in question were as follows:

Year	*Numbers*
1979	70,970
1980	67,180
1981	65,024
1982	86,179
1983	88,213
1984	*83,061

* Provisional.

The increase in waiting lists caused by industrial action in 1982 is now being steadily reduced. Lists tend to overstate numbers of patients waiting for treatment since they include duplicated entries and patients who no longer need treatment.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average waiting time for National Health Service patients in Scotland requiring *(a)* urgent treatment and *(b)* non-urgent treatment in each year since 1979.

Mr. Younger: This information is not available in precisely the form requested. The mean waiting times (in days) for all in-patient treatment in Scotland in the years in question were as follows:

Year	*Days*
1979	79
1980	75
1981	73
1982	67
1983	98

The increase in 1983 reflects the effect of industrial action of 1982.

The 1984 statistics are not yet available.

NHS Employees

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total numbers employed by the National Health Service in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Younger: The number of people employed by the National Health Service in Scotland at 30 September in each year since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*Numbers*	*Whole-time equivalent*
1979	136,872	115,483·5
1980	139,122	118,895·9
1981	143,531	122,467·9
1982	145,429	124,010·6
1983	146,124	124,491·3
1984	144,998	123,502·8

Health Boards

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the indicative allowance available to individual health boards for support-funded projects during the current financial year giving details for each health board of the amount already committed and the amount available for new projects.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is given in the table. It is for boards to decide whether to contribute more or less than the indicative levels from their revenue allocations.

Indicative level of support finance expenditure 1985-86

£ million

Health board	*Total* *1*	*On previous commitments* *2*	*On new projects* *3*
Argyll and Clyde	0·273	0·001	0·272
Ayrshire and Arran	0·227	—	0·227
Borders	0·154	0·087	0·067
Dumfries and Galloway	0·531	0·437	0·094
Fife	0·540	0·342	0·198
Forth Valley	0·404	0·247	0·157
Grampian	0·507	0·228	0·279
Greater Glasgow	0·795	0·154	0·641
Highland	1·034	0·907	0·127
Lanarkshire	0·437	0·124	0·313
Lothian	0·533	0·101	0·432
Orkney	0·015	0·003	0·012
Shetland	0·015	—	0·015
Tayside	0·313	0·071	0·242
Western Isles	0·176	0·152	0·024
Total	5·954	2·854	3·100

Edinburgh District Council (Expenditure)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much he estimates the Edinburgh district council could reduce its expenditure by submitting services to competitive tender.

Mr. Ancram: I do not have the information that could serve as a basis for any such estimate. The experience of councils which have tested the market suggests, however, that considerable savings can be made.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantial answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However a sample of all letters from right hon. and hon. Members answered by Treasury Ministers in June 1985 suggests that the average time taken to provide a substantive answer is a little over a month.

VAT (Health)

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to extend value added tax to private treatment on the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. It remains Government policy that all hospital treatment and medical treatment by registered practitioners, whether provided within the National Health Service or outside it, shall be exempt from value added tax.

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value added tax income from *(a)* medical insurance premiums, *(b)* private hospital charges and *(c)* consultants' fees in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Hayhoe: These items are exempt from value added tax.

Customs Officials

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of customs officials employed at each airport and port between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret to have to say that to list the number of customs officials employed at each airport and port between 1979-1985 would require considerable research and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The total number of Customs and Excise staff employed on customs duties at ports, airports and inland premises for each of the years 1979 to 1985 is set out as follows:

	Number
1979	7,591
1980	7,231
1981	7,088
1982	6,861
1983	6,717
1984	6,552
1985*	6,701

* Provisional.

Average Earnings

Mrs. Roe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of minutes or hours of work a male manual labourer on average earnings needed to complete in each of the years 1975 to 1985, respectively, in order to earn the average retail price in that year of the following items *(a)* weekly rent of a three bedroomed council dwelling, *(b)* weekly mortgage repayment on a newly built semi-detached house, *(c)* five gallons of petrol, *(d)* monthly second class railway season ticket—Brighton/Victoria, *(e)* large loaf of bread, *(f)* 20 cigarettes, *(g)* one pint of beer, *(h)* one bottle of whisky, *(i)* dinner for two in a restaurant, *(j)* a dishwasher, *(k)* a pair of shoes, *(l)* oil central heating for a three bedroomed dwelling for one week and *(m)* two pounds of lamb.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital Gains

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the estimated annual yield of the treatment under income tax of all realised capital gains as investment income;

(2) what is the estimated yield of the treatment under income tax of all capital gains as they accrue as investment income.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Caribbean Area

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of maintaining the United Kingdom's military commitments in the Caribbean area *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding Belize.

Mr. Lee: The extra cost of maintaining the Belize garrison is estimated to be about £7 million a year at 1984-85 prices. No significant extra costs arise from other deployments in the area.

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Caribbean countries from which officers attended courses in defence establishments in the United Kingdom for each year since 1982.

Mr. Lee: Service personnel from the following Caribbean countries and territories have attended defence courses in the United Kingdom since 1982: Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago.

Russian Speakers

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of officers within the services, including the Territorial Army and Reserves, who are fluent Russian speakers; and if he is satisfied with the numbers.

Mr. Lee: There are 190 officers within the services, including the Territorial Army and Reserves, who have qualified to interpreter standard in Russian. We are satisfied that this is sufficient.

Departmental Police

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the strength of his Department's police; and how many are stationed outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The current strength of the Ministry of Defence police is 4,213. No Ministry of Defence police officers are stationed outside the United Kingdom.

NATO

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish details of the United Kingdom's contribution to the common defence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation by comparison with United Kingdom North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies on spending allocated to capital expenditure and naval force tonnage.

Mr. Heseltine: A comparison of figures for NATO allies (as well as for Japan) is given in the annual report to Congress by the United States Secretary for Defence on "Allied Contributions to the Common Defense". I am placing in the Library a copy of the 1985 report which gives figures mainly for calendar year 1983 as the most recent for which complete information is available. This shows that, in that year, the United Kingdom percentage spent on capital expenditure of about 45 per cent. was followed by 36 per cent. for the United States and less than 35 per cent. for European allies. In terms of naval force tonnage, the report to Congress ranks the United Kingdom second with about 11 per cent. of the NATO total, well ahead of other European allies.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Heseltine: In the 12 months from 1 June 1984 to 31 May 1985 right hon. and hon. Members sent nearly 7,000 letters to Ministers in my Department. A sample of these suggests that the average time between the date of a letter and the date of a substantive reply is about 26 days. This period includes the time (sometimes several days) between the date of a right hon. or hon. Member's letter and the date of receipt in my Department.

Submarine Berths, Portsmouth

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the intended operational function for the three new submarine berths to be built at Portsmouth.

Mr. Lee: There are no submarine berths at the Portsmouth naval base nor are there plans to build any. There is a main jetty at Gosport which currently provides berths for three 'O' class submarines. The berths are to be dredged to enable them to accommodate the new Upholder class of submarines.

Military Traffic Incident, Helensburgh

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *516*, if he will give more details of the cause and nature of the traffic accident involving two vehicles in a military convoy in Helensburgh on Thursday 20 June.

Mr. Stanley: The minor accident referred to involved one military vehicle running into another military vehicle immediately ahead of it at a very slow speed and is the subject of an inquiry in accordance with standard procedures.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the approved list of consultant architects engaged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and if he will list the number and value of contracts awarded to each consultant architect in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who has advised me that a register of consultant architects whom the Executive is prepared to consider employing is available for examination at the executive's headquarters. Information on the number and value of contracts awarded to each consultant architect in each of the last five years is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Portaferry to Strangford Ferry

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many days in the current year there has only been one ferryboat operating between Portaferry and Strangford due to technical problems; what proposals he has to overcome this problem; if he has received complaints about the service in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Other than at peak holiday periods the service normally operates using one vessel. A service was maintained for every day this year except for a 12 hour period on 1-2 May and a six-day period from 8-13 June. These breaks in service were caused by mechanical failure occurring simultaneously in the main vessel and in the back-up vessel.

The Department of the Environment has received complaints about the service in the current year but repairs have been completed and normal service has resumed. Regular planned maintenance is carried out annually on both ferries.

Prison Service

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average basic salary excluding allowances and overtime for each grade including governors for the financial year 1984-85 in the prison service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	£
Governor I	22,605
Governor II	20,283
Governor III	16,744
Governor IV	13,455
Assistant Governor	11,654
Assistant Governor (Trainee)	11,219
Chief Officer I	10,643
Chief Officer II	9,854
Principal Officer	8,084
Senior Officer	7,217
Basic Grade Officer	5,969

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average gross salary including allowances and overtime for each grade including governors for the financial year 1984-85 in the prison service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	£
Governor I	28,236
Governor II	25,203
Governor III	20,542
Governor IV	17,568
Assistant Governor	15,767
Assistant Governor (Trainee)	15,332
Chief Officer I	19,530
Chief Officer II	18,642
Principal Officer	18,821
Senior Officer	17,845
Basic Grade Officer	16,439

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average overtime for each grade including governors for the financial year 1984-85 in the prison service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The average overtime worked by grades eligible for overtime pay (those below governor grades) was 17.32 hours per week for the financial year 1984-85. Information providing a grade-by-grade breakdown could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of officers had a gross salary in excess of *(a)* £13,000, *(b)* £14,000 and *(c)* £15,000 for the financial year 1984-85 in the prison service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

i. In excess of £13,000—92.56 (includes ii and iii)
ii. In excess of £14,000—81.53 (includes iii)
iii. In excess of £15,000—72.45

District Heating

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Housing Executive on the breakdown of charges made for district heating on the Springfarm estate, Antrim, including information as to the fuel, maintenance and other components of such charges.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available. I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will instruct the Housing Executive to investigate ways of providing tenants who do not wish, or cannot afford, to use the district heating system, with an electric immersion heater.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available. I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Vehicle Weight Tests

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current availability of heavy commercial vehicle inspection stations in the light of the provisions in the Road Traffic Transport and Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 exempting such vehicles from the requirement to undergo a weight test if, when stopped, they are further than five miles from the nearest inspection station; and what are the implications for the enforcement of maximum legal weight for this class of vehicle.

Mr. Chris Patten: Article 206 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 empowers a constable or a person authorised by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to require a vehicle to be weighed and for that purpose to proceed to a weighbridge. If the point at which the requirement is made is more than five miles from the weighbridge, and the vehicle on being weighed is found to be within the limits authorised, the Department is liable for loss occasioned.

To meet the requirements of this provision the Department operates weighbridges sited at key traffic points throughout the Province whilst a number are available on an agency basis.

Heavy Lorries

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prosecutions have been made under the Road Traffic, Transport and Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 against persons who have driven heavy vehicles on the public highway which have been in excess of the permitted maximum axle weight; and in how many cases a conviction resulted.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985]: A total of 282, all of which resulted in convictions.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what additional resources have been made available to enforce the provisions of the Road Traffic, Transport and Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 with regard to vehicle inspection and illegal parking of heavy commercial vehicles.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985]: My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the existing resources of the Department of the Environment and Royal Ulster Constabulary are sufficient to enforce the provisions of this order.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prosecutions have been made under the Road Traffic, Transport and Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 against persons who have parked heavy vehicles on verges or footways; in how many cases a conviction resulted; and how many of those convicted were resident within Northern Ireland and how many in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985]: During the short period for which this legislation has been in force, no one has been prosecuted for offences committed in contravention of its provisions.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the maximum penalty for parking a heavy vehicle on a verge or footway; and, in how many cases a conviction has been followed by the imposition of the maximum penalty.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985]: £400; during the short period for which this legislation has been in force, there have been no prosecutions (and hence no convictions) under it.

Bomb Attacks (Newry and Killeen)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the investigation into the mortar attacks at Newry and the car bomb attacks at the courthouse in Newry on 3 April and at Killeen on 20 May, indicating how many investigating officers were involved, their ranks, how many hours they spent on this inquiry, whether they sought to reconstruct the scenes of the incidents concerned, how many pages their report to the Chief Constable occupied, what conclusions were reached in their report about the operational dispositions of the police before, during and after each incident, what recommendations were made to the Chief Constable, and to what extent these have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report, with particular reference to the adequacy of the personal protection provided to the police officers involved.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985]: My right hon. Friend and I have received confidential reports on each of these tragic incidents from the Chief Constable.

It would not be right, and could seriously impede the continuing police investigations, if I were to announce their contents.

Pensions

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pensioners in Northern Ireland receive reduced pensions because they are in receipt of private pensions or other incomes.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985]: The information is as follows:

Type of Income	*Numbers of Pensioners*
Earnings	80
Occupational pension (Guaranteed Minimum Pension)	14,211
Another Benefit	185

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Testing

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will make it their policy to declare a moratorium on nuclear testing, subject to super power compliance, as a first step to the signing of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Luce: No. The problems involved in ensuring adequate compliance with a moratorium on nuclear testing would be at least as great as in the case of a comprehensive test ban. As I told the House on 7 June, during the adjournment debate, we continue to seek real progress towards a comprehensive test ban. As recently as 11 July, we tabled an important working paper on the subject at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the proposal from the Soviet Union for a nuclear weapons testing moratorium to start on 6 August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Meirionydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 8 May.

South West Africa People's Organisation

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the South West Africa People's Organisation leaders in the past five years concerning bomb explosions in Namibia for which the South West Africa People's Organisation has claimed responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: SWAPO is well aware that we condemn all acts of violence in Namibia, whether commited by SWAPO or by the South African security forces or by others. My right hon. and learned Friend made our position on this absolutely clear during his recent meeting with Mr. Nujoma.

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his recent meeting with Mr. Sam Nujoma of the South West African People's Organisation, including the matters discussed.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. and learned Friend recently met the President of SWAPO, as he meets all the parties to the Namibia negotiations. Mr. Nujoma and he reaffirmed their support for Security Council resolution 435 and discussed how best to achieve its implementation. My right hon. and learned Friend stressed our commitment to the path of peaceful negotiation.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any states have indicated an intention to withdraw from the non-proliferation treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: We are not aware of any such intention. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) on 27 June.

Ministers (Overseas Visits)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the programme of already announced overseas visits, together with their purpose, for himself and for each Minister in his Department between July and December; and if he will list the programme of already announced overseas visitors to the United Kingdom he expects to meet in the same period.

Mr. Renton: The programme of visits already announced for Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is as follows:

		Nature of visit
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs		
Helsinki	July	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
Nassau	October	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
Brussels	monthly	Foreign Affairs Councils
Luxembourg	December	European Council
Baroness Young		
Nairobi	July	World Conference of the UN Decade for Women
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind		
No visits yet announced		
Mr. Richard Luce		
Brussels	July	Visit to NATO
Geneva	August	Review Conference on Non Proliferation Treaty
Mr. Timothy Raison		
Sofia	October	23rd Session of General Conference on UNESCO
Mr. Tim Renton		
Peru	July	Presidential Inauguration
Ecuador and Bolivia	August	Bilateral visits

Discussions are taking place with representatives of Governments regarding a number of overseas visitors to Britain whom my right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet during this period. However, no announcement is

made regarding forthcoming visits until arrangements have been completed and the Government concerned agrees to advance publicity.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what study he is making of foreign vessels fishing in the area of the South Sandwich Islands and the Shag Rocks.

Mr. Renton: No systematic study is being made of foreign vessels fishing in the remote areas of South Sandwich Islands and the Shag Rocks.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will seek to extend the 1980 convention for the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources to the Falkland waters.

Mr. Renton: The convention on the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources was specifically designed to deal with conservation in the Antarctic marine ecosystem which is quite different from that of Falklands waters. Extension of CCAMLR would require the unanimous consent of the parties.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the initiatives taken by Her Majesty's Government for the establishment of multilaterally-based fisheries conservation and management regime around the Falkland Islands; and what contacts are taking place with other Governments.

Mr. Renton: Our exchanges on this complex matter are best pursued confidentially.

EC (Foreign Policy)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those subjects on which the European Economic Community adopted a common foreign policy prior to 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Nine/Ten have issued joint statements on the following topics between 1977, when the political co-operation archives began, and 1983:

1. East/West relations (including arms control matters).
2. The Arab/Israel conflict and the situation in Lebanon.
3. The CSCE process including CDE.
4. The Iran/Iraq conflict.
5. South Africa (apartheid, the EC Code of Conduct and the homelands).
6. The internal situation in Poland.
7. The Argentine invasion of the Falklands.
8. The Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.
9. The American hostages in Tehran.
10. The progress of the Euro/Arab dialogue.
11. Human rights matters in Eastern Europe.
12. The UN Conference on the Law of the Sea.
13. The situation in Namibia.
14. The situation in Cyprus.
15. Abuse and violation of diplomatic privilege.
16. Chemical and bacteriological weapons.
17. UN matters (including UNEP, UNCTAD and UNWRA).
18. The situation in South East Asia (including Cambodia, Vietnam and refugee problems).
19. Human rights in Chile.
20. The situation in Nicaragua.
21. Majority rule and independence in Zimbabwe.
22. Civil Aviation security.
23. The situation in Zaire.
24. Human rights in Surinam.
25. The re-establishment of democracy in Turkey.

The Ten have in addition taken joint positions on a wide variety of issues at the UN, and made their joint views known to a large number of third countries on topics of common interest ranging across the whole spectrum of Foreign Affairs. Copies of the statements were placed in the Library of the House when they were issued.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Renton: For the 12-month period ended 30 June 1985 the average time taken to provide substantive answers to letters from right hon. and hon. Members by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was 12 days.

BBC External Services

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will grant extra assistance to the British Broadcasting Corporation external services to enable it to broadcast direct to South Africa on medium wave.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to finance the installation of a medium wave transmitter capable of broadcasting to South Africa. The £100 million capital expenditure programme agreed by the Government to improve the audibility of the external services over the period 1981-1991 is fully committed. Broadcasts to South Africa are currently relayed from a number of BBC short wave transmitters.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Streptomycin

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has issued guidance to doctors that the use and dosage of streptomycin should be scaled down.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have not issued such advice. The use of streptomycin has declined as alternative antibiotic therapies have become available.

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to alert foreign medical services of the side effects of the use of streptomycin.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We make information on adverse drug reactions reported in the United Kingdom available routinely to other national drug regulatory agencies through the World Health Organisation. Streptomycin has been on the market for many years and its benefits and possible adverse reactions are well known to doctors here and abroad.

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people in Britain today are known to have tinnitus due to streptomycin;

(2) how many people in Britain today are known or suspected to suffer streptomycin-induced Meniere's disease.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not record this information centrally. It has been long established however, that streptomycin is toxic to the ears and a warning to this effect is including in prescribing literature for streptomycin.

Industrial Death Pension

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the industrial death pension was last increased; whether he plans to bring back its value in real terms to that which existed when it was introduced; if he will estimate the pension necessary to achieve this; and if he will estimate the approximate annual cost of such an increase.

Mr. Newton: The main element of industrial death benefit—the higher permanent rate—was last increased in November 1984 from £34·60 to £36·35 a week. The benefit was introduced in 1948 at £1·50 a week and has since risen in real terms by 112 per cent.

The amount by which this benefit exceeds the national insurance widows pension has been maintained at 55 pence per week since November 1967. To restore the original lead over national insurance widows pension (20p in 1948) in real terms would require a rise of £1·73 to £2·28 a week. This would cost about £2·4 million in a full year. We have no plans for such an increase.

Pensions

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions have been made about unemployment in assessing the burdens to be borne by people in employment in meeting the costs of the state earnings-related pensions scheme in its first year of full operation.

Mr. Newton: Estimates for future levels of national insurance contributions needed to pay for benefits for people over pension age are on pages 45 to 51 of volume 3 of the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9519). These are based on a range of assumptions for earnings growth, unemployment levels and demographic trends. A central long-term assumption of six per cent. unemployment has been adopted for these estimates. The effects on contribution rates of unemployment assumptions of three per cent. and 10 per cent. are also illustrated.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any fraud investigation is being undertaken or is proposed for central London into the claiming of benefit in multi-occupied board and lodging accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: In the public interest it is not our practice to disclose details of our anti-fraud activity.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of suicide, or attempted suicide have been brought to his attention concerning claimants of board and lodging payments.

Mr. Whitney: Apart from the tragic occurrence debated on 28 June at column 1264, we are aware of one further reported suicide and one reported attempted suicide involving people in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Child Patients (Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley)

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many children were treated on adult wards in the Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley district health authority by hospital and by specialty for each of the last 10 years;

(2) what was the number and ratio of children's beds to adult beds in the Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley district health authority for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: We do not collect this sort of detailed local information centrally. My hon. Friend may care to contact the chairman of Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley health authority for the information he needs.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many representations he has received regarding the exclusion of Solpadeine tablets from the limited list; and whether he will ask the review committee to re-examine this exclusion;

(2) whether he will request the review committee relating to the limited list of drugs to consider restoring Otrivine Anticistin nasal spray or Dimotapp L.A. tablets to the list for the relief of hay fever.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received a number of letters about the exclusion of Solpadeine from National Health Service prescription. The advisory committee on NHS drugs, whose establishment my right hon. Friend announced last week, will be free to reconsider at any time the need for any scheduled drugs, either on its own initiative or in response to representations from doctors or the pharmaceutical industry. I understand that, as a result of such representations, the advisory committee will look at Dimotapp LA tablets at an early stage.

Stanley Royd Hospital (Salmonella Poisoning)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the report on the inquiry into the outbreak of salmonella poisoning at the Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. John Patten: The committee of inquiry into the outbreak, under chairman John Hugill QC, completed the public hearings of oral evidence on 17 May. We are awaiting its report, and will publish the findings of the committee once we have given the report careful consideration.

Telephone Installations (Medical Need)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of telephones installed by social work departments on the basis of medical need in each relevant local authority area in Scotland and in England and Wales in the last year for

which figures are available; and if he will estimate the installation costs and the additional annual cost of meeting the standing charges for these telephones.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not centrally available in the exact form requested. Data on the number of clients receiving assistance with the installation of a telephone, and on the net overall expenditure on telephones (installation and rental together) by each local authority in England and Wales are contained in "Personal Social Services Statistics 1983-84" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Copies of this are in the Library. Information on provision in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Births (Malformations and Handicaps)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which malformations and handicaps *(a)* are and *(b)* are not, usually detected within the first seven days of birth; and if he will specify the proportion of cases in each category.

Mr. John Patten: Notifications of congenital malformations to live and still births recognised within seven days of birth are made to district health authorities on a voluntary basis, and are forwarded to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

It is not possible from the national scheme to indicate with any reliability the proportions of all malformations which are notified, nor to give any information on handicap.

Most defects are liable to be underreported. Major conditions frequently not detected in the first seven days after birth include those affecting hearing and vision, the cardiovascular system, and genetic and chromosomal abnormalities (including Down's syndrome). A fuller discussion of the likely extent of detection of each group of malformation is given in chapter 3 of "Congenital Malformation Statistics: notifications 1971—1980 Series MB 3 no. 1", copies of which are in the Library.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department as to the proportion of children with Down's syndrome whose handicap is detected within the first seven days.

Mr. John Patten: National data are not available on the proportion of children with Down's syndrome whose condition is detected in the first seven days.

A recent study has suggested that as many as 94 per cent. of subsequently confirmed Down's syndrome cases were diagnosed soon after birth, but there is reason to suppose that this percentage may vary considerably from area to area.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list in the *Official Report* *(a)* the number of amniocentesis tests carried out, *(b)* the number of such tests which revealed Down's syndrome, *(c)* the number of such cases which were terminated, and *(d)* the number of such cases which were carried to a completed pregnancy in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally in the exact form requested. However, the tables show *(a)* the numbers of notifications of legal abortions where the medical condition was given as chromosomal abnormality, the majority of which are likely to be Down's syndrome and *(b)* the numbers of notifications of congenital malformations with Down's syndrome (live and still births) diagnosed within the first seven days after birth, for the latest available three years.

(a) Legal abortions to resident women: numbers with the principal medical condition specified as chromosomal abnormality, 1981-83

England and Wales

	1981	*1982*	*1983*
ICD (9th Rev.) 6551 chromosomal abnormality in foetus	262	288	254

(b) Numbers of babies born with Down's syndrome by type of birth, 1982-84

England and Wales

Year	*Total*	*Liveborn*	*Stillborn*	*Not known/ not stated*
1982	527	513	12	2
1983	497	487	6	4
1984	505	488	14	3

Figures are derived from a voluntary system of notifying congenital malformations observed at birth or up to seven days after birth and are therefore an incomplete measure of the total number of affected infants.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *196*, about Down's syndrome and nuclear installations, whether he will give the age of children to whom the evidence relates; and whether the statistics referred to in the answer include cases of abortions following positive, amniocentesis tests.

Mr. John Patten: The information in my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 20 June at column *196*, related to the notifications of congenital malformations recognised within seven days of birth, and did not include cases of abortions following positive amniocentesis tests.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what account he took, when formulating his conclusions based on scrutiny of the statistics of the incidence of Down's syndrome in the Sellafield area that there was no evidence from this monitoring to relate the incidence to the presence of a nuclear installation, of the age of each of the parents in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The statistics examined were the notifications of congenital malformations with Down's syndrome to live and still births recognised within seven days of birth per thousand total (live and still) births for the local health authority in which Sellafield is located. These notifications include the ages of the mothers and these were taken into account.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 20 June to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), he will list the studies his Department has examined in connection with his scrutiny of the possible correlation between the incidence of Down's syndrome and radioactivity from nuclear installations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The reports examined are:

British Medical Journal, volume 287, 12 November 1983, Sheehan PME, Hillary IB. An unusual cluster of babies with Down's syndrome born to former pupils of an Irish boarding school. pages 1428-1429.

Letters to *British Medical Journal*, volume 288, 14 January 1984, pages 146-147 Reynolds F, Wiggins RD, James WH, Sheehan PME, Hillary IB. An unusual cluster of babies with Down's syndrome. Brown A. Role of radiation in aetiology of Down's syndrome.

Letter to *British Medical Journal*, volume 289, 11 August 1984, page 378 Sharp PM, McConnell DJ. An unusual cluster of babies with Down's syndrome—was it caused by the Windscale fire?

Interpretation of the points raised in the reports leads to the conclusion that there is no evidence that radiation from the Windscale accident might have reached Ireland and the only factor implicating it in the causation of these genetic accidents is the coincidence of timing.

This Department and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys routinely check the world literature, including that provided by the international clearing house for birth defects monitoring systems, and no substantive reports on the possible association between the incidence of Down's syndrome and radioactivity from nuclear installations are known.

Operation Costs

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest available average costings for a tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy, OPCS code 233, repair of inguinal hernia (411), Haemorrhoidectomy (493), cholecystectomy (522), hysterectomy (696), total hip replacement (810), excision, internal structure of knee (820), varicose veins, ligation and stripping (893/4).

Mr. John Patten: We do not routinely make estimates of the cost of individual operations. However, an analysis done in 1981-82 in six National Health Service hospitals covering over a hundred patients would suggest that at 1984-85 prices the average revenue cost of a hernia repair would be £500, of a cholecystectomy £960, and a hysterectomy (non-malignant cases) £930. We estimate that the average cost of a total hip operation, including an element for capital, at 1984-85 prices is some £2,700. We have no reliable estimates for the other procedures.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe will be receiving a reply to his letter of 25 April, sent under urgent cover, about charging people on supplementary benefit for their home helps in the county of Essex, and about which a reminder was sent on 3 June.

Mr. Newton: I wrote to the right hon. Member today. I am very sorry that my reply was so delayed.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from hon. or right hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Fowler: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Congenital Diseases (Sellafield)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has carried out research into age-specific rates of incidence of congenital disease in the population of the Sellafield area, following the recommendations of the Black report.

Mr. John Patten: No. We have concentrated first on implementing recommendations 1-10 in chapter 6 of the report.

Congenital Malformation (Reporting Scheme)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with the efficacy of the voluntary national scheme for reporting congenital malformations detected within the first seven days of birth as an indicator of incidences of handicap; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The primary aim of the voluntary national scheme for the notification of congenital malformations is for surveillance. The scheme was established in 1964 shortly after the thalidomide tragedy with the aim of speedily identifying any sudden increase in the prevalence of any malformation at birth.

The notification system was not intended to provide accurate figures on the overall prevalence of malformation or handicap, and its deficiencies in this respect are recognised.

However, we are satisfied that the system assists in the monitoring role intended for it. As with other regular reviews of statistics, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and this Department are currently examining the working of the notification of congenital malformation scheme.

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances chest X-rays have been provided to the employees of private contract companies *(a)* in the Hounslow and Spelthorne health authority and *(b)* other district health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is for individual health authorities to decide whether such arrangements are appropriate and we do not collect information on them centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach health authority chairmen for information on the position in districts in which he is particularly interested.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the resource allocations to special health authorities are reduced by the volume of their income from private patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The revenue resources allocated to health authorities including special health authorities do not take account of any changes in the volume of income from private patients.

Mrs. Julia Hall

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an independent inquiry into the treatment and care at St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth and the subsequent death of Mrs. Julia Hall who died in Portsmouth on 30 August 1982.

Mr. John Patten: We are satisfied with the inquiries already made by the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health authority into this unfortunate incident.

Voluntary Redundancy

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when legislation will become effective which will allow unemployment benefit to be paid to persons accepting voluntary redundancy; and what instructions or guidance he has given to employment offices on this matter.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he will make to refund those miners who accepted redundancy from the National Coal Board between March and May 1985 and were refused unemployment benefit.

Mr. Newton: The proposed amendment to section 20(1)*(a)* of the Social Security Act 1975, which has been added to the current Social Security Bill to establish that workers made redundant are not to be regarded as having left employment voluntarily, would come into effect as soon as the Bill became law. We hope the Bill will receive Royal Assent later this month.

Workers made redundant who lose benefit for this reason before the amendment comes into effect will receive extra-statutory payments, and the Department of Employment has already issued instructions to its local offices to identify these claimants from the records of voluntary unemployment decisions.

Income Support

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is his intention under the proposals in "The Reform of Social Security" to pay an extra rate of income support to a claimant who has an adult dependent partner.

Mr. Newton: As stated in chapter 2 of "Reform of Social Security", volume 2 (Cmnd. 9518), we intend to pay separate rates of income support to couples, and to continue to aggregate their needs and resources.

Sterile Intravenous Fluids

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations from manufacturers of sterile intravenous fluids in the United Kingdom about the effect of health authorities' contractual policies on their viability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have had no direct representations from manufacturers, but two hon. Members have written to me. I understand that three manufacturers of intravenous fluids have since made representations to the Health Service supply council, which is responsible for National Health Service supplies policy, claiming that a competitor is underpricing its products. The council has found no reason to amend the advice it gave to health authorities in 1983 about contracting for these fluids. I understand too that one firm has made a reference to the Director General of the Office of Fair Trading.

Specialist Claims Control

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the present specialist claims control exercise in Leith will terminate; how many officers are in the team; how much they are paid; and what expenses they claim on a weekly basis.

Mr. Whitney: The specialist claims control team which is at present in the local office at Edinburgh North, which covers Leith, consists of three officers and the exercise is planned to end on 16 August. The current average salary for an officer in the LOI grade is £8,923. The staff employed on this exercise can claim travelling expenses and day subsistence, where appropriate, in accordance with normal departmental rules.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *529*, how much benefit was saved as a result of adjustments following investigation of the 133 cases involved; and what were the respective savings due to the discovery of fraud or error on behalf of his Department's staff.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated total benefit saving was £36,760 which was all attributable to the discovery of fraud.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how global savings are calculated arising from specialist claims control exercises; what changes there have been in the method of calculation; what steps he has taken to establish the accuracy of the method used to determine savings; and what conclusions he draws as to the extent to which the savings reflect *(a)* fraud and *(b)* mismanagement.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply on 12 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) at columns *482-83* and to the statement and copy report placed in the Library on that date.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *529*, how many of the 133 cases previously investigated represent single parents, unemployed single men, and husbands or wives with dependent children.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Health Expenditure (Peterborough)

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1974-75 for the Peterborough health district *(a)* the revenue allocation in actual and real terms compared to 1974-75, *(b)* the capital allocation in actual and real terms compared with 1974-75, *(c)* the number of in-patient cases treated, *(d)* the number of out-patient cases treated, *(e)* the total number of staff employed, *(f)* the number of doctors employed and *(g)* the number of nurses and midwives employed.

Mr. John Patten: The information we have available on *(a)* is as follows. Figures up to 1982 are not directly comparable with those from 1982 onwards because on 1 April 1982 Peterborough health district, formerly part of Cambridgeshire area health authority, became a health authority in its own right and there were some minor boundary changes.

Peterborough District Health Area

	Revenue Expenditure (£ million cash)	**1983-84 prices*
1974-75	6·5	19·9
1975-76	9·1	22·1
1976-77	10·6	22·7
1977-78	12·3	23·3
1978-79	14·2	24·2
1979-80	17·6	25·7
1980-81	23·3	28·7
1981-82	26·7	29·8
1982-83	27·9	29·2
1983-84	29·9	29·9
1984-85	32·0	30·6

* The figures have been calculated using the gross domestic product deflators.

We do not have the information requested in *(b)* available centrally. But in any case it would not be very meaningful because capital expenditure at district level fluctuates from year to year depending on whether schemes in the district have been included in the regional capital programme. My hon. Friend may like to approach the East Anglian regional health authority direct for detailed information:

The information requested in *(c)* and *(d)* is as follows:

*NHS Hospitals, Peterborough District Health Authority**

	In-patient cases	*Day cases*	*Total out-patient attendances*
1974	22,338	1,355	143,371
1975†	21,266	1,750	136,196
1976	23,247	2,228	140,291
1977	23,522	2,341	146,374
1978	23,289	2,454	149,317
1979†	24,348	2,661	153,505
1980	27,448	3,168	158,369
1981	28,860	3,916	163,471
1982†	28,654	3,845	163,196
1983	29,688	3,556	165,515
1984‡	30,250	3,851	169,067

* Peterborough Health District prior to 1 April 1982.

† Activity levels in the years 1975, 1979, 1982 were in general affected by industrial action in the health service.

‡ Provisional.

We do not have information readily available on *(e)*, *(f)* and *(g)* and my hon. Friend may also wish to contact the Regional Health Authority about this.

Visually Handicapped Persons

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he intends to publish in full the report of his Department's fact-finding study of local authority provisions for the visually handicapped;

(2) when he expects the report of his Department's fact-finding study of local authority provisions for the visually handicapped to be completed; how soon after that date he expects to be in a position to indicate what action he proposes to take in response to the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I hope to make an announcement about these matters shortly.

National Insurance

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the additional revenue that will be yielded in a full financial year from removing the ceiling on employers' national insurance contributions.

Mr. Whitney: The Government Actuary estimates that the yield in a full financial year would be £800 million.

Health Authorities (Crown Immunity)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to health authorities on Crown Immunity in National Health Service hospitals and contractors providing services there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *60*]: No guidance on Crown Immunity in this context has been issued. Contractors providing services in hospital, who are not crown servants or agents exercising crown functions, would not be covered by Crown Immunity.

Medical Information

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the information routinely collected from health authorities and family practitioner committees; and if he will place a copy of each return form in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *57*]: I have arranged for a copy of "A Guide to Health and Social Services Statistics"—a subject index of the information routinely collected by our Department—and copies of the return forms to be placed in the Library. This guide was compiled in April 1984. We are preparing an updated version and will place this in the Library in due course. The following is a list of the information included in the guide (items marked with an asterisk are returned by local authorities):

Form number	*Title*
ANC 4	Ancillary staff employed by general medical practitioners
DC 1*	Gazeteer of LA adult training centres for the mentally handicapped
DC 2*	Gazeteer of LA day centres for the mentally ill, elderly and younger physically handicapped
DI 1	Doctor's index: personal details of family doctors
DI 2	Doctor's index: doctors index entry forms
DI 3	Doctor's index: medical list changes and total of principal doctors
DI 4	Doctor's index: basic particulars of assistant medical practitioners and their principals
DI 4N	Doctor's index: number of assistant medical practitioners
DI 5	Doctor's index: basic particulars of trainees and their trainers
DI 5N	Doctor's index: number of trainees
DI 6	Doctor's index: names of doctors receiving initial practice allowance
DI 9	Doctor's index: basic particulars of salaried and "small share" partners
DI 12	Doctor's index: names of principals during quarter and allowances payable
DI 13	Doctor's index: names of principals during quarter
DI 14	Doctor's index: basic details of income
DI 15	Doctor's index: basic details of locums
DI 23	Doctor's index: doctors practising from health centres
DI 24	Doctor's index: practitioners providing contraceptive services
FIN Dept. (accounts)	Functional analysis of expenditure apportioned to the main patient groups in: (i) Hospital services (ii) Community health services

Form number	Title
FIN Dept. (case returns)	Summary of cost data
FIN Dept. (accounts)	Summary of income and expenditure for family practitioner services
FIN Dept. (accounts)	Staff costs for family practitioner services
FIN Dept. (accounts)	Summary of functional analysis of expenditure in: (i) Regional health authority departments and (ii) District headquarters department services (iii) Ambulance services
FIN Dept. (accounts)	Summary of expenditure for community health councils
FPC 48	Ophthalmic practitioners and premises
FPC 49/1	Pharmaceutical services premises
HC(FP)(77)-901	Check on entitlement to exemption from prescription charges
HC(FP)(78)-901	Check on entitlement to exemption from optical charges
HIP1B	Hospital in-patient enquiry maternity
HMR1(IP)	Hospital in-patient enquiry
HMR1(IP)	Hospital activity analysis
HMr1(Mat)	Hospital in-patient enquiry maternity
HMR1(Psych. I/P)	Mental health enquiry
LHS27/1	Births
LHS27/2	Clinic services: ante-natal mother-craft and relaxation classes child health clinic
LHS27/3	Health visiting, home nursing and domiciliary midwifery services
8M(1)	School health service—medical inspection and treatment
28M1	Dental inspection and treatment
28M2	Dental inspection and treatment
28M3	Dental hygeinists
NBTS47	National blood transfusion services—general statistics
RA1*	Residential accommodation for the elderly and for younger physically handicapped people
RA2*	Local authority homes for elderly and YPH
RA3*	Voluntary and private homes for elderly and YPH
RA4*	Separate units for elderly and YPH
RA5A*	Gazeteer of LA homes for the elderly and younger physically handicapped
RA5B*	Gazeteer of voluntary and private homes for the elderly and younger physically handicapped
RA6*	Residential accommodation for the mentally handicapped
RA9A*	Gazeteer LA homes for the mentally handicapped
RA9B*	Gazeteer of voluntary and private homes for the mentally handicapped
RA10*	Residential accommodation for mentally ill
RA13A*	Gazeteer of LA homes for the mentally ill
RA13B*	Gazeteer of Voluntary and private homes for the mentally ill
RA14*	Gazeteer of community homes with education on the premises and assessment centres
RAN4	Related ancillary staff employed by general medical practitioners
SBE504	Maternity medical
SBE515	General ophthalmic services
SBH2	Hospital nursing and midwifery agency
SBH2 (Bank)	Bank nursing staff
SBH2c	Staff primary health care nursing and midwifery agency staff
SBH6	Pathology statistics in (i) Hospital services (ii) Family practitioner services
SBH13C	Mental health legal status of residents
SBH19	Hospital eye service
SBH50 & 50(1)	Hospital medical and dental staff in grades up to and including registrars hospital locum medical and dental staff graded senior registrar and above
SBH50(A) & 50(A)(1)	Medical and dental staff in post—community health
SBH57 & SBH57(1)	Hospital medical and dental staff in grades of senior registrar and above
SBH57(3)	Hospital medical and dental staff—domiciliary consultations
SBH59	Hospital medical and dental staff in grades of senior registrar and above vacant posts
SBH60	Sexually transmitted diseases
SBH112A	Psychiatric facilities: Mental illness hospitals and units other than those in general hospitals
SBH112B	Psychiatric facilities: Mental illness units in general hospitals
SBH112C	Mental handicap facilities: Mental handicap hospitals and mental handicap units in other hospitals
SBH140	Cervical cytology
SBH168	Miners rehabilitation
SBH179	Chronically sick and disabled
SBH195	Ambulance service statistics
SBH203	No. of patients on in-patient waiting list
SBH208	Psychosurgery operations
SBH211	Private patients in NHS hospitals
SBH212	Private hospitals, homes and clinics
SBL607	Vaccination (other than smallpox) of persons under 16
SBL618	Chiropody service
SBL631	Mental health nursing homes authorised to detain patients
SBL655	Tuberculin test and BCG vaccinations
SBL708	Family planning—clinic services
SBL709	Family planning—domiciliary service
SBP2/3	Products prescribed by general medical practitioners, dentists or hospital doctors
SBP9	Advance estimates (prescriptions)
SBP10	Particulars of chemist, drug store and appliance contractors
SBP10/1	Openings and closures of retail pharmacies
SBP13	Prescriptions by reason for exemption
SH3/EDP4	Hospital activity return
SH3/EDP5	
SH3/EDP6	
SH5T	Chiropodists providing services to authorities on a sessional or fee basis
SH6	NHS administrative and clerical staff
SH9	NHS patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements
SH13 Part 1	NHS works professional staff
SH13 Part 2	NHS ancillary staff
SH13 Part 4	NHS maintenance (building and engineering staff)
SSDA 302*	Meals, services provided for the elderly and/or physically handicapped people
SSDA 305*	Cases of assistance to persons by LA social services departments
SSDA 503*	Day care facilities for children
SSDA 512*	Day centres for the mentally ill, and the physically handicapped
SSDA 702*	Guardianship under the Mental Health Act 1959
SSDA 902*	Registration of blind persons and partially sighted persons
SSDA 903*	Children in care of local authority
SSDA 904*	Fostering and place of safety
SSDA 906*	Supervision orders and intermediate treatment
SSDA 910*	Persons on the registers of deaf and hard of hearing
SSDS 001*	Summary of all staff of the social services
T 145	Tuberculosis number of new cases and smear positive cases

Housing Benefit

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide the latest available estimates of the total numbers of recipients of standard housing

benefits, divided between rate assistance and rent assistance; how many in each category have income above and below the needs allowance; if he will give the current year and full year estimates of the expenditure saving due to the increase in the rate taper to 13 pence and estimate of the number of claimants who will be adversely affected by the taper increase without taking account of the increase in the child needs allowance; how many of these losers will lose eligibility to rate rebates altogether; and if he will as far as possible break the above estimates down as between pensioners, working householders and others.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 July 1985, c. *301-3*]: I regret that there were two minor errors in one of the tables which accompanied my reply to the hon. Member. A corrected version follows.

Table 1. Estimated standard housing benefit caseload at November 1985
Thousands, Great Britain

Household Type	*Rate Rebate Recipients*			*Rent Rebate or Allowance Recipients*		
	Above Needs Allowance	*Below Needs Allowance*	*Total*	*Above Needs Allowance*	*Below Needs Allowance*	*Total*
Pensioners	1,200	1,250	2,400	650	650	1,300
Working	150	200	350	150	100	250
Other	250	450	700	200	350	550
All	1,550	1,900	3,450	1,050	1,100	2,100

Note: Individual items do not necessarily add up to totals because of rounding.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Dorrell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the cost in a full year of the improvements in *(a)* family income supplement and *(b)* the housing benefit children's needs allowance announced recently; and what is the total net cost, allowing for the interaction between the two.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 July 1985, c. *301*]: The total net cost in 1986-87 of the uprating improvements from November 1985 in family income supplement and the housing benefit children's needs allowance, allowing for the interaction between the two benefits, is estimated to be about £23 million.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 16 July 1985

WALES

Beaches and Jetties (Public Access)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce legislation to provide a public right of access to the foreshore of beaches and to public slipways and jetties.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Highway authorities already have the power under part III of the Highways Act 1980 to create statutorily public rights of way.

Musical Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will initiate discussions with each of the directors of education of the local education authorities within Wales, in order to ensure that children in all areas in Wales are given an opportunity to learn to play musical instruments.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: No. It is for local education authorities and schools to determine the music curriculum. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that provision in Wales, including opportunities to play musical instruments, is of a generally high standard but believes local education authorities will welcome, as he has done, the recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate publication "Music from 5-16" and its views on ways on securing a comprehensive range of provision.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Photocopying Equipment

Mr. Beith asked the Lord Privy Seal whether the photocopying equipment supplied to the parliamentary Labour party at public expense is exclusively for the use of the civil servants provided for the official Opposition.

Mr. Biffen: No.

SCOTLAND

Company Failures

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies supported by the Scottish Development Agency since 1975 have failed; and what has been the cost to public funds.

Mr. Allan Stewart: By 31 March 1985 the figures were 175 and £10·9 million respectively. At that date the agency had outstanding investments of £48·8 million in 850 firms.

Blood Transfusion

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Common Services Agency costing study of the supply of units by the blood transfusion service to private sector medical establishments has been completed; and if it has been decided to vary the charge to these establishments as a result.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many units of blood were supplied to *(a)* commercial medical establishments and *(b)* other private hospitals by the Scottish blood transfusion service in each year since, and inclusive of, 1982-83; what has been the estimated cost of such supplies in each year; and what has been the revenue income in each year from charging for such supplies.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

	Units of Whole Blood Supplied to the Private Sector	*Revenue Received*
1982-83	650	Nil
1983-84	560	£1,915
1984-85	730	£27,287

Notes:
1. Charges were introduced in November 1983.
2. The receipts relate to blood and blood products; information about receipts for whole blood only is not available.
3. Receipts will not necessarily be brought to account in the year of supply.
4. Information about costs is not available.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current charge per unit of whole blood to *(a)* commercial medical establishments and *(b)* other private hospitals in Scotland for blood supplied to them by the Scottish blood transfusion service; and if the charge has been varied since being introduced.

Mr. John MacKay: The current charge to the private sector is £19 per unit of whole blood. It will be increased very shortly.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the factors taken into account, and the financial weighting attached to each, when fixing the handling charges for blood supplied to private hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The charge is intended to cover the expenses incurred by the blood transfusion service in processing blood for supplying to the private sector. No charge is made for the blood itself.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new entrants to the labour force there have been in each year since 1974; how many new entrants he estimates there will be in the current year and in each year until 1990; and if he will express the new Scottish entrants as a proportion of all entrants to the work force in Great Britain.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 July 1985, c. *251*]: The size of the civilian labour force in Scotland in 1971 and at two-yearly intervals between 1977 and 1983, the latest date for which estimates are available, is shown in the following table; this is based mainly on the labour force survey. Estimates for 1984 and labour force projections are under preparation. The table also shows the

changes in the civilian labour force in Scotland between the years for which information is available, and the corresponding changes for Great Britain.

thousands

Year	*Scottish civilian labour force estimates (mid-year)*	*Changes in civilian labour force*	
		Scotland	*Great Britain*
1971	2,303	0	0
1977	2,457	+154	+1,006
1979	2,486	+29	+120
1981	2,430	−56	+207
1983	2,430	0	−329

Electronics Industry

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies in Scotland are operating in the electronic manufacturing sector and how many in the research and development and software sectors; and what information he has as to how many of the electronic manufacturing firms also maintain research and development units in Scotland.

Mr. Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 July 1985, c. 256]: Information is not available on the basis requested. The latest results from the census of employment show that in 1981 the numbers of units classified directly to the electronics manufacturing industry, the research and development industry and the computer services industry in terms of the 1980 standard industrial classification (SIC) were as follows:

Industry	*Number of Units*
Electronics	433
Research and development	117
Computer services	149

These figures do not include units engaged in these activities which are classified to other industries in the 1980 SIC.

I have no comprehensive information on the extent of research and development undertaken by electronics manufacturing companies in Scotland. The hon. Member may wish to refer, however, to the Scottish "Economic Bulletin No. 29 of 1984", pp 9-10, which explores the results of a 1981 survey of employment in research and development. A copy of the "Bulletin" is in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Community Budget (Agricultural Expenditure)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate of the dollar/ecu exchange rate was used in determining the level of agricultural spending contained in the 1986 draft EEC budget.

Mr. Jopling: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assumption regarding the increase in cereal prices was made in deciding on *(a)* the limit for EEC agricultural spending in 1986 and *(b)* the 1986 draft budget.

Mr. Jopling: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all categories of agricultural and rural spending or support not included in the 20·6 billion ecu limit on EEC agricultural spending for 1986; and if he will state for each category *(a)* the level of spending in 1984, *(b)* the level of spending for 1985 and *(c)* the estimated level of spending as contained in the 1986 preliminary draft budget.

Mr. Jopling: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dieldrin

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what levels of Dieldrin were found by the analyses carried out upon the dead herons found on the River Avon near Evesham; and if he will report on the efforts made to locate the source of this pollution.

Mrs. Fenner: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which uses of Dieldrin are likely to be approved once the Food and Environment Protection Bill becomes law.

Mrs. Fenner: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Grain Storage

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the refusal of the Home Grown Cereals Authority to accept Merseyside companies offering space for the storage of EEC intervention board grain; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish details of his allocation by area of the 50,000 additional community programme places recently announced.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I set out current targets for the expansion of the community programme in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 30 April at column *105*. The Manpower Services Commission is consulting area manpower boards about distributing places available at regional level, and this will be taken into account in the allocation of the remaining 50,000 places.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, in the light of the recent court judgment regarding the compatibility with the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 of the rules for eligibility for women in respect of the community programme, he will make a statement on the future provision of places for women on the programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We are awaiting the published decision of the industrial tribunal in the case of Mrs. Chandler and will consider its implications for the community programme.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps have been taken to ensure the involvement of young people in the planning and execution of the youth training scheme, and in particular, trainee representatives on area manpower boards and programme review teams.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Trainee involvement in the youth training scheme takes place at a number of levels. At the individual level, trainees are involved in shaping their training programmes through the regular contact with scheme staff which is one of the requirements of the scheme. At programme level, sponsors are encouraged to set up programme review teams which include trainee representatives. The commission's aim under the forthcoming two-year youth training scheme is that all programmes should have such teams from April 1987.

At area level, individual area manpower boards may include organisations representing trainees' interests through co-option or by invitation, and some already do so. The composition of area manpower boards is currently under review. At national level, the youth training board includes a member from the British Youth Council, who represents the interests of young people.

Textile Industry

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed in the textile industry in the Staffordshire, Moorlands constituency.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information on employment in local areas is from the September 1981 census of employment. Industrial breakdowns are not available for constituencies but in the area covered by the jobcentre areas of Leek, Longton, Cheadle, Biddulph, Burslem and Hanley, which corresponds most closely to the Staffordshire Moorlands constituency, there were just over 2,700 employees employed in the textile industry (class 43 of the standard industrial classification 1980) at September 1981.

Remploy Ltd.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the total grants made to Remploy Ltd. since 1979; what was the annual loss made by the company in 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Grants are made by the Manpower Services Commission to Remploy to finance the company's excess of expenditure over income and capital expenditure. The information requested (available by financial year only) is as follows:

£000's

Financial year	Grants			Annual operating loss
	Revenue	Capital	Total	
1978-79	22,530	2,422	24,952	—
1979-80	27,263	3,764	31,027	—
1980-81	35,236	6,943	42,178	—
1981-82	39,195	6,493	45,688	42,222
1982-83	42,442	6,658	49,100	43,408
1983-84	44,572	7,331	51,903	46,335
1984-85	47,825	8,745	56,570	49,290

Both the Government and Remploy are anxious to improve the company's cost effectiveness and I have agreed with Remploy a plan which aims to reduce per capital costs by 12 per cent. to the level of disabled employment costs by 1987-88. I shall be keeping the position and the scope for further improvements in cost effectiveness under close review.

School Leavers (Brent)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Brent, South on 9 July, *Official Report*, column *416*, how many of the 618 unemployed claimants in Brent, who have not had employment since leaving full-time education, have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available.

Religious Discrimination

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to prohibit religious discrimination in employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government deplore all unfair discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of religious belief. However, they do not consider that either the scale or the nature of such discrimination makes legislation an appropriate solution.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest available figure for the number of school age children whose head of household has been unemployed for a period of *(a)* one to two years, *(b)* two to three years, *(c)* over three years and *(d)* over two years, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures are not available in the precise form requested. According to the labour force survey conducted in the spring of 1984, there were 421,000 children in total under the age of 16 whose head of household had been unemployed for between one and two years, and 1,011,000 children whose head of household had been unemployed for two years of more. Separate figures are not available for children of school age, or unemployment durations beyond two years.

Putney Gas Explosion

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Employment when the report of the Health and Safety Executive on the Putney gas explosion will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand the report to the Health and Safety Commission will be published shortly. When it is I will make a statement pursuant to this reply and place a copy of the report in the Library.

Wages Councils

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the responses which his Department has received in reply to his proposals in respect of wages councils expressed support for his policy.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultative paper made clear the Government's position that change is needed. The responses to the paper suggest considerable support for this view.

Road Haulage Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the number of people employed in the road haulage industry in 1960 and in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives, for the dates specified, the estimated number of employees in employment in the road haulage industry in Great Britain. The Department's employment statistics are analysed according to the standard industrial classification (SIC). The figures for June 1960 to June 1981 are for minimum list headings (MLHs) 703 and 704 of the 1968 SIC while those for June 1982 to June 1984 are for group 723 of the 1980 SIC. The figures for September 1981 are on both bases.

Employees in Employment—Road Haulage Great Britain

	1968 SIC MLHs 703 and 704	*1980 SIC Group 723*
June 1960	208,000	N/A
June 1975	224,200	N/A
June 1976	215,400	N/A
June 1977	219,900	N/A
June 1978	220,800	N/A
June 1979	222,500	N/A
June 1980	214,900	N/A
June 1981	192,800	N/A
September 1981	196,500	194,800
June 1982	N/A	191,400
June 1983	N/A	186,400
June 1984	N/A	184,200

N/A= Not available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Community Radio

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications his Department has received for licences to operate community radio stations; if he will break down this figure by region; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many representations he has received about the licensing of community radio since the answer of 6 June to the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) *Official Report*, column *215;* how many of these have related to the timing of his decisions on the developments of community radio; and if he is yet in a position to indicate precisely when these decisions will be announced.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Applications for community radio licences have not yet been invited, although interested groups have on occasion forwarded details of their programming and other plans. Since 6 June, we have received about 90 letters and telephone calls about community radio; a small number of these inquired about the timing of a further statement on the development of community radio. In this latter connection, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 11 July.

Metropolitan Police (Plastic Handcuffs)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) why plastic handcuffs have been introduced by the Metropolitan police;

(2) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the use of plastic handcuffs conforms with the guidance in the Metropolitan police instruction book.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that plastic handcuffs have been the subject of evaluation trials but have not been issued for normal policing duties. A limited number are available, however, for use by officers on special duties, under the direction of senior officers.

Metropolitan Police (Fire Resistant Overalls)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fire resistant overalls the Metropolitan police possess; and how many have identity numbers attached.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that his force has about 6,500 pairs of fire resistant overalls and that instructions have been issued that officers must display identity numerals when wearing overalls on duty.

Public Entertainment Licences

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to amend the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, section 1 and schedule 1 (Licensing of Public Entertainments) to provide that licences attach to the premises and are not personal to the particular applicant; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the present statutory provisions for the enforcement of safety regulations.

Mr. Mellor: Under section 1 of and schedule 1 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, a public entertainment licence is granted to a particular person but in respect of particular premises. It is essential that the licence should be granted to an individual so that he can be held responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the licence (including those relating to safety) are complied with. If he fails to comply, he renders himself liable to criminal proceedings and the licence itself may also be revoked. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to amend the legislation, nor are we aware that it has led to difficulties of enforcement of safety regulations

Greater Manchester (Community Relations)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester on the use of special branch officers of the Greater Manchester police to take part in community relations activities; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to replace the police national computer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question of 14 November 1984 at column 258.

Criminal Information System

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place the operational specification of the proposed criminal information system for the Metropolitan police in the Library.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis whether to proceed to detailed design work on a computerised crime reporting system. The Commissioner informs me that, primarily for reasons of security, he does not intend to make the operational specification widely available. He does not consider, therefore, that it would be right to place it in the Library.

Proxy Votes

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there is an expiry date for proxy votes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In general, a person appointed to vote as proxy on an elector's behalf is entitled to vote at any parliamentary, European Parliament or local government election so long as the elector is entitled to be treated as an absent voter. If my hon. Friend has a particular difficulty in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Unemployed Offenders

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of new offenders are unemployed.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Sentencing Policy (Manslaughter)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will commission a study on the implications for penal policy and deterrence of a statutory minimum penalty, subject to reduction only in exceptional circumstances, for the crime of manslaughter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The argument against statutory minimum penalties is that they would unduly constrain the court's ability to take the circumstances of the offence and the offender fully into account in passing sentence. This applies with particular force to the offence of manslaughter, which varies greatly in degree of seriousness. The courts already have the benefit of full guidance in judgments of the Court of Appeal on sentencing in cases of manslaughter. We do not therefore believe that a study would be worthwhile.

Defendants (Non-appearance)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners remanded in custody in England and Wales were not produced at courts where they were due to appear as defendants for each day in May and June.

Mr. Mellor: The information is not available centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Medical Treatment)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria for determining whether prisoners should be released from *(a)* open prisons and *(b)* closed prisons for medical treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Prisoners requiring medical treatment that cannot be provided within the prison system are sent outside for it. Security arrangements are decided case by case. Prisoners from open prisons do not usually require extensive security arrangements and they are frequently sent to outside hospitals even though appropriate treatment is available elsewhere in the prison system.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were released from *(a)* open prisons and *(b)* closed prisons for medical treatment during each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The approximate number of occasions on which prisoners were treated in outside hospitals was as follows. The figures do not distinguish between open and closed prisons.

Year	*In Patient Treatments**	*Out Patient Treatments*
1980	1,400	14,500
1981	1,400	15,500
1982	1,500	16,300
1983	1,650	17,700
1984†	2,300	21,500

* Excludes confinements
† Fifteen months from 1 January 1984 to 31 March 1985

Asylum

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers who entered the United Kingdom in another category have been treated as illegal entrants in each year since 1979 and the current year to date; what was their nationality; and how many were detained on these grounds.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances he declares asylum seekers to be illegal entrants; at what stage in the asylum procedure this is done; and under what circumstances detention would be considered.

Mr. Waddington: If a person who may be an illegal entrant applies for asylum, his application is considered in accordance with normal asylum procedures. Only if his application is unsuccessful is consideration given to the possibility of his removal as an illegal entrant. Detention is then authorised only where this is considered necessary to effect removal.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances he will provide written reasons for refusal of asylum where there is no right of appeal and where no Member of Parliament is involved.

Mr. Waddington: Apart from the brief reasons given, for example, in the notice of refusal of leave to enter where a passenger seeks asylum on arrival in this country, it is not the practice to give detailed written reasons in these circumstances.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances travel documents will be offered to those people refused asylum but granted exceptional leave to remain.

Mr. Waddington: In general, if it can be shown that their own national authorities refuse to document them or that it would be unreasonable to expect them to approach their national authorities.

Iranian Nationals (Deportation)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iranians expressing a fear of returning to Iran have been refused permission to stay in the United Kingdom and subsequently deported to Iran in each year since 1979.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. For the total number of Iranians who have been deported since 1979, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Battesea (Mr. Dubs) on 2 May 1985 at columns *216-18*.

Metropolitan Police (Wrongful Acts)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the amounts paid in out-of-court settlements of claims arising from the wrongful acts of Metropolitan police officers in 1984; what were the amounts paid under awards made by courts in similar cases in 1984; and what was the number of cases initiated in 1984 and the number concluded in 1984.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the amounts paid in out-of-court settlements of claims arising from the wrongful acts of Metropolitan police officers in 1984, the amounts paid under awards made by courts in similar cases in 1984, the number of cases initiated in 1984 and the number concluded in that year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The total amount paid in 1984 by the Metropolitan police in settlement of claims arising from allegations of misconduct by police officers—whether or not formal proceedings were instituted—was £162,986. The total amount paid by the force under awards made by the courts in similar cases during 1984 was £15,617. The number of such civil actions initiated against the force in 1984 was 181, and the number disposed of was 107.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown by district of the civil cases initiated by members of the public against the wrongful acts of police officers in the Metropolitan police for 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A breakdown by police district of the 181 such cases initiated in 1984 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-British citizens resident in the United Kingdom have submitted applications during the past six years for their spouses to be granted permanent settlement in the United Kingdom; and what proportion of such applications were successful and unsuccessful, respectively.

Mr. Waddington: Comprehensive information is not collected centrally on the citizenship of the spouses of those applying for entry clearance to or settlement in the United Kingdom. However, the following information is readily available. Over the period 1980 to 1984 about 100 husbands were refused entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent to join their wives in the United Kingdom solely or partly because they were not British citizens and in 1984 about 70 husbands from all countries were refused permission to extend their stay in the United Kingdom solely or partly for the same reason. The numbers of wives settled on removal of time limit at the same time as their husbands, all of whom will have been non-British citizens, were given for the years 1978 to 1984 in table 14 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1984" (Cmnd. 9544).

Mr. Kandiah Raveenthiran

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received the report of the investigation he ordered into the removal to Sri Lanka of Mr. Kandiah Raveenthiran on 4 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: Yes. I have received a full report about the circumstances in which Mr. Raveenthiran was returned to Colombo before the receipt of representations from the United Kingdom immigration advisory service against the decision not to grant asylum. This serious error occurred because not all those who ought to have been told of the setting of the directions for Mr. Raveenthiran's removal were told.

The Tamil emergency placed considerable strain on staff both in the immigration service and in other parts of the immigration and nationality department, but the report shows that there were a number of general weaknesses in communication and organisation which should not have been present. As a result, clearer lines of communication —particularly between headquarters departments and the ports—will be introduced and relative responsibilities more clearly defined.

In view of the pressures placed on staff, and the more general weaknesses to which I have referred, formal disciplinary action against individual officers involved would be inappropriate. Those involved have, however, been seen by the head of the immigration and nationality department and the ways in which they failed in their responsibilities have been made clear to them.

ENVIRONMENT

Defective Houses

Mr. Bevan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the building societies in the Birmingham area known to be willing to lend on the security of houses designated under the Defective Housing Act 1984 after the houses have been repaired under the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Gow: In my reply of 7 May, at column *300*, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), I explained that the Building Societies Association had participated in the setting up of the arrangements for the NHBC warranty scheme for repairs to PRC houses and that I am confident that houses repaired under the NHBC scheme will prove acceptable to building societies generally.

Sir Reginald Eyre asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses under the Housing Defects Act 1984 have been repaired to fitness standards; and if he will set out the number and type in each category.

Mr. Gow: Under the Housing Defects Act 1984 local authorities provide grant assistance to private owners of houses designated under the Act towards the cost of reinstating those houses satisfactorily. I regret that information on the number of houses which have been reinstated is not available at present.

Construction

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the percentage of gross domestic product spent on construction in the following countries: *(a)* Canada, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* Sweden; and what is the equivalent figure for the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The available information for these countries relates to fixed capital investment only and excludes repair and maintenance work which is substantial in the United Kingdom.

Fixed Investment in Construction as a Percentage of GDP in 1982

	Percentage
Canada	13·5
Federal Republic of Germany	12·7
France	10·3
Sweden	10·9
United Kingdom	9·0

Although countries attempt to conform to common definitions, this is not always possible because of the differing information systems within each country.

Bungalows for Disabled People

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bungalows for disabled people have been built since 1979; and how many were built between 1974 and 1979.

Sir George Young: From January 1980 to March 1985, completions were reported of 19,600 dwellings provided for the chronically sick and disabled by local authorities, new towns and housing associations in England, compared with 15,900 from January 1974 to December 1979. The type of dwelling is not reported.

Dieldrin

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those rivers which exceed the levels permitted under European Community directive 80/778/EEC for Dieldrin residues in waters intended for human consumption.

Mr. Macfarlane: The standards laid down in European Community directive 80/778/EEC relate to drinking water and are not meant to be applied to river waters. There is, as yet, no Community agreed river water quality standard for Dieldrin in the series of daughter directives arising from the directive 76/464/EEC on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community.

Homeless People

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the number of homeless people in Portsmouth in each half-year since 1979.

Sir George Young: The following table gives the number of households accepted as homeless by Portsmouth local authority in each half-year since 1979.

	Number
1979 1st half	75
2nd half	65
1980 1st half	54
2nd half	60
1981 1st half	77
2nd half	71
1982 1st half	65
2nd half	56
1983 1st half	36
2nd half	49
1984 1st half	44
2nd half	109

These figures need to be increased by about 40 per cent. to allow for those households who, although considered to be homeless, received advice and assistance only.

My Department does not collect information on the size of these households.

London (Grants)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many consent applications citing clause 92 of the Local Government Bill have been received from each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority;

(2) how many consent applications citing clause 93 of the Local Government Bill have been received from each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is set out in the following table:—

Applications received under clause 92 of the Local Government Bill and section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 as amended by clause 93 of the Local Government Bill

Authority	*Clause 92*	*Section 9/Clause 93*
Greater London Council	193	521 (264)
Inner London Education Authority	1	28 (17)
Greater Manchester Council	90	208 (169)
Merseyside County Council	18	83 (59)
South Yorkshire County Council	71	236 (209)

Authority	Clause 92	Section 9/Clause 93
Tyne and Wear County Council	9	105 (78)
West Midlands County Council	99	264 (210)
West Yorkshire County Council	1	95 (60)

Note: Figures in brackets represent the number of applications received where the amount involved was below £250,000 in relation to building or engineering works and below £100,000 in relation to other categories detailed in section 9(1) of the Act.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about delays in granting consent for applications received under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Each application must be considered carefully and on its individual merits. If unnecessary delays are to be avoided, it is imperative that fully documented applications are submitted at the earliest possible stage.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has consulted any claimants' organisations about the Greater London council consent application under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act for Searchlight took over three months to be granted; and whether he has personally visited the organisation.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on Wednesday 10 July.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he or his officials have visited Spare Rib the London Lesbian and Gay Centre or the Women's Peace Bus since the Greater London council applied for consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act to make a grant to the three organisations.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why consent for the Greater London council claimants festival has not been forthcoming;

(2) why consent to the All London Teachers Against Racism and Facism is being delayed.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Responses are awaited to requests made to the GLC for further information needed to enable proper consideration to be given to these applications.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the representations received in support of the Greater London council application for consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act for the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Spare Rib and Women's Peace Bus.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Thirty two letters have been received in support of the Greater London council's application for consent under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act for the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, four letters in support of the application for Spare Rib and five letters in support of the application for the Women's Peace Bus.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why consent has not been forthcoming to the Greater London council's anti-racism awareness campaign; and whether he has consulted the Council for Racial Equality about his decision.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A response is awaited to a request made to the GLC for further information needed to enable proper consideration to be given to this application.

My right hon. Friend has not consulted the Council for Racial Equality with regard to this matter.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all outstanding applications for consent received from the Greater London council and the dates they were received.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications for the Greater London council and each of the metropolitan county councils under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act were for a value of less than £100, between £100 and £1,000, between £1,000 and £10,000, between £10,000 and £100,000, between £100,000 and £1 million and over £1 million.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Financial considerations are not always a material factor in determining applications under the Act and such details have not been supplied or sought in every case. The information requested is as follows:

Authority	Number of applications by value (£)						
	Not supplied	Under 100	100-999	1,000-9,999	10,000-99,999	100,000-1 million	Over 1 million
Greater London Council	390	213	258	809	514	68	5
Greater Manchester Council	40	110	118	216	137	9	0
Inner London Education Authority	180	527	0	0	0	0	0
Merseyside County Council	60	48	39	61	10	6	0
South Yorkshire County Council	108	117	75	140	43	2	0
Tyne and Wear County Council	5	39	41	101	30	2	0
West Midlands County Council	36	122	64	227	134	7	1
West Yorkshire County Council	65	43	35	75	39	4	0
All Authorities	884	1,219	630	1,629	907	98	6

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when a further series of general consents will be issued under sections 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act, and clauses 92 and 93 of the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A further series of general consents under sections 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act and statements of intention to consent under clauses 92 and 93 of the Local Government Bill were issued on 11 June. Further consents will be issued in due course, as appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act are still being considered by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Three hundred and sixty-one.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many press and public relations officers are employed in his Department; and what is the figure for each of the past three years and the total cost for each of those years.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The number and estimated staff costs of Government information officers employed by my Department over the last three years is:

Number (at 1 April)	*Estimated costs (at outturn prices) £000's*
1983 *25	0·346
1984 22	0·326
1985 23	0·338

*Staffing levels adjusted to reflect the transfer of officers dealing with transport matters to the Department of Transport.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many press notices have been issued by his Department in each of the past three years; and what was the total cost.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: In 1982, 1983 and 1984 my Department issued respectively 520, 608 and 592 press notices at a total cost of £50,395, a sum which includes all staff costs and a share of departmental overheads.

Housing Stock

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make additional resources available to housing authorities to enable their housing stock to be brought up to higher standards following the meeting with the director general of the National Economic Development Council.

Sir George Young: One of the main conclusions reached in the NEDC's report was that better information was needed on the condition of the infrastructure. My Department has recently undertaken an inquiry into the condition of local authority housing stock. The results are now being analysed and will be taken into account in deciding the future levels of resources needed for public sector investment in housing.

2 Home Road, Battersea

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Greater London council can expect to receive written consent under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act for the disposal of 2, Home Road, Battersea.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Written consent was issued on 11 September 1984.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what samples of potable waters have been taken from the River Avon near Evesham for analysis; and what are the levels of Dieldrin, DDT and DDE found in the samples taken.

Mr. Macfarlane: The River Avon near Evesham is not used as a source of potable water and accordingly no samples have been taken for such usage.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Relief

Mrs. Beckett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the costs per year of tax relief for those who take out private insurance policies in substitution for the state earnings-related pension scheme when the state earnings-related pension scheme is phased out.

Mr. Moore: It is provisionally estimated that the proposals could reduce tax revenues by some £300 million per annum in 1989-90.

Labour Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the increase in United Kingdom unit labour costs relative to the world generally and the EEC in particular; and to what extent this is used by Her Majesty's Government as an indicator of changes in competitiveness.

Mr. Peter Rees: Estimates of United Kingdom relative unit labour costs are available in the International Monetary Fund's publication "International Financial Statistics" (p64 in the July 1985 issue). The equivalent figures for relative unit labour costs vis-a-vis our EC partners on the same basis are given in the following table. Figures for the first half of 1985 are not yet available.

United Kingdom Unit Labour Costs Compared to the EC

	Per cent
1975	86·1
1976	71·2
1977	66·25
1978	71·0
1979	81·8
1980	100·0
1981	109·2
1982	104·6
1983	96·5
1984	99·8

Notes:
1. Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands.
2. Competitors costs are trade weighted expressed and in a common currency.
3. Some data is taken from OECD. Economic Outlook June 1985.

A variety of price and cost-based measures of competitiveness are monitored. Other aspects of competitiveness, such as quality, design and delivery dates are important but are not readily quantifiable.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the average variability of sterling against exchange rate mechanism currencies since the establishment of the European monetary system in terms of the real exchange rate measured in *(a)* consumer prices and *(b)* relative export prices.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The data necessary to calculate real sterling exchange rates and their variability can be found as follows:

(a) nominal sterling exchange rates against all currencies in the exchange rate mechanism are published in Financial Statistics, table 13.1;

(b) consumer price and export unit value indices are published in the country tables of the IMF's International Financial Statistics.

There are many alternative measures of exchange rate variability, and they can give widely varying results. Different measures will be appropriate in different circumstances.

Taxation Yield

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the annual yield produced by value-added tax in England and Wales for 1983-84.

Mr. Hayhoe: Net receipts of VAT in 1983-84 were £15,218 million, of which it is estimated that some £13,500 million was raised on expenditure in England and Wales.

Direct Cosmetics Ltd. (Judgment)

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on his policy regarding the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Communities in the case of Direct Cosmetics Ltd. and the Commissioners of Customs and Excise.

Mr. Hayhoe: As I indicated to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe on 8 May (*Official Report*, column *402*), a formal submission was made to the European Commission seeking to restore the VAT valuation provisions which the European Court of Justice judgment rendered ultra vires. The submission succeeded and the powers were restored on 12 June. New directions have been issued by Customs which took effect on 1 July. Claims have been invited from traders who consider that they may have overpaid tax.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the percentage level of value added tax take-up for each EEC country necessitated by the 1986 draft EEC budget.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The preliminary draft budget has not yet been published by the Commission, so it is not expected that the Council of Ministers will be in a position to establish a draft budget until September.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the percentage level of value added tax take-up for the United Kingdom for each EEC budget since 1975.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the maximum level of expenditure in the EEC budget implied by a 1·4 per cent. value added tax ceiling; and if he will list any similar estimates made by other EEC countries or the EEC Commission.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mines and Oil Wells Allowances

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now publish his proposals for changes to the mines and oil wells allowances.

Mr. Moore: A consultative document containing these proposals is being published today, and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. The document proposes changes on both the structure and rates of the mines and oil wells allowances. The effect of the proposals is to bring these allowances more closely into line with the general system of capital allowances, following the changes in the 1984 Finance Act and the provisions of this year's Finance Bill. The aim is to simplify and clarify another complex area of the tax system. The main proposals consistent with the wider capital allowances code are:

The abolition of the present system of allowances (initial allowances and writing down allowances based on output and royalty value of output formulae).

Their replacement by straightforward percentage based annual writing down allowances on a reducing balance basis. The proposed rate is 25 per cent. for qualifying expenditure other than that on the acquisition of minerals or rights over them for which a 10 per cent rate is proposed.

Relief to start when the expenditure is incurred provided that a mining trade has begun.

The abolition of relief for expenditure on land.

It is proposed that legislation on these proposals should be introduced in next year's Finance Bill. The consultative document invites representations on the proposals in the document and these should be sent to the Inland Revenue by the end of October of this year. An Inland Revenue press release issued today gives further details, including the price and the availability of the document.

Black Economy

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will initiate studies of recent estimates of the size of the black economy and the correlation between the level of unemployed claimants and registrants at jobcentres, with a view to instituting subsequently an inquiry into the size of the black economy and ways to restrict it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985]: Methods for dealing with the black economy are kept under constant review. In this connection, outside studies and estimates of the problem are carefully noted.

PRIME MINISTER

Lewisham

Q14. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Lewisham.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Treaty of European Union

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the preparations being made for the special meeting of the Council of Ministers to discuss the draft Treaty of European Union; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Preparations for the proposed intergovernmental conference called under article 236 of the EC treaty will be discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 and 23 July.

Japanese Trading Policy

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister what progress is being made with representations to Japan on its international trading policy.

The Prime Minister: In addition to direct representations to Japanese authorities by Ministers, the European Council in Milan endorsed the declaration by the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 June. This calls for Japan to make a clearly verifiable commitment to a significant, sustained increase in imports of manufactures and processed agricultural products, to further liberalise her financial markets and to internationalise the yen. The President of the Commission, M. Delors, will be meeting Prime Minister Nakasone on 19 July and will stress that the Community will judge Japan's response by the actual results of the action programme to be announced this month.

Economic and Industrial Policies

Mr. Dykes asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry and other Departments of State on the forward development of Her Majesty's Government's economic and industrial policies.

The Prime Minister: There is always room for improvement.

Soft Loans

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will increase the level of the present aid and trade provision in support of the proposed mechanism for soft loans.

The Prime Minister: The future level of ATP will be decided in the light of overall decisions on public expenditure and other claims on resources.

Cabotage

Sir David Price asked the Prime Minister, in view of the European Council's decision that priority should be given to creating a free market for transport, when the other European Community countries will extend to British-registered ships the rights of cabotage.

The Prime Minister: The EC Commission has proposed a 10-year transitional period for the opening up of cabotage trades as between member states. This is a far longer period than is necessary or than we can accept and the Secretary of State for Transport is having discussions with Ministers from other member states with a view to securing much earlier access for British vessels to those trades that are still closed.

Non-life Insurance

Sir David Price asked the Prime Minister, further to the statement on 2 July on the meeting of the European Council at Milan, whether any agreement was reached about when a free market in non-life insurance will be established throughout the Community.

The Prime Minister: The European Council agreed that the removal of barriers in financial services should be a high priority in the action programme for completing the Community internal market by 1992. Non-life insurance services are an important element in the Commission's paper on which the action programme is to be based.

France (British Visitors)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister if she will make representations to the French Government about incidents of ill-treatment of non-white British passport holders by French border officials.

The Prime Minister: We have already drawn the French authorities' attention to the concern felt here over the incident involving a British delegation to the Council of Europe Youth Week in Strasbourg, in which a Jamaican national was primarily involved. The French authorities are looking into the matter. I am not aware of any other recent incidents of this kind.

Engagements

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 16 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Philippine Airlines (Aircraft Purchases)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many British-made aircraft have been exported to Phillipine Airlines since 1970.

Mr. Channon: According to information that I have, British-made aircraft exported to Philippine Airlines since 1970 comprise five new and 11 used aircraft, three of which were purchased from United Kingdom operators; additionally, a further three aircraft have been leased from a United Kingdom airline. Five European Airbuses purchased in this period, in which Britain has a stake, have not been included.

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect the increase in relative unit labour costs since 1978 has had on the relative profitability of manufactured exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Manufacturers' relative unit labour costs affect their ability to compete in both home and overseas markets, while the relative profitability of exports may influence the balance they choose between export and home sales. The two are not therefore directly related, although they both have implications for the level of export sales.

Confectionery (Plastic Toys)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in the light of the death of Roddy Breslin in Tyrone county hospital on 6 May, he will introduce legislation to prohibit the import and sale of chocolate eggs and other confectionery containing small plastic toys.

Mr. Fletcher: While saddened to learn of the death of Roddy Breslin through choking on the plastic wheels and axle of a toy car, I have to recognise, as parents do, that the world is full of small objects which can cause the death of a child by choking.

In the case of small toys and toys containing small parts the consumer safety unit advises the use of warnings to keep the objects away from small children, and many responsibile suppliers follow this practice. I have no plans to prohibit the supply of such products.

The Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1985 make illegal from 1 August 1985, small toys and some other objects which imitate food in appearance, taste or smell. But it would not be fair or practicable to extend this concept to small objects associated with food, such as cake decorations or novelties contained within chocolate eggs. Such products should carry warning labels and parents should be particularly vigilant.

Commodities (Investor Protection)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he made prior to formulating his investor protection policy as it relates to the users of *(a)* commodity markets in general and *(b)* to the terminal coffee market of the costs likely to arise to the markets and the implications for their international competitiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: The proposals for investor protection, described in the White paper "Financial Services in the United Kingdom" (Cmnd. 9432), are designed to promote the efficiency and competitiveness of the financial services sector, within a regulatory framework which inspires confidence in investors. These objectives apply to the regulation of business in all investments, which will include coffee and other commodity futures. Costs will be minimised because the system of self regulation within a statutory framework will allow the detailed rules to take account of the differing needs of the various types of investment and of the interests of investors and traders.

Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to progress in establishing the Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers; and what role he envisages for this body, in the context of his investor protection policy, in relation to the regulation of the terminal coffee market.

Mr. Fletcher: I welcome the progress made in establishing the Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers, which I hope will become operational as soon as

possible. The White Paper, "Financial Services in the United Kingdom" envisages that recognised self-regulatory organisations will have a major role in regulating investment business under the proposed new regulatory regime. The AFBD will be eligible for recognition if its rules and practices provide an adequate level of investor protection.

British Telecom

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column 443, how many shares Rudolf Wolff & Co. undertook to buy in its role as underwriters to the flotation of British Telecommunications; and what happened to the shares they handled.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *6*]: Rudolf Wolff was allocated 1·375 million shares under the placing and commitment arrangements described in my answer of 27 June. The arrangements for the offer for sale did not require applicants to give an account of their management of their allocations.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column 443, when the applications by employees of an eligible fund based overseas for 31,900 British Telecommunications shares were discovered; what arrangements were made for the surrender of their profits to charity; which charities were involved and on what dates payments were made to them; if any investigations into possible fraud or deception were carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *6*]: The employees referred to in my answer of 27 June openly submitted their names to the overseas office of one of the brokers involved in the British Telecom flotation, in the belief that they were eligible for the placing and commitment arrangements. The London office of that broking firm made placing and commitment applications on their behalf in view of the limited time available. All brokers to the BT issue were required to give undertakings to our merchant bank advisers that applicants introduced under the placing and commitment arrangements were institutions of a certain size and the broking firm involved now accepts that it was in error in allowing these particular applications to go forward without checking whether the employees were buying on their own behalf or as trustees of funds. Before giving my answer of 27 June I asked for the placing and commitment allocation to be re-checked. The employees names came to light and the broking firm which had submitted the applications was asked to confirm the basis on which they had been made. When it became clear to the employees concerned that they had applied erroneously under the placing and commitments arrangements, they volunteered to surrender the profits earned to the Marine Adventure Sailing Trust. These payments were made on or around 25 June. All commissions that were earned in respect of these applications have been returned. I have no reason for believing that this was other than a genuine and honest mistake on the part of the brokers and the applicants concerned.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to reduce the level of overseas aid to Indonesia.

Mr. Raison: We have no plans to reduce the level of aid to Indonesia. We plan a modest increase in the technical co-operation programme; and we announced in June a new loan commitment of £10 million.

Tigre (Famine Relief)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining what action has been taken to provide relief for famine victims in Tigre; and if Her Majesty's Government in co-operation with other EEC countries and United Nations agencies are making a commitment to provide long-term development aid.

Mr. Raison: The Government have provided substantial relief, both directly and through voluntary agencies and the European Community, to victims of the famine in Ethiopia wherever they may be. For the longer term, we look mainly to the European Community and the World Bank, to which we make substantial contributions, to provide development assistance to Ethiopia.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to improve the quality of pianos in schools in St. Helena; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The St. Helena Government are likely to ask for new pianos when the education system is reorganised following construction of the new central secondary school. In the meantime, we are considering with the St. Helena Government what might be done to improve the present provision.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many independent sources of information he relies on in assessing present numbers of wirebirds in St. Helena and their general health as a species.

Mr. Renton: In addition to the published sources given in my answer of 10 December 1984, at columns *340-42*, the agriculture and forestry officer of the St. Helena Government and the few amateur ornithologists on the island are available for consultation.

Mr. Oscar Mpetha

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the imprisonment of Mr. Oscar Mpetha; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Given Mr. Mpetha's age and physical condition there are strong humanitarian grounds for intervention. My right hon. and learned Friend therefore instructed Her Majesty's embassy in South Africa on 10 June to convey a request to the authorities that clemency be exercised.

I very much hope that our representations will be heeded.

Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan (Deputation)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassadors in Rome and Paris about the visits to those countries and also to the Holy See of the deputation headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan; and what information he has regarding the composition of the deputation.

Mr. Luce: A delegation led by the Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan visited Paris, Rome and the Holy See in late June and early July. It comprised the Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan; the Foreign Minister of Jordan; Mr. Jawid Al Ghoussein, chairman of the Palestine National Fund and a member of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation; and Mr. Khalid Al Hassan, a former member of the PLO executive committee. The delegation was received by the Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on 26 June, by the French Foreign Minister on 27 June and by the Pope and the Vatican Secretary of State on 1 July.

Mr. Elias Freij

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the recent visit to the United Kingdom by the Mayor of Bethlehem, Mr. Elias Freij and his meetings with Ministers; and whether he extended a welcome to Mr. Freij personally to participate in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian deputation organised by King Hussein.

Mr. Luce: Mr. Elias Freij, Mayor of Bethlehem, visited the United Kingdom as our guest from 20 to 25 June. We value continuing contacts with leading personalities from the occupied territories. He called on my right hon. and learned Freind and I on 24 June. We had a useful discussion on the situation in the occupied territories and developments relating to the Arab-Israel dispute. The possibility of Mr. Freij's participation in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was not raised.

Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any members of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation which was received by the Italian and French Governments in June whom Her Majesty's Government would not be prepared to receive *(a)* at ministerial and *(b)* at official level as members of such a delegation visiting the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: Our policy is to encourage all committed to working for peace. We maintain close and friendly contacts with the Jordanian Government. Our policy towards the PLO is well known. We look to the PLO to acknowledge Israel's right to exist and renounce violence.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if either Mr. Khalid Al-Hassan or Mr. Jawid Al-Ghussyn, executive members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, have applied for a visa to visit the United Kingdom in the near future.

Mr. Renton: We have no trace of current visa applications from these two men.

Parades (Northern Ireland)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which foreign countries have made representations about the possible re-routeing of parades which would normally take place in Northern Ireland during June, July and August; and what response he has made to such representations.

Mr. Renton: The Irish Government made representations about the routeing of marches in Portadown in connection with a St. Patrick's day parade. But we have received no recent representations. We have always made it clear to the Irish that the re-routeing of parades is a matter for the police.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which foreign countries have made represenations about the possible banning of parades which would normally take place in Northern Ireland during June, July and August; and what response he has made to such representations.

Mr. Renton: None.

Nuclear Test Ban

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives Her Majesty's Government have taken at the Geneva conference on disarmament over a comprehensive nuclear test ban.

Mr. Luce: On 11 July the British delegation to the conference tabled a working paper on "Seismic Monitoring for a Comprehensive Test Ban", a copy of which will be placed in the Library shortly. The paper describes techniques for detecting and identifying seismic signals emitted by nuclear explosions, and relates these issues to the verification of a total ban on such explosions. We trust this working paper will make a helpful contribution to discussion within the conference on disarmament of unresolved technical issues which stand in the way of progress towards a verifiable comprehensive test ban.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Ocean Drilling Programme

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the United Kingdom contribution to the ocean drilling programme in each of the past three years; if he intends that the United Kingdom should remain a full member of the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The total United Kingdom contribution was as follows:

£000's

	NERC	Department of Energy	Total
1982-83	1,517·4	107·4	1,624·8
1983-84	382·0	—	382·0
1984-85	169·9	—	169·9

These figures relate to the international phase of ocean drilling, which was completed in September 1983, and to the ocean drilling project which began in October 1983. The project's financial years do not coincide with United Kingdom financial years, to which the figures shown here relate. On the second and third parts of the question I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 8 July 1985 at column *352*.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether a decision has been made for British participation in the ocean drilling project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 8 July 1985 at column *352*.

Business Schools

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to seek to transfer the funding of the United Kingdom's business schools from the University Grants Committee to his Department.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 8 July, what response the Natural Environment Research Council has had from companies in the oil and mining sectors to its request for contributions to enable the United Kingdom to afford the cost of full membership of the Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling from 1 October 1985.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the Natural Environment Research Council that the companies concerned have promised contributions totalling approximately £275,000 per annum for up to four years. Negotiations are continuing to see if this total can be increased.

Unemployed Persons

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with progress on the three-year Replan programme to widen education opportunities for the unemployed.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Replan programme, announced in March 1984, aims to encourage the development of suitable educational opportunities for unemployed adults in England and Wales by evaluating innovative provision, identifying and disseminating good practice, and promoting collaboration between relevant agencies, statutory and voluntary. Some 60 development projects have been approved for funding; regional staff development programmes involving some 2,000 participants have taken place; and education support grants have been offered to over 50 local education authorities in England and Wales for projects due to commence in 1985-86 and concerned with the planning, co-ordination and development of provision for the unemployed. I am satisfied with the start which the programme has made.

A central role is being played by a team of field officers which is now complete, the majority of its members having been in post since January.

Primary and Secondary School Pupils

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary pupils are being taught in temporary accommodation at the latest available date.

Mr. Dunn: The information needed to provide estimates in the form requested by the hon. Member is not available. However, the current best available estimate is that in January 1985 there were 450,000 temporary places in primary schools and 370,000 temporary places in secondary schools maintained in use by local education authorities.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary school pupils currently attend schools in buildings constructed before *(a)* 1920, and *(b)* 1940.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not held centrally.

Teachers

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers have left their jobs in the last eight months.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not yet available centrally.

Education Statistics

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures for every third year since 1961-62, showing the number and the proportion *(a)* of all students entering higher education who are of working-class families and *(b)* of all school leavers who are of working-class families.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers and proportions of home university students with known social class accepted through the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA), and who were from social groups IV and V for every third year since 1977 were as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Percentage*
1977	4,200	6·4
1980	3,900	5·4
1983	4,400	7·1

Similar figures are not available for earlier years, nor for students in public sector higher education, nor for school leavers.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has been asked for advice by any local education authorities retaining selection as to the effects of falling rolls upon their grammar schools.

Mr. Dunn: No.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his

Department as to the effect of falling rolls on the academic and selective nature of grammar schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Reports by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools are the main source of evidence available nationally of the effects of falling rolls on all types of secondary schools, including grammar schools. These report, inter alia, on observed changes in the curricular and ability ranges of schools with declining pupil numbers. Information provided by local education authorities and others in respect of proposals published under sections 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980 provides further evidence in respect of particular schools.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the proposals relating to the minimum size of schools, contained in the White Paper, "Better Schools", did not refer to grammar schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The principles proposed in the White Paper are in respect of the most common forms of school organisation. However, its statement that each school should as far as possible be kept large enough to justify sufficient teachers to provide all pupils with a curriculum which measures up to the principles set out in chapter 2 is of general force.

Pupil Achievement

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department as to the influence of family poverty on participation in and achievement at school; and whether he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: On 14 November 1984, at columns 698-99, I told the House about two studies undertaken by the Department which examined the statistical association between achievements of pupils in maintained schools and various social background and other factors. These factors included the proportions of children in families of lower social and economic status, of children in families on supplementary benefits, in large families, in single-parent families and in poor housing. The first of the studies (reported in Statistical Bulletin 13/84) found a strong association between low achievement (the proportion of pupils failing to obtain any graded results in O-levels and CSE) and the poverty-related factors of poor housing, single-parent families and a low proportion of children in higher socio-economic groups. This outcome was not inconsistent with the results of the second study. I also pointed to wide variations in examination results among pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds. A better understanding of the factors giving rise to this wide variation is likely to be relevant to the development of the Government's policies for improving standards in schools for all pupils. I have said that I am willing to consider proposals for research in this area.

Remedial Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the amount spent on remedial education by each local education authority in 1979-80 and 1984-85 in real terms; what proportion of the education budget each figure represents; and what percentage change was involved in each case.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available: remedial education is not separately identified in the local education authorities' returns of expenditure.

Education Budget

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the total education budget in real terms and in cash terms *(a)* including that amount representing teachers' pay and *(b)* excluding that amount representing teachers' pay (i) in 1984-85 and (ii) in each of the next three years; and whether he will state the proportion of the education budget represented by teachers' pay in each case.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information including teachers' pay is as follows:

Education Provision	*1984-85* £ million	*1985-86* £ million	*1986-87* £ million	*1987-88* £ million
Cash	13,310	13,725	13,630	13,630
Real Terms 1984-85 base	13,316	13,066	*12,240	*12,002

* Real terms based on total cash figures including provisional plans for local authority current expenditure, subject to review.

Notes:

(1) within these totals:

central Government expenditure:
1984-85: provisional outturn (Cmnd. 9569)
1985-86/1987-88: Cmnd. 9428 plans

local authority current expenditure
1984-85: provisional outturn
1985-86: local authority budgets
1986-87/1987-88: Cmnd. 9428 provisional plans, subject to review.

The figures for 1985-86 onwards the figures do not include funds transferred to MSC of funds for "Training for Jobs." The sums involved are £62 million in 1985-86, £105 million in 1986-87 and an equivalent sum in 1987-88.

(2) Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by GDP deflator at market prices.

No specific proportion of the planned provision for 1985-86 onwards is attributable to teachers pay; it is not therefore possible to show the figures excluding it nor to state the proportion of the education budget which it represents. It is for local authorities as employers to accommodate the pay of teachers in schools and further education within the total cash provision, having regard to other claims. Outturn figures for local authority expenditure for 1984-85 (including expenditure of teachers' pay) are not yet available. In 1983-84, the latest year for which actual expenditure is available, local education authorities spent £5·9 billion on teachers' salaries in schools and further education out of a total of £8·35 billion net institutional expenditure.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of gross national product has been spent on the education budget in each year since 1979; and what are the projected figures for each of the next three years in each case *(a)* including pay and *(b)* excluding pay.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is more realistic to express such expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). The figures are as shown. For 1985-86 onwards the GDP figures used are the projections shown in the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1985-86.

Financial year	Education budget as proportion of GDP*†
1979-80	4·2
1980-81	4·4
1981-82	4·4
1982-83	4·3
1983-84	4·2
1984-85	4·1
1985-86	3·9
1986-87	13·5
1987-88	13·4

* Education expenditure for which the holder of my office is responsible, ie, on universities in Great Britain, mandatory awards in England and Wales, local authority sector expenditure in England and other central Government expenditure almost entirely in England. Gross domestic product for the United Kingdom.

† Education budget totals made up from:

central Government expenditure:

1984-85 : provisional outturn (Cmnd. 9569)

1985-86 : Cmnd. 9428 plans.

1987-88

local authority current expenditure

1984-85 : provisional outturn

1985-86 : local authority budgets

1986-87 : Cmnd. 9428 provisional plans.

1987-88

For 1985-86 onwards the figures do not include funds transferred to MSC for "Training for Jobs".

‡ Education budget includes Government's provisional plans for local authority current expenditure in 1986-87 and 1987-88. These plans remain subject to review.

Information is not collected in a form which would allow the figures for past years to be shown excluding pay for all employees whose salaries are met from the education budget. For 1985-86 onwards, no specific proportion of planned provision for local authorities is attributable to pay; it is for local authorities as employers to accommodate it within total cash provision. Within planned provision the total for central Government expenditure for 1985-86 is consistent with the Government's assumption of pay increases of 3 per cent. for those groups for which it is responsible.

School Activities

Mr. Proud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will take steps to collect information as to the number and proportion of children who do not take part in the following activities, where they form part of the standard school day, in those local education authorities which levy charges for the activities *(a)* music, *(b)* swimming, *(c)* other sports and *(d)* domestic science; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take steps to collect information about the practice of local education authorities as to the levying of charges for the following subjects where they form part of the school day *(a)* music, *(b)* swimming, *(c)* other sports and *(d)* domestic science; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: There are no plans to collect information in the form suggested. Section 61(1) of the Education Act 1944 prohibits the charging of fees in respect of the education provided in any maintained school, and we have made it clear that we look to local education authorities to ensure that this statutory requirement is met. We have also made it clear that we recognise that many parents are ready to make voluntary contributions to their children's schools, and that such generosity is to be welcomed provided that the contributions are genuinely voluntary and that no child is penalised because his parents are unwilling or unable to make such contributions.

Mrs. H. Fusco (Appeal)

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be able to announce his decision in respect of the appeal by Mrs. H. Fusco of Wentworth Drive, Perton, under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: It has been necessary to make further inquiries of the Staffordshire local education authority concerning the special educational provision it has proposed to make for Mrs. Fusco's son. My right hon. Friend expects to be able to reach an early decision on the appeal when the required information has been received.

Overseas Students (Spain and Portugal)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether students from Spain and Portugal will become entitled to pay fees at the home student rate on the accession of those countries to the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Students from Spain and Portugal in the United Kingdom who satisfy the necessary conditions will become entitled to pay the same rate of fee as "home" students following the accession of those countries to the European Community on 1 January 1986. My right hon. Friend proposes that the following arrangements should apply.

From 1 January 1986 nationals of Spain and Portugal who are students in the United Kingdom will be entitled to pay fees at the same rate as "home" students provided that they satisfy the conditions for residence in the European Community prior to the start of the course laid down in the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1983 (SI 1983/973 as amended by SI 1984/1201) and the Education (Fees and Awards) (Scotland) Regulations 1983 (SI 1983/1215 as amended by SI 1984/1361). These regulations will be amended to provide that residence in Spain or Portugal before the accession of those countries to the Community will be treated as residence in the Community for the purposes of the regulations. This amendment will apply not only to nationals of Spain and Portugal, but also to nationals of all other Community countries, including the United Kingdom. Nationals of the United Kingdom resident in Spain and Portugal who might not otherwise be entitled to pay the home rate of fee will therefore be treated on the same basis as nationals of those countries.

The date of accession falls one third of the way through the academic year 1985-86. For that year students from Spain and Portugal who satisfy the necessary conditions will be expected to pay an annual fee composed of one third of the relevant "overseas" rate and two thirds of the relevant "home" rate. Local authorities, universities and other institutions of further and higher education should be guided accordingly.

The necessary amendments to the relevant regulations will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible.

Secondary Schools (Articles of Government)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local education authorities since November 1982 have sought his permission to change their articles of government for secondary schools; which of these authorities were given permission; which were denied permission; and, in each case, what were the reasons for the refusal.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *382*]: The information requested is as follows:

Approved
- Barnet
- Bexley
- Birmingham
- Cornwall
- Durham
- Humberside
- Knowsley
- Leeds
- Stockport
- Surrey
- Wakefield

Not Approved
- Bolton
- Calderdale
- Derbyshire
- Enfield
- Essex
- Gloucestershire
- Haringey
- Hounslow
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne
- Norfolk
- Northamptonshire
- North Yorkshire
- Sheffield
- Staffordshire
- Suffolk
- Sunderland

Under Consideration
- Barnsley
- Bedfordshire
- Bromley
- Liverpool
- Newham
- Nottinghamshire
- Sandwell
- West Sussex

The proposals not approved were incompatible with the Government's policies on school government and, in particular, either purported to give powers to the local education authority to override actions properly taken by the governors and headteacher under other provisions of the articles or otherwise sought to confer too great powers on the local education authority at the expense of the governing body.

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the fare structure for civilians on flights to the Falkland Islands following the opening of Mount Pleasant airport.

Mr. Stanley: A new fare structure for civilian travel on Ministry of Defence flights between the United Kingdom and Mount Pleasant airport, via Ascension Island, came into operation on 1 July. This new structure is described in a paper "Fare structure for air movement between United Kingdom and the Falkland Islands", copies of which I am sending to my hon. Friend and am placing in the Library.

Caribbean

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence which ports received naval visits by Her Majesty's ships within the Caribbean area for each year since 1983.

Mr. Stanley: The number of visits by Her Majesty's ships within the Caribbean area for each year since 1983 was as follows:

State/Territory	*Island/Port (Where Appropriate)*	*Number of Visits*		
		1983	*1984*	**1985*
Anguilla		2	1	0
Antigua	St. John's	5	6	12
Bahamas	Cat Island	1	0	0
	Freeport	5	6	3
	Nassau	5	6	3
Barbados	Bridgetown	9	13	7
Belize		12	9	4
British Virgin Islands	Virgina Gorda	2	3	1
	Road Town, Tortola	4	10	1
Cayman Islands	Cayman Brac	2	2	0
	Grand Cayman	4	3	3
Colombia	Cartagena	1	0	0
Dominica		2	3	3
Dominican Republic	Santo Domingo	2	0	0
Grenada		0	2	2
Guadaloupe		2	0	0
Haiti	Port-au-Prince	0	2	0
Jamaica	Kingston	6	1	0
	Montego Bay	1	1	0
	Ocho Rios	1	0	0
	Port Antonio	2	0	0
Martinique	Fort-de-France	0	2	0
Montserrat	Plymouth	3	3	1
Netherlands Antilles	Curacao	0	2	0

State/Territory	Island/Port (Where Appropriate)	Number of Visits		
		1983	1984	*1985
Panama	Cristobal	2	0	0
Puerto Rico	San Juan	6	0	0
	Roosevelt Roads	12	0	7
St. Kitts & Nevis	Basseterre	4	3	2
	Charlestown	0	0	2
St. Lucia	Castries	1	5	6
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	St. Vincent	3	5	2
	Bequia	4	1	0
	Carriacou	0	1	0
	Union Island	0	0	3
Trinidad & Tobago	Port of Spain	1	4	4
	Tobago	1	0	0
Turks & Caicos	Grand Turk	3	2	0
US Virgin Islands	St. Croix	5	3	0
	St. Thomas	2	2	0

* Up to 6 July.

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many and which class of ship and submarine visited ports in the area of the Caribbean, including Belize, in each year since 1982.

Mr. Stanley: The number of Royal Navy vessels, by class, including Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, which have visited ports in the Caribbean area was as follows, for each year since 1982:

Classes of ship	1982	1983	1984	1985*
Fleet Submarines	1	0	0	1
Patrol Submarines	0	0	1	1
ASW Carriers	1	1	0	0
Type 42 Destroyers	1	3	4	1
County Class Destroyers	1	2	1	1
Type 21 Frigates	1	1	5	1
Type 22 Frigates	1	1	2	1
Leander-class Frigates	3	5	5	1
Type 12 Frigates	3	6	5	1
Type 81 Frigates	1	3	0	0
Assault Ships	1	1	0	1
Royal Yacht	0	1	0	0
Ocean Survey Ships	3	4	3	2
Coastal Survey Ships	0	0	2	2
Ice Patrol Ship	0	1	0	0
Royal Fleet Auxiliaries	6	7	5	4

*Up to 6 July.

Shackleton Aircraft

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Shackleton force will remain operational until Nimrod AEW enters service.

Mr. Stanley: I can confirm that it is our intention to maintain the Shackleton in service until Nimrod AEW enters service. To this end, a programme of major servicing for the Shackleton will start later this year.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with the United States Government on the possible role of Ascension Island in the strategic defence initiative research programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No such discussions have taken place.

Service Land

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans the Royal Navy and other branches of the armed services have to release land to the public, including local authorities, in the Portsmouth area.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to my recent reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) on 21 June, at columns 248-49.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many hectares of land are owned by the Royal Navy in Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport local authority districts.

Mr. Lee: The following areas of land in the local authority districts requested are in the ownership of the Secretary of State for Defence, and occupied by the Royal Navy:

	Hectares
Portsmouth	279·0
Fareham	92·5
Gosport	777·0

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the report into the future of the housing requirement of the Royal Navy in the Portsmouth area will be published.

Mr. Lee: There is no such report.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion, and in which local authority districts, of the land owned by the Royal Navy in the Portsmouth naval base area is redundant.

Mr. Lee: At present some 0·8 per cent. of the naval estate in the local authority districts of Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport is surplus to requirements and in the process of disposal. We have proposals to declare other areas surplus over the next few years following studies into the further concentration of the naval estate in the Portsmouth area.

TRANSPORT

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the stage which has been reached in the statutory and non-statutory procedures for each of the trunk road schemes listed in the 1987 to 1989 time band of the document "National Roads—England 1985".

Mrs. Chalker: Responsibility for preparation of the 107 schemes in this two-year period is divided between nine regional offices. I regret therefore that the information requested cannot be provided without disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member is interested in a particular scheme, perhaps he would care to write to me.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last 12 years at constant prices on *(a)* maintenance and repair of motorways and trunk roads and *(b)* new building of motorways and trunk roads.

Mr. Ridley: The figures are as follows:

£ million

	Maintenance and repairs	*New building*
1973-74	199	926
1974-75	112	753
1975-76	130	797
1976-77	132	740
1977-78	121	526
1978-79	141	452
1979-80	142	425
1980-81	131	400
1981-82	192	443
1982-83	204	529
1983-84	184	501
1984-85 (1982-83 prices)	*212	*532

* (provisional)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the amount spent by local authorities in each of the last 12 years on *(a)* maintenance and repair of roads and *(b)* new road building, expressed at constant prices.

Mr. Ridley: I shall reply to the hon. Lady very shortly.

Ironbridge Bypass

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Transport in what way the compulsory purchase order for the Ironbridge bypass, which was withdrawn, was defective.

Mrs. Chalker: The compulsory purchase order made by the county council for the Ironbridge bypass on 30 July 1984 which was withdrawn, was defective because it lacked an adequate statement of purposes. A new compulsory purchase order was made on 5 June 1985.

Taxis (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for taxi services in Liverpool of the proposals on taxi licensing contained in the Transport Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: District councils in England and Wales which license taxis under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 have adopted widely varying policies, and some have limited numbers more severely than have others, such as Liverpool city council. What is now clause 16 of the Transport Bill will prevent any district council from refusing a licence unless they are satisfied that to grant it would have an adverse effect on the general availability of taxis or the cost of providing taxi services. The effect of this in a particular area will depend upon local circumstances.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from taxi operators in Liverpool about the proposals on taxi licensing contained in the Transport Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Liverpool Taxi Owners Association made a representation seeking no change from the present policies under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the most recent comparative evaluation carried out by his Department into the high pressure sodium lamps and low pressure sodium lamps for motorway lighting purposes; and if he will set out the results showing lamplife, energy consumption, light output and installation cost.

Mrs. Chalker: A comparative evaluation was completed in June and the data used included:

	*Low pressure sodium**	*High pressure sodium**
Bulk lamp change after	8,000 burning hours	12,000 burning hours
Electricity supply cost per year per lantern	£29	£40
Installation cost for lantern, control gear and 1st lamp	£110	£70
Lamp cost	£19	£10

* Light output assumed to be about 26,000 lumens in both cases.

The conclusion was that the whole life costs were finely balanced over the life of the lantern and on that basis the low pressure sodium type should be favoured as it uses much less energy. In view of this conclusion consideration is being given to requiring evaluations to be done on a scheme by scheme basis, using tender costs, to ensure that value for money is always obtained.

Bus Industry

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many jobs were lost in the bus industry from December 1980 to December 1982.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of staff employed by bus and coach operators in Great Britain fell by 13,560 in this period, reflecting the decline in the level of local bus services.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of bus lanes in London.

Mrs. Chalker: Bus lanes can provide a benefit to the community when correctly designed and in the right circumstances. Equally, when badly designed and installed in the wrong place they can cause problems.

Roads (Telephones)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy regarding the installation of telephones on high class all-purpose roads at the construction stage.

Mr. Ridley: It is not my policy to provide telephones on trunk roads since help in an emergency is usually close by. Public telephones are provided by British Telecom where they believe they may be commercially justified. Telephones may be provided by the motoring organisations in safe locations.

Signposting

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy with reference to sign posting of primary and secondary destinations on the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield.

Mr. Ridley: On the M1, as on other motorways, signs normally show only primary destinations, but a destination of secondary importance may be shown at a junction where there is no suitable primary destination in that direction. Wakefield itself is signed from junctions 39, 40 and 41 on the M1.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received recently from British Rail any plans to electrify the Portsmouth to Southampton line.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Company Cars

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of company cars in 1960, 1970 and in each year since 1974; and what proportion this represented of the total number of cars in each year.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Lorry Bans

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of lorry bans applied by local authorities and the total number of miles of roads affected by such bans in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Lorry Construction

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the modifications to lorry construction affecting safety, scale and noise levels enforced by his Department in each of the last 12 years.

Mr. Ridley: The following are the main new requirements for lorry and trailer construction brought in by regulation over the period. Minor changes, those affecting special or rare types of lorry and provisions merely to allow Community standards as alternatives, are omitted.

Topic	*Date regulation made*	*Date regulation applies*
Fitting of rear fog lamps	22 August 1978	Vehicles manufactured from 1 October 1979
Noise control—mandatory application of EC Directives	6 August 1980	Lorries manufactured from 1 April 1983
Introduction of braking requirements in EC Braking Directives and provision for antilock braking systems	10 August 1981	Vehicles manufactured from 1 October 1982
Articulated lorries—gross weight limit raised to 38 tonnes with 10·5 tonne drive axle	4 November 1982	1 May 1983
Articulated lorries—length limit raised to 15·5 m	4 November 1982	1 May 1983
Articulated lorries—trailer length limited to 12·2 m	4 November 1982	1 May 1983
Fitting of rear underrun protection and sideguards	4 November 1982	Trailers manufactured from 1 May 1983 and lorries manufactured from 1 October 1983
Revised tyre tread depth and re-cut pattern requirements	30 June 1983	1 November 1983
Fitting of dim/dip devices	18 June 1984	Vehicles manufactured from 1 October 1986
Fitting of hazard warning devices	18 June 1984	Vehicles manufactured from 1 October 1985
Stricter noise requirements	30 August 1984	Lorries type approved after 1 October 1985
Fitting of spray suppression equipment	25 September 1984	New trailers manufactured from 1 May 1985, new lorries manufactured from 1 April 1986, older trailers from 1 October 1986 and oldest trailers from 1 October 1987

Airline Passengers

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he can provide any information regarding the percentage of civil airline passengers using British airports travelling for leisure and the percentage travelling on business in 1964 and in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: Only information relating to international passengers is available:

International Passengers at United Kingdom Airports—Estimated Breakdown by Purpose of Travel

	**Leisure*	*Business*
1964	75·9	24·1
1975	77·4	22·6
1976	76·1	23·9
1977	76·1	23·9
1978	76·5	23·5
1979	76·5	23·5

	*Leisure	Business
1980	77·4	22·6
1981	77·5	22·5
1982	78·5	21·5
1983	78·1	21·9
1984	78·1	21·9

Source: International Passenger Survey.

* Leisure includes those travelling for the purpose of a holiday; visiting friends and relations; formal study; medical, religious or marriage reasons; taking up employment and seeking employment. The vast majority of leisure travellers are on holiday or are visiting friends and relations.

Buses

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of vehicle kilometres travelled by all buses, passenger transport executive buses, municipal buses, National Bus Company and Scottish Bus Group buses, and private buses, in 1964 and in each of the last 12 years.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is as follows. Figures for 1984 will be available later this year in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1974-84" HMSO.

Vehicle kilometres by Type of Operator: Great Britain

(millions)

	All Operators	Passenger Transport Executives	Municipal Operators	National Bus Company	Scottish Bus Group	Private Operators
1964	3,795	682	312	1,468	295	641
1972	3,416	557	256	1,201	246	848
1973	3,426	556	257	1,191	245	886
1974	3,462	546	259	1,188	221	967
1975	3,550	554	261	1,191	240	1,019
1976	3,511	545	259	1,142	231	1,041
1977	3,451	524	250	1,110	216	1,062
1978	3,404	517	246	1,075	212	1,077
1979	3,338	505	242	1,045	208	1,073
1980	3,280	510	241	1,026	203	1,020
1981	3,227	487	233	973	206	1,048
1982	3,206	485	232	972	200	1,051
1983	3,280	482	231	969	202	1,131

The ownership of a number of operators changed in the period to 1975. The figures for earlier years have been adjusted to conform to the present ownership categories. For example, the passenger transport executive figure for 1964 consists of the municipal and private operators which later formed the PTEs. The vehicles kms. of operators in 1964 as they then existed were:

	Million
Municipal Operators	562
Nationalised	592
Private	930

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people were employed in bus services, municipal buses, National Bus Company, Scottish Bus Group, private buses and Passenger Transport Executive buses, in 1964 and in each of the last 12 years.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is as follows. Figures for 1984 will be available later this year in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1974-1984" Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Staff employed at end of year by type of operators: Great Britain

(thousands)

	All operators	Passenger transport executives	Municipal operators	National bus company	Scottish bus group	private operators
1964	275	58	29	94	19	32
1972	220·6	47·0	23·0	71·1	14·6	30·7
1973	212·6	44·9	20·8	69·4	14·6	31·1
1974	215·4	46·0	21·3	70·9	14·4	30·5
1975	224·4	47·2	21·6	72·1	14·6	34·0
1976	218·5	46·2	20·9	69·0	13·4	34·2
1977	212·1	45·3	20·1	66·0	13·0	32·9
1978	211·1	45·6	19·8	63·6	12·4	34·7
1979	208·9	44·7	19·4	62·6	11·7	35·8
1980	201·0	45·1	19·2	57·7	10·8	34·3
1981	190·3	40·9	17·9	52·7	9·6	35·3
1982	187·0	39·4	17·5	50·9	9·3	37·5
1983	187·4	39·9	17·4	48·8	9·2	39·8

The ownership of a number of operators changed in the period to 1975. The figures for earlier years have been adjusted to conform to the present ownership categories. For example, the passenger transport executive figure for 1964 consists of the municipal and private operators which later formed the PTEs. The staff employed by operators in 1964 as they then existed were:

	Number
Municipal operators	80,500
Nationalised	61,300
Private	82,500

Airline Industry

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total contribution to the United Kingdom balance of payments from the airline industry in 1964 and in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: Following is the information:

United Kingdom balance of payments—Civil aviation

Balances—£ million

	United Kingdom airlines	*Foreign airlines*	*Overall balance*
1964	51	−24	27
1975	217	−112	105
1976	316	−107	209
1977	337	−118	219
1978	438	−159	279
1979	341	−53	288
1980	350	45	395
1981	323	114	437
1982	358	33	391
1983	508	−80	428
1984	521	−52	469

Source:
Central Statistical Office Pink Book.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have been employed in civil aviation in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: In 1984, the number of people employed in civil aviation was about 85,000. Earlier years figures are not readily available. The numbers of people employed by United Kingdom airlines in Great Britain for 1975 to 1984 are as follows:

Numbers employed at 31 December

	Thousands
1975	57·3
1976	60·2
1977	63·3
1978	67·1
1979	67·6
1980	65·0
1981	56·4
1982	50·2
1983	46·8
1984	49·3

Source: CAA.

Traffic Statistics

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, showing the estimates made in 1960 for traffic on *(a)* motorways and *(b)* trunk roads (distinguishing between car, light van, lorries under 28 tons and over 28 tons) in respect of the years (i) 1970, (ii) 1975, (iii) 1980, (iv) 1985, (v) 1990 and (vi) 2000; what were the actual outturn traffic levels for (1) 1970, (2) 1975 and (3) 1980; and what are the latest projections for 1985, 1990 and 2000, expressing those traffic levels in vehicle/kilometres, or some multiple thereof.

Mr. Ridley: Records are not held centrally of any estimates of future traffic made in 1960, and searching for them would incur disproportionate cost. Some forecasts of traffic were made in the early 1960s at the then Road Research Laboratory, but these were in the nature of research and not necessarily the policy of the then Ministry of Transport.

The Ministry's 1968 booklet "Advisory Manual on Traffic Prediction for Rural Roads" forecast traffic for all rural roads, and for all traffic, equated to passenger car units. From a 1960 base, it predicted these units to grow by 83 per cent. to 1970, 129 per cent. to 1975, 167 per cent. to 1980, 198 per cent. to 1985, 223 per cent. to 1990 and 265 per cent. to 2000.

The actual outturn traffic, in billion vehicle kilometres was as shown in the following table.

Vehicle type Year/Road class	*Cars and taxis*	*Light goods vehicles*	*HGVs under 28 tonnes GVW*	*HGVs over 28 tonnes GVW*	*All HGVs*
1970					
Motorways	5·96	0·56	—	—	1·97
Trunk roads	25·61	2·84	—	—	5·58
1975					
Motorways	14·02	1·30	2·28	1·42	3·70
Trunk roads	27·58	3·11	3·45	1·53	4·98
1980					
Motorways	20·77	1·83	2·68	2·37	5·05
Trunk roads	32·90	3·34	3·15	1·83	4·98

Note: No breakdown of HGV's for the above categories is available for 1970.

Current national forecasts are for all categories of road together with no isolation of trunk roads and motorways. They were published, with the background underlying them, in the Department's national road traffic forecasts, 1984. They are shown in the following table, expressed in billion vehicle kilometres.

	1985		1990		2000	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Cars and taxis	227	236	249	277	271	331
Light vans	22·3	22·8	23·3	24·6	25·0	29·4
Heavy goods vehicles						
—under 25 tonnes GVW	13·3	13·7	13·0	14·0	12·3	14·2
—over 25 tonnes GVW	6·3	6·5	6·6	7·1	7·3	8·4

Notes:
GVW is gross vehicle weight.
The forecasts for heavy goods vehicles are broken at 25 tonnes GVW.

Airport Security

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his reply of 4 July to the hon. Member for Derby North, *Official Report*, column *220*, whether he has yet come to any conclusions in his review of the security measures that apply to airports and airlines in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the security arrangements for passengers boarding aircraft of British airlines.

Mr. Ridley: At a meeting I held on 27 June with some of the major airlines and airports represented on the National Aviation Security Committee it was agreed that, although a high standard of security was achieved at British airports, there was scope for some enhancement of present arrangements. These matters have now been discussed further in the National Aviation Security Committee.

Security would not be served by my giving full details. However, we are revising our existing measures for the security of hold baggage; among other things we intend to recommend to airlines the need to end "off-airport" check-in except where security is adequately safeguarded. These measures will be given statutory backing if necessary. We are reviewing access control at airports, other aspects of the security of airport terminals, and the security of cargo, including the latest technology for screening and handling. We shall also be reinforcing our advice to British airlines about security arrangements at overseas airports.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ethnic Minorities

12. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what ways the National Health Service takes account of the special health needs of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In developing their services, we expect individual health authorities to reflect the needs of the populations they serve, including any special needs of ethnic minorities. Centrally, we have supported the Stop Rickets campaign of 1981-83 and the current Asian Mother and Baby campaign.

Board and Lodging Benefits

15. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will withdraw the supplementary benefit regulations which deal with board and lodging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No. The changes were necessary to control escalating expenditure and to help curb abuse by both landlords and claimants.

39. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received since the introduction of the supplementary benefit regulations on board and lodging calling for an increase in the sums allowed.

Mr. Whitney: A detailed breakdown of the subject-matter of letters received from hon. Members and others on the new supplementary board and lodging changes is not available. However, since 29 April we have received about 650 letters from hon. Members and about 450 letters direct from individuals and organisations, many of which concerned the level of the board and lodging allowances.

Carers (Benefits)

16. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to introduce a carers' benefit.

Mr. Newton: Invalid care allowance is the benefit for carers of severely disabled people. We have no plans to introduce any other benefit of this nature.

NHS (Facilities)

17. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, since 1980 what has been the *(a)* net increase in new operating theatres, *(b)* net increase in new X-ray rooms, *(c)* net increase in new accident and emergency departments and *(d)* net increase in new outpatient departments in the National Health Service; and how this compares with the previous four-year period.

Mr. John Patten: In the five years 1980 to 1984, 35 major hospital schemes, each valued between £5 million and £20 million, have been completed and include 169 new operating theatres, 105 X-ray rooms, 23 accident and emergency departments and 22 outpatient departments.

New building schemes for the National Health Service are spread over the whole country and although some of them provide for new communities, most have replaced old and outdated facilities. Over 70 major schemes, each costing over £5 million and with a total value in excess of £840 million, are being planned, designed and constructed. This increased investment is bringing real improvements in terms of new hospital buildings as well as maintenance of existing stock.

Information on the content of new building schemes for the four-year period 1976-1979 is not available centrally.

Elderly Persons (Residential Care)

18. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra provision is to be made by his Department to meet the additional nursing charges incurred by certain elderly persons in residential care.

Mr. Whitney: From 29 April new limits were introduced for supplementary pensioners in residential care. The basic rate is now £110 a week with higher amounts available for those whose disability arose before pension age. A further £28·60 is given in recognition of the extra care provided by nursing homes.

"Reform of Social Security"

19. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many further representations he has received relating to the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) earlier today.

Abortion Act 1967

20. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to complete his investigation into alleged abuses of the Abortion Act 1967, details of which have been supplied to him by the hon. Member for Broxbourne.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are taking the follow-up action agreed when my hon. Friend and I discussed this matter on 27 June.

Housing Benefit

21. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has estimated the likely cost to local government if the Green Paper proposal, which increases the 10 per cent. of housing benefit met by local government to 20 per cent., is implemented.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper proposes that the proportion of housing benefit costs not met by specific grant will be taken into account in rate support grant. The implications of this proposal will be discussed with the local authority interests.

Cigarette Companies (Sponsorship)

22. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his assessment of the effect of sponsorship of sports and other events by cigarette companies on the level of smoking.

Mr. John Patten: I know of no evidence that links sponsorship by cigarette companies in this country with the level of smoking.

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore

23. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report from the Le Quesne working party into the future of the royal national orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore, Middlesex.

Mr. John Patten: The working party on orthopaedic services in Bloomsbury, chaired by Professor Le Quesne, was set up by the health authority. The report will therefore be made to the authority, not to the Secretary of State. I understand the report will be ready by the end of July. If the report or subsequent consideration of it by the health authority recommends changes to the orthopaedic services in Bloomsbury, then there will be full consultation in the normal way. I have already said that if major changes are proposed in Stanmore then, even if proposals are unopposed by the Community Health Council, the matter will be referred to the Secretary of State before final decisions are taken. The report of the working party would clearly be one of the documents we would need to take into account at that stage if major changes are proposed.

Basingstoke and District Hospital

24. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future level of resources available to the Basingstoke and district hospital.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We provide funds to the Wessex regional health authority and it allocates part of those funds to the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority to cover provision of all its services. The district health authority then decides on the level of resources for its individual units, according to national policy guidelines and its own judgment of local priorities. In the current year, we have allocated £504 million revenue expenditure to Wessex regional health authority which is an increase of 6·7 per cent. over its 1984-85 funding. To obtain details of the specific funding to Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority, my hon. Friend may care to contact the chairman of Wessex regional health authority or, for details of allocations more locally, the chairman of Basingstoke health authority.

Small Businesses (Report)

25. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific measures he plans to undertake to ensure that his Department implements the proposals contained in the recent Department of Trade and Industry report on the scrutiny of administrative and legislative requirements in small businesses.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's response to these proposals will be set out in the Government's White Paper on deregulation which has been published today.

Health Authorities (Competitive Tendering)

26. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will report upon the latest progress of health authorities in submitting services to competitive tender.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) at columns *489-93* on 12 June.

NHS (Rayner Scrutinies)

27. **Mr. Lewis Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is in a position to estimate the savings achieved by the first group of Rayner type scrutinies in the National Health Service.

58. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress there has been towards realising all the savings identified in the first programme of scrutinies into different areas of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have given all health authorities advice and policy instructions on the implementation of scrutiny recommendations. We do not yet have the information requested but we have asked regional health authorities to report to us by the end of the year on the savings they have achieved.

Surrogate Children

28. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the number of surrogate children that have been born; whether they were born in National Health Service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have complete and reliable information. As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend on 21 January, at column *354*, hospitals could have considerable difficulty in distinguishing between surrogate mothers and other expectant mothers. As my hon. Friend knows, the Government's Bill to outlaw commercial surrogacy agencies has today received Royal Assent.

NHS Privatisation (Northern Region)

29. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the policy of privatisation in the northern region of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have made quite clear our policy on competitive tendering and this applies equally to the northern region as it does to the rest of the country.

Pharmacists (Contracts)

30. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the agreement achieved with the Pharmaceutical Services negotiating committee on the pharmacists' contract.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since our final offer on the new contract for community pharmacists was put to the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee on 14 May, I have had meetings with representatives of the Company Chemists Association, Boots and Underwoods Ltd. We have also received correspondence from Safeways Ltd., from Underwoods, and, either direct or via hon. Members, from 13 individual pharmacists.

These representatives are coming from a dissatisfied minority of contractors. The PSNC negotiates for all contractors and their negotiators, including representatives of the Company Chemists Association, accepted our proposals unanimously. The proposals were accepted by the local pharmaceutical committees at their conference on 23 June by a majority of 192 to 19.

Chronically Disabled People (Powered Wheelchairs)

31. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received regarding the provision of battery-powered wheelchairs for the chronically disabled.

Mr. Newton: In the past year we have received over 70 letters, including a petition with some 7,000 signatures, advocating the provision of powered outdoor wheelchairs in addition to those for indoor use already issued by the Department.

Severe Disablement Allowance

32. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will change the conditions for payment of severe disablement allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Home Helps (Disabled People)

33. **Mr. Alfred Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authorities charge disabled people in receipt of supplementary benefit for their home helps.

Mr. Newton: This information is not collected centrally.

50. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received with regard to the charging of disabled people on supplementary benefit for their home helps; what has been his response; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 1 April, at column *493*, since when very few representations have been received about charging for home helps whether or not the people were disabled or in receipt of supplementary benefit. Our view remains as stated on many occasions that we would prefer those on supplementary benefit, whether disabled or otherwise, not to be charged.

Cardiac Operations

34. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent initiatives he has taken to encourage health authorities to increase their annual turnover of cardiac operations and to make improvements in intensive care facilities.

Mr. John Patten: In January 1984, we asked health authorities to develop coronary artery surgery as a priority within the acute sector and this was restated in January 1985. The number of coronary artery bypass operations perfomed within the United Kingdom rose from 3,538 in 1979 to 9,443 in 1983, an increase of 167 per cent. It is for health authorities to relate intensive care facilities to the workload.

Personal Social Services (Suffolk)

35. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the current level of expenditure on personal social services for the elderly in the Suffolk county council area.

Mr. John Patten: Expenditure returns from local authorities do not separtely identify the client group benefiting from each item of expenditure. Gross current expenditure by Suffolk county council in 1983-84 on services principally for the elderly is given in the table. Figures for later years are not yet available.

	£ million
Residential care for the elderly	6·9
Home helps	2·4
Meals in the home	0·1
Day centres and lunch clubs for the elderly	0·2

Low Income Families (Private Medical Care)

36. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to encourage low income families to opt out of the National Health Service in favour of private medical care.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Sugar (Dental Health)

37. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the effect of sugar on teeth in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have recently received formal representations from a number of professional organisations involved in children's health expressing concern about the adverse effects of the long-term use of sugar-based medicines on the teeth of sick children. For further information on this issue I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 2 July at columns *125-26*.

Cervical and Breast Cancer

38. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in drawing up proposals for improving screening techniques for cervical and breast cancer.

54. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of his consideration of the possible extension of mammography in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On cervical cancer I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to my reply on 29 April, at columns *49-51*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox). Since then consultations have begun with representatives of the medical profession on practical steps to improve the effectiveness of follow-up arrangements for abnormal results. I will also be meeting representatives of the British Society for Clinical Cytology in the near future to discuss the problems being experienced in some of the laboratories which process smears.

As I informed the House on 2 July, we have set up an expert working party on breast cancer screening. Its terms of reference are:

i. to consider the information now available on breast cancer screening by mammography; the extent to which this suggests necessary changes in United Kingdom policy on the provision of mammographic facilities and the screening of symptomless women; and

ii. to suggest a range of policy options and assess the benefits and costs associated with them; and set out the service planning, manpower, financial and other implications of implementing such options.

Its membership is:

Professor A. P. M. Forrest (Chairman) Regius Professor of Clinical Surgery at the University of Edinburgh;
Dr. J. Chamberlain, Institute of Cancer Research;
Mr. A. Elton, Northwick Park Hospital;
Dr. H. Gravell, Welsh National School of Medicine, Cardiff;
Dr. D. Hayes, Belfast City Hospital;
Professor C. Joslin, University of Leeds;
Ms. A. Ludbrook, Health Economics Research Unit, Aberdeen University.

In addition, the following have agreed to be co-opted to assist the chairman as and when their expertise is required.

Mrs. J. Andrews, (Radiographer)
Mr. M. Fitzgerald, (Physicist)
Mr. K. Ford, (District Treasurer)
Dr. D. J. Pereira Gray, (General Medical Practitioner)
Miss. P. Hibbs, (Nursing Officer)
Mr. R. Taylor, (District General Manager)
Dr. B. Thomas, (Mammography screener)
Dr. R. Wrighton, (District Medical Officer)

I have asked the Chairman to report as soon as possible.

Drug RU 486

40. **Dame Jill Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the drug known as RU 486 has been examined by the Committee on Safety of Medicines; what study he has made of the extent of the use of the drug in the United Kingdom; how many representations he has received concerning the availability of the drug in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This drug is available only in relation to two clinical trials, for which the licensing authority has granted doctor's exemption certificates. One of the trials relates to use of the drug in abortion and involves a maximum of 20 patients. The doctor responsible for this clinical trial has confirmed that it will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Abortion Act. The Committee on Safety of Medicines, which advises the licensing authority, is not involved in the doctor's exemption scheme. We have received four letters about use of the drug in abortion.

Wrightington Hospital

41. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be in a position to make a statement on the future of the children's ward at Wrightington hospital.

Mr. John Patten: At this stage this is a matter for the health authority which, I understand, is about to undertake formal public consultations on its new proposals.

Board and Lodging Regulations

42. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to hold discussions with the Association of Directors of Social Services on the Government's recently introduced board and lodging regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to meet the Association of Directors of Social Services on this subject.

62. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many people under the age of 25 years have been required to move from one area to another as a consequence of the board and lodging regulations recently introduced by his Department.

Mr. Newton: Detailed information is not available on the total number of claimants whose period of payment as a boarder has been restricted since the introduction of supplemenary benefit board and lodging changes from 29 April. However, initial indications from various parts of the country suggest that most non-exempt claimants assessed on the new rules are receiving benefit as householders or non-householders in the same or different accommodation.

NHS (Expenditure)

43. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service in the most recent year for which figures are available; and how this compares with the percentage in 1978.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1983, 5·6 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service. In 1978 the figure was 4·8 per cent.

Bed and Breakfast (Supplementary Benefit)

44. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is now satisfied with the operation of his proposals to curb the abuses of supplementary benefit payments for bed and breakfast claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Newton: The information at present available suggests that, following the introduction of the new rules, the numbers receiving board and lodging payments have declined significantly, and that most of the claimants affected are now receiving benefit at the householder or non-householder rate. We shall continue carefully to monitor the arrangements, and be ready to extend the exemption categories if the need is shown.

Social Services Departments

45. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to seek to rationalise the work of social services departments.

Mr. John Patten: While it is primarily for local authorities, taking account of local circumstances and their own priorities, to determine how the work of their social services departments is carried out, we are always concerned to promote improvements in their professional practice, efficiency and effectiveness. The Audit Commission is helping that process with its studies on various aspects of the personal social services and the Department's new social services inspectorate aims to secure the most effective use of professional and other resources by identifying good practice and spreading knowledge about it.

Basildon

46. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total annual expenditure of his Department in the Basildon area.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not available.

NHS Hospitals

47. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the latest approximate figures for the amount spent per year on window cleaning in National Health Service hospitals;

(2) what are the latest approximate figures for the amount spent per year on pest infestation control in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not separately identified in the accounts submitted to the Department by health authorities.

School Meals

48. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the proposals in the social security Green Paper in respect of school meals for children of families receiving the proposed family credit.

Mr. Whitney: We have received two representations asking that school meals, rather than a higher rate of benefit, should continue to be made available to children of those families receiving the proposed family credit. We have also received a number of inquiries about the details of our proposals.

Child Benefit

49. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families have qualified in respect of one or more children for child benefit for children over the age of 16 years in the last year for which figures are available; and what are the estimates of numbers likely to qualify for each of the next five years.

Mr. Whitney: At 31 December 1983, about 913,000 families were receiving child benefit for at least one child aged 16 or over. The estimates for the subsequent five years are:

	Families
31 December 1984	870,000
31 December 1985	820,000
31 December 1986	790,000
31 December 1987	760,000
31 December 1988	720,000

Drug Prescriptions (Appeals)

51. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the latest position with regard to the appeals mechanism on which drugs can be prescribed on the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) earlier today.

Girocheques

52. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why his Department's Girocheques normally delivered on a Saturday in the Worksop area still frequently do not arrive until the following Monday.

Mr. Whitney: Until January this year there were recurrent problems with the delivery of unemployment or supplementary benefit girocheques posted from the computer centre at Reading to claimants in the Worksop area, but in January claims for that area were transferred to the computer centre at Livingston. We know that in March there were delays in delivery of two small batches of girocheques but we are not aware of there having been any general problems since the change of computer centre. If the hon. Member will let me have details of any specific complaints, I will look into them.

North West Thames Regional Health Authority

53. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will make a statement on the

percentage real increase in revenue expenditure of the North West Thames regional health authority between 1978-79 and 1984-85.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There were significant boundary and management changes in 1982 which make it impossible to give a sensible figure for the whole period. However, on the pre-1982 boundaries between 1978-79 and 1981-82 the revenue expenditure of North West Thames regional health authority rose by 12·3 per cent. ahead of the general level of inflation. Between 1982-83 and 1984-85 it rose by 1·6 per cent. in the same real terms.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the expert group to report on proposals to improve screening for breast cancer.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have asked the chairman of the group to let me have a report as soon as possible. I announced the formation of the group on 2 July. The chairman will need time before he can make a realistic assessment of how long this task will take.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of women suffering from breast cancer in the years between 1979 and 1984 in the following age groups: 16 to 24 years and 24 years to 35 years.

Mr. John Patten: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys handles statistics of registrations of newly diagnosed cancers; this provides the nearest available information on the numbers of women suffering from breast cancer. The information in the exact age groups requested is available only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the latest readily available figures.

Numbers of registrations of malignant neoplasm of female breast, ICD (9th Revision) 174, for selected age-groups, females only, 1979 to 1981

Year	Age-group in years 15-24	25-34
1979	15	471
1980	22	488
1981	16	483

War Pensioners

56. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from organisations representing ex-service personnel on the effects on war pensioners of the proposal in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security", to withdraw local authority discretion to operate local schemes to enhance the amount of income disregarded for the purpose of calculating entitlement to housing benefit.

Mr. Whitney: We have received a letter from the Council of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations, which represents over 50 ex-service organisations. We have had no other representations.

Staff Retraining

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for the retraining of staff in his Department in order to assist with the implementation of his social security reviews.

Mr. Newton: The type and extent of retraining which staff will need depends on the details of the new schemes to be implemented. Decisions will not be taken until after the consultation period ends.

Nurses (Stress)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will institute a departmental inquiry into the prevalence and causes of stress among nurses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. We do not consider that there is evidence which indicates that such an inquiry is justified. I am aware that the results of a survey by the *Nursing Mirror* purport to demonstrate that a majority of nurses suffer high levels of stress. However, I understand that the survey represents the views of a self-selected sample of only 1,000 nursing staff (out of a total nursing staff of 400,000 in England) who completed a questionnaire published in the *Nursing Mirror* at a time when we were awaiting the review bodies' recommendations on their pay. We cannot therefore accept that this is a representative and objective national picture.

Nursing is a demanding and sometimes stressful job, but nurses are trained to meet those demands. We have demonstrated the respect and high regard in which we hold the profession by our decisions on their pay and training. Between April 1979 and February 1986 nurses' basic pay rates will have risen on average by 111 per cent., which is over 30 per cent. ahead of the forecast rise in prices over the same period. We have reduced their working week without loss of pay from 40 to 37½ hours. Between September 1979 and September 1984 an extra 39,500 whole-time equivalents have been employed in England.

We have also set up the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the four national boards so that the nursing profession could become largely self-governing in determining future patterns of education and training. All these statutory bodies are collaborating on proposals for change. The English national board has already produced draft proposals. We have encouraged the board to consult the profession, and are ourselves consulting health authorities on these proposals which will reduce the ward responsibilities of student nurses and given them more theoretical work in their first two years of training. This is aimed, in part, at reducing the stress amongst beginners exposed too early to heavy responsibilities as well as improving the quality of service given to patients.

Aids and Adaptations

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy regarding the circumstances in which he exercises his default powers against a local authority which is delaying the provision of aids and adaptations under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

Mr. Newton: Each case is considered on its merits. Where there is prima facie evidence that an authority may be in breach of its duty under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, inquiries are pursued and we then consider, in the light of those inquiries, whether there are grounds for making an order under section 36 of the National Assistance Act 1948 declaring the authority to be in default.

Health Co-operation

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the co-operation between health authorities and the social services departments of county councils; and if he will make a statement about this in relation to community care.

Mr. John Patten: Good progress has been made in some places, but there is room for improved co-operation generally, particularly in the development of better co-ordinated community care services. We look forward to receiving shortly the report of an official level working group on joint planning set up jointly by the local authority associations, the National Association of Health Authorities and the Department to suggest ways of improving joint planning between health and local authorities and of securing the better use of resources.

Widows

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women claimed widows' allowance, broken down by age showing *(a)* the number who were aged less than 40 years, *(b)* the number who were aged 60 or more and *(c)* by single years the number who were aged between 40 and 59 years, or the nearest available information, and for the latest available year.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

*Awards of widow's allowance in 12 months to 31 March 1985**

Age of widow at husband's death	*Number of awards*
Under 40	4,880
40	670
41	770
42	750
43	1,000
44	1,020
45	950
46	900
47	1,070
48	1,210
49	1,700
50	2,090
51	2,210
52	2,810
53	2,910
54	3,420
55	3,620
56	3,770
57	3,930
58	4,310
59	4,370
60 and over	11,490

* Excluding awards of widow's allowance which were not followed by a succeeding long-term widow's benefit — no information is available on these cases.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Widows

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women stopped claiming widows' allowance and began to claim *(a)* age-related widows' pension, *(b)* widows' pension and *(c)* no widows' benefit, showing them in each case broken down by age into (i) those aged 60 years or more, (ii) by single years those aged 40 to 59 years or the closest available breakdown and (iii) those aged less than 40, for the latest available year.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is as follows:

Awards of widow's pension following widow's allowance in 12 months to 31 March 1985

Age of widow at husband's death	Numbers of awards of succeeding benefit	
	Age-related widow's pension	Widow's pension
Under 40	*	*
40	100	*
41	190	*
42	180	*
43	320	*
44	380	*
45	320	*
46	480	*
47	590	*
48	810	*
49	1,030	*
50	*	1,460
51	*	1,720
52	*	2,220
53	*	2,280
54	*	2,930
55	*	3,280
56	*	3,470
57	*	3,660
58	*	4,070
59	*	1,880
60 and over	*	170

* Not applicable.

Information about the number of widows in receipt of widow's allowance who have no entitlement to a succeeding widow's benefit is not available.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women stopped claiming widowed mothers' allowance and began to claim *(a)* age-related widows' pension, *(b)* widows' pension and *(c)* no widows' benefit, showing them in each case broken down by age into (i) those aged 60 years or more, (ii) by single years those aged 40 to 59 years or the closest available breakdown and (iii) those aged less than 40 years for the latest available year.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

Awards of widow's pension following termination of widowed mother's allowance in the 12 months to 30 September 1983*

Age of widow	Awards of succeeding benefit		No succeeding benefit
	Age-related widow's pension	Widow's pension	
Under 40	†	†	1490
40	60	†	50
41	170	†	80
42	220	†	10
43	350	†	30
44	390	†	20
45	440	†	20
46	470	†	40
47	650	†	30
48	710	†	—
49	840	†	10
50	†	920	20
51	†	1,030	40
52	†	1,030	—
53	†	1,280	10
54	†	1,170	10
55	†	1,210	10
56	†	1,200	20
57	†	1,210	—
58	†	870	10
59	†	1,020	—
60 and over	†	460	10

* Including widowed mother's allowance (personal).

† Not applicable.

‡ No succeeding benefit available.

1. Terminations of widowed mother's allowance with no succeeding benefit for widows over 40 occur as a result of disqualification eg because of "living together".

2. This 12 month series is an aggregate of statistics from two six-monthly periods ended 31 March 1983 and 30 September 1983. The age of the widow is the age at the sample date, thus some of the widows from the March enquiry would be a year older than shown by 31 September 1983.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the total number of widows receiving widows' pension at the full rate, *(b)* receiving age-related widows' pension at each of the age-related rates, showing separately those with reduced pensions for contribution reasons but counting them as if they received benefit at the full rate at the latest available date.

Mr. Whitney: At 30 September 1983 177,320 widows were receiving widow's pension at the standard rate and 13,910 receiving a reduced rate on account of contribution deficiencies. From the available information on age-related widow's pension it is not possible to classify those widows whose age-related pension is reduced on account of contribution deficiencies according to their age. For example, a widow receiving a pension of 65 per cent. of the standard rate could be either a woman widowed at 45 whose late husband had a full contribution record or a woman widowed at a later age whose late husband's record was deficient. The number of widows receiving an age-related widow's pension at 30 September 1983 is as follows:

Widows receiving age-related widow's pension at rate appropriate to age

Age at widowhood or cessation of WMA*	Rate of pension (per cent.)	Number of widows
40	30	3,800
41	37	3,200
42	44	4,160
43	51	6,090
44	58	7,830
45	65	9,800
46	72	11,270
47	79	14,070
48	86	17,040
49	93	21,300
Total		98,560

Widows receiving age-related pension reduced on account of contribution deficiencies

Rate of pension (per cent.)	*Number of widows*
less than 30	3,680
31 to 36	1,060
38 to 43	1,430
45 to 50	1,110
52 to 57	1,240
59 to 64	1,420
66 to 77	1,150
73 to 78	1,070
80 to 85	1,220
87 to 92	590
Total	13,970

* Widowed Mother's Allowance

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate how many widows each year would *(a)* be denied age-related widows' pension altogether, *(b)* move across each of the age bands to the next lower rate, showing the movement across each age band separately and *(c)* get age-related widows' pension rather than full widows' pension; and what would be the total annual saving to public funds if the relevant date for determining entitlement to widows' pension or age-related widows' pension were brought forward from the date of expiry of entitlement to widows' allowance to the date of bereavement;

(2) if he will estimate how many new claimants each year would *(a)* be denied age-related widows' pension altogether, *(b)* get a lower age-related widows' pension, showing the movement from each age band separately and *(c)* get age-related widows' pension rather than full widow's pension, showing the movement into each age band separately; and what would be the annual saving to public funds if the age bands for entitlement to age-related widows' pensions were each raised by five years.

Mr. Newton: The relevant date for determining entitlement to widow's pension or age-related widow's pension is not the date of expiry of entitlement to widow's allowance but the date of bereavement, except in the case of a widow who has been receiving widowed mother's allowance for whom the relevant date is that on which her entitlement to widowed mother's allowance ceases. The table gives estimates of the number of new claimants each year who would be affected if the age bands for entitlement to age-related widow's pension were raised by five years.

The financial effects and numbers of widows affected by the raising of the age bands for age-related widow's pension by five years would build up over time, since pensions already in payment would not be affected. The financial effects of such a change would depend on what assumptions were made about benefit rates, and entitlements to income-tested benefits. However, we estimate that the combined effect on the national insurance fund of all the proposals for widows' benefits in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517), including the raising of the age bands for widow's pension by five years, would be to increase expenditure from the fund by about £28 million in the first full year. In the second year the effect would be broadly neutral, and savings would build up after then with an approximate saving of £50 million by the fifth full year. These figures assume current benefit rates and that the new lump sum payment would be £1,000.

New Claimants who would be affected by the raising of the age bands for age-related widows pension from 40-50 to 45-55

(a) Number with no entitlement to age-related pension = 1,500

(b) Number who would get an age-related pension at a lower rate than now

Age 45 =	200
46 =	500
47 =	600
48 =	1,000
49 =	1,200
Total =	3,500

(c) Number who would get age-related pension rather than full widows pension

Age 50 =	1,600
51 =	1,500
52 =	2,300
53 =	2,500
54 =	3,100
Total =	11,000

Note to table:
Total numbers above are accurate only to nearest 500 except for those below 500 which are to the nearest 100. They are derived from 1983 estimates of the number of widows receiving widows benefits.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women receiving board and lodging benefit in (i) the London borough of Wandsworth and (ii) Greater London.

Mr. Whitney: I regret the information requested is not available.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information was used to determine the weekly upper limits for ordinary board and lodging claims by couples without dependent children under the age of 11 years provided under the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *369-371*]: I regret that this question was included inadvertently with a number of statistical questions from the hon. Member for Derby South which I answered on 9 July. We considered the previous arrangement did not reflect actual cost and accordingly put forward a proposal in the consultative document referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee on 29 November 1984. In the light of the representations received and the committee's own views, we have no reason to believe that the limits now adopted for couples without a child under eleven are unreasonable.

Central Heating (Addition)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate how many people in the Newport, East constituency are likely to be affected by the proposal to abolish central heating additions for new claimants as from 5 August;

(2) how many people in the Newport, East constituency receive central heating additions at both the higher and lower rate; and if he will estimate the effect his recent review will have on these benefits.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the cost savings in respect of pensioners' central heating supplementary benefit payments as a result of the decision to make no further such awards from 5 August.

Mr. Whitney: We estimate the savings from the change in entitlement to central heating additions for pensioners to be about half a million pounds in 1985-86 rising to about £3 million in 1987-88.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any information on the likelihood of regular smokers contracting Legionnaire's disease.

Mr. John Patten: There is limited epidemiological evidence to suggest that cigarette smoking is one of the risk factors which can give rise to an increased possibility of developing the disease after exposure to the infection through the inhalation of polluted water droplets.

Family Credit

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the recently unemployed claiming family credit will have to wait 13 weeks before a payment can be made under the proposals in the Green Paper.

Mr. Newton: We have no intention of requiring the recently unemployed to wait 13 weeks before a claim to family credit can succeed and the new provisions and procedures will be designed accordingly.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements are planned under the family credit scheme to deal with *(a)* those who change jobs in the middle of a payment period, *(b)* those who move in and out of short-term jobs and *(c)* those who hold more than one part-time job.

Mr. Newton: These and other details of the proposed family credit scheme are being considered in the course of consultation on the Green Paper.

Social Fund

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements will be made for the repayment of a loan from the proposed social fund if the claimant ceases claiming benefit before the loan is repaid.

Mr. Newton: We shall consider the arrangements for the repayment of loans from the social fund, including cases where the recipient ceases to receive or does not receive benefit, in the light of our consultation on the social security green paper.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of women suffering from cervical cancer in the years between 1979 and 1984 in the following age groups: 16 to 24 years and 24 to 35 years.

Mr. John Patten: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys handles statistics of registrations of newly diagnosed cancers; this provides the nearest available information on the numbers of women suffering from cervical cancer. The information in the exact age groups requested is available only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the latest readily available figures.

Numbers of registrations of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri, ICD (9th Revision) 180 for selected age-groups, females only, 1979 to 1981

England and Wales

Year	*Age groups in years*	
	15 to 24	*25 to 34*
1979	36	469
1980	44	492
1981	43	568

Hospitals (Infections)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence he has regarding the spread of hospital-induced infections by the transmission of pathogenic organisms by pests.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no evidence to suggest this is a significant factor.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many of the 77 serious outbreaks of hospital infection reported to the public health laboratory service in the last five years the source of the infection was established; in how many of the hospitals there was evidence of pest infestation; and in what proportion of cases this was considered to have contributed to or cause the outbreak.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have information in the form requested.

Hospitals (Pest Infestation)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department offers to hospitals regarding control of pest infestation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We provide an advisory service on pest control to the National Health Service. Health authorities were notified of this service in HN(76)186. We encourage each district to have at least one officer trained in basic pest control procedures and to meet this aim our Department organises one week residential courses in pest control management. Since 1977 we have run 24 such courses each with an average attendance of 20.

We have also issued two advice notes on the subject:

1. Domestic Service Advice Note No. 5—'An Introduction to Pest Control in Hospitals' (2nd Edition, 1984).
2. Domestic Service Advice Note No. 6—'Pest Control—Contract Management' (1981).

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest figure for the proportion of National Health Service hospitals which have infestations of *(a)* pharoah's ants and *(b)* other pests; and from what source the figure is derived.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The latest information available on the incidence of pharoah's ants in National Health Service hospitals in England indicated that 11·6 per cent. of hospitals surveyed were infested. These figures are taken from: Edwards J P and Baker L F, 1981: "Distribution and importance of the pharoah's ant

monomorium pharonis (L) in National Health Service Hospitals in England", *Journal of Hospital Infection* 2, 249-254. We have no information on the prevalence of other pest species in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions environmental health officers have referred to pest infestation in their reports on hygiene in hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect centrally the information requested.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the British Pest Control Association regarding pest infestation hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the pests which are known to have infested National Health Service hospitals, indicating the extent of the incidence of the infestations and their seriousness in terms of patients' health.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At one time or another National Health Service hospitals are known to have suffered from the following pests: rats, mice, feral cats, sparrows, pigeons and various species of ants, cockroaches, and other insects. I am sure an equally impressive list could be compiled by any other large organisation responsible for residential buildings if it was asked a similar open question without limits of time and I hope the right hon. Member will not derive alarmist conclusions from it. We do not keep a central record of the extent and incidence of infestations by pests, but health authorities must take all possible measures to minimise the effects of pest infestation on patients' health.

Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Wonford

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional funding he envisages that his Department will make available to finance the replacement of the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital, Wonford, in the light of dangers arising from aggregate reaction.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The South Western regional health authority and Exeter health authority are urgently considering what needs to be done to replace the parts of the hospital that are unsound and to ensure the safety of the building in the meantime. They are also considering the legal position. We have asked the regional health authority to report on their plans and on the financial implications of these by February 1986. We will not be able to make any firm decision on funding until we have seen this report.

NHS (Cost)

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give, in round figures, the annual cost of the National Health Service for each of the last five years, specifying for each year the amount spent on administrative, clinical and auxiliary services, respectively, and the percentage figures each represents of the whole;

(2) if he will give, in round figures, the annual cost of the National Health Service for each of the past five years, specifying the numbers employed and the total wage bill in respect of each year, giving the wage bill as a percentage of the total annual cost;

(3) if he will give, in round figures, the total annual cost of the National Health Service for each of the past five years, broken down into regions and districts, respectively; and what is the percentage figure each represents of the whole.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Staff)

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers of staff employed at his departmental headquarters with direct responsibility for the National Health Service for a convenient date in each of the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The number of staff employed in the Department's headquarters with direct responsibility for the National Health Service on 1 April for each year since 1981 was as follows:

Date	*DHSS (HQ) Staff-in-post with direct responsibility for the National Health Service* *Number*
1 April 1981	907
1 April 1982	870
1 April 1983	837
1 April 1984	790
1 April 1985	770

Chronically Sick and Disabled People (Newcastle upon Tyne)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the recently published report of the major survey of chronically sick and disabled people in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, about which the Minister for the disabled attended a conference presided over by the lord mayor of the city on 9 July; if he will be drawing the report to the attention of other local and health authorities; and if he will make a statement on the report's findings.

Mr. Newton: I was pleased to attend the conference at which results of this survey were publicised. It is an example of the kind of co-operation between health and local authorities we have always encouraged. Information about the numbers and needs of disabled people is clearly of great importance, and this major study should be of interest to other health and local authorities. I am therefore ensuring that a reference to it is included in the Department's health and social service abstracts which are sent to all health and local authorities.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people between the ages of 12 and 21 years died from drug abuse in the years 1979 to 1985; and if he will provide a breakdown by region.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the exact form requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the latest readily available figures.

Number of Deaths Associated with Drug Abuse: Persons aged 15-24 Years, 1979-84—England and Wales

	ICD* Cause of death	Number of deaths 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
England							
304	Drug dependence	35	31	18	50	31	32
305·2 to 305·9	Non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco)	—	2	1	5	1	10
Wales							
304	Drug dependence	1	—	—	1	2	—
305·2 to 305·9	Non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol and tobacco)	—	—	—	—	—	—

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision).

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people between the ages of 12 and 21 years died from alcohol abuse in the years 1979 to 1985; and if he will provide a breakdown by region.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the exact form requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the latest readily available information for deaths specifically associated with alcohol. Limited additional information is given for deaths which may be associated with alcohol consumption. Deaths from road traffic accidents are not shown, but it is estimated that for all ages about one road death in five (i.e. about 1,000 a year in England and Wales) occurs in accidents where at least one person had consumed alcohol over the legal limit. Other than deaths due to toxic effect of alcohol, figures are not readily available for accidental deaths with any mention of alcohol on the death certificate.

Number of deaths associated with alcohol consumption: Persons aged 15-24 years, 1979-1984

England, Wales

	ICD*	Cause of Death	Number of Deaths 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984†
England		*Deaths specifically related to alcohol consumption*						
	291	Alcoholic psychoses	—	—	—	—	—	—
	303	Alcoholic dependence syndrome	—	1	3	—	—	2
	305.0	Non-dependent abuse of alcohol	11	7	5	6	5	7
	425.5	Alcoholic cardiomyopathy	—	—	—	—	—	—
	571.0 to 571.3	Chronic Liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol reported as a cause	1	2	5	2	2	3
	980	Toxic effect of alcohol	6	10	5	3	5	7
		Other deaths which may be related to alcohol consumption						
	571.4 to 571.9	Chronic Liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol not specifically reported as cause	6	7	8	8	7	6
Wales		*Deaths specifically related to alcohol consumption*						
	291	Alcoholic psychoses	—	—	—	—	—	—
	303	Alcoholic dependence syndrome	1	—	—	—	—	—
	305.0	Non-dependent abuse of alcohol	—	1	2	1	—	—
	425.5	Alcoholic cardiomyopathy	—	—	—	—	—	—
	571.0 to 571.3	Chronic Liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol reported as a cause	—	—	—	—	—	—
	980	Toxic effect of alcohol	—	1	—	—	2	1
		Other deaths which may be related to alcohol consumption						
	571.46 to 571.9	Chronic Liver disease and cirrhosis, alcohol not specifically reported as cause	—	—	2	—	—	—

* International Classification of Diseases (9th revision)
† Due to a change in coding these data are not directly comparable with previous years.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people between the ages of 12 and 21 years died from solvent abuse in the years 1979 to 1985; and if he will provide a breakdown by region.

Mr. John Patten: Exact figures of deaths associated with solvent abuse are not available. However, the table shows the number of confirmed cases in England and Wales, by region, from the "National Study of Deaths Associated with the Abuse of Volatile Substances for 1979 to 1984" (the latest available year). One death in 1984 which is at present an unconfirmed case is not included in the figures.

Deaths associated with solvent abuse for persons aged 12 to 21, 1979-84 by standard region

Standard Region	Year					
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Northern	—	4	4	2	1	10
North West	3	2	3	5	13	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	5	—	1	7	4
East Midlands	—	1	2	2	4	2
West Midlands	1	1	3	2	4	5
East Anglia	—	—	—	—	—	1
South East	6	6	10	16	17	17
South West	—	1	1	5	5	4
Wales	1	1	2	2	1	8
England and Wales	12	21	25	35	52	58

Deaths (Causes)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the main causes of deaths of people between the ages of 12 and 21 years for the years 1979 to 1985; and if he will provide a breakdown by region.

Mr. John Patten: Information in the exact form requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the latest readily available figures. Broad groups of causes have been selected in order to give an overall view of mortality in this age-group. Different categorisation of causes could change the order of presentation.

Males

Rank	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
ENGLAND						
Road vehicle accidents E810-E819	1,378	1,412	1,033	1,301	1,203	1,187
Rem. of external causes of injury and poisoning E800-E999	521	491	863	600	606	636
Suicide and self-inflicted injury E950-E959	238	230	262	245	246	286
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320-389	131	134	140	148	135	177
MN of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue 200-208	126	107	134	134	139	126
WALES						
Road vehicle accidents E810-E819	75	72	59	69	50	59
Rem. of external causes of injury and poisoning E800-E999	43	34	50	46	37	32
Suicide and self-inflicted injury E950-E959	13	17	12	16	27	22
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320-389	15	12	10	10	13	6
MN of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue 200-208	11	8	6	6	10	9

Females

Rank	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
ENGLAND						
Road vehicle accidents E810-E819	266	295	226	315	271	271
Rem. of external causes of injury and poisoning E800-E999	162	171	226	175	147	146
MN of bone, connective tissue, skin and breast 170-175	43	42	44	49	38	46
Suicide and self-inflicted injury E950-E959	91	104	75	74	88	60
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320-389	69	76	81	67	60	72
WALES						
Road vehicle accidents E810-E819	9	15	13	15	20	12
Rem. of external causes of injury and poisoning E800-E999	14	12	17	19	9	4
MN of bone, connective tissues, skin and bone 170-175	4	2	3	3	5	3
Suicide and self-inflicted injury E950-E959	4	6	3	3	1	2
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320-389	8	2	4	7	5	3

Source: SD25S and cause reference runs.
MN=malignant neoplasm.
Rem.=remainder.

Diet-related Disease

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to the incidence of diet-related disease in Britain and in other industrial nations; what is the trend in such incidence; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what is the cost of treating diet-related disease in the latest year for which figures are available; and what is the trend of the cost.

Mr. John Patten: I am advised that the part played by diet in the causation of disease, other than deficiency disease, has not been established with sufficient certainty to enable the information requested to be provided.

Tooth Decay

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information is available to his Department as to the incidence of tooth decay in school-age children in Britain as compared with other industrial countries; what is the trend in incidence; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) what he estimates to be the cost of treating tooth decay in school-age children in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Pensions (Credit Transfer)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an estimate of the possible cash savings to his Department that would be achieved in a full year on the assumption that pensions were paid by automated credit transfer to those pensioners who on the latest information available to him have a bank account.

Mr. Whitney: On the information available such a change could produce a saving of some £70 million a year. But so large a shift in the method of payment would involve such fundamental changes to the system that it is not possible to make a realistic estimate of the actual financial effects.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the procedure for filling generalist trade union places on district health authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There are no places on district health authorities specifically reserved for trade unionists as such. In appointing generalist members, however, regional health authorities are statutorily required to consult a number of specified bodies which include trade union organisations. They are not required to appoint from among the names submitted in response to that consultation although we would normally expect each district health authority to contain one member with a background in the wider trade union movement.

Health Authority (South-East Staffordshire)

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the years 1978, 1982 and 1984 the number of doctors, nurses, ancillary and administrative staff employed by the South-East Staffordshire district health authority.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the amount spent on capital projects since 1979 by the South-East Staffordshire district health authority.

Mr. John Patten: Health authorities are required to submit capital schemes for departmental approval only if they cost more than £5 million. Detailed information on smaller capital schemes is not therefore held centrally and my hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of south east Staffordshire health authority for the figures requested.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps the Northern Ireland Housing Executive takes to monitor the performance of its contractors; what sanction it applies in cases where a contractor fails to meet the required standards or fails to carry out the terms of his contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has informed me that there is a named supervisory officer for each contract. Standards of workmanship are set at the outset of a contract and the performance of contractors is assessed regularly. The Housing Executive also monitors its programme monthly in terms of progress of works and expenditure. Contractors failing to meet the standard or failing to carry out the terms of their contracts may be suspended or removed from the approved list of contractors and may face the termination of their contracts.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many single payments for funeral expenses under supplementary benefits regulations have been made in each of the past five years and the first half of the current year in Northern Ireland;

(2) how many single payments for maternity expenses under supplementary benefits regulations have been made in each of the past five years and the first half of the current year in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: Information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, figures derived from the annual statistical inquiry show that the numbers of single payments made during the preceding 12 months to persons on supplementary benefit at the time of the inquiry were as follows:

	Numbers	
	Funeral expenses	*Maternity expenses*
November 1979	372	†
December 1980	558	†

	Numbers	
	Funeral expenses	*Maternity expenses*
December 1981	729	3,035
December 1982	957	7,418
December 1983*	1,120	11,009

* The latest year for which figures are held.
† Not available.
Source. 5 per cent. sample.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many single payments have been made under supplementary benefit regulations in each social security office in Northern Ireland in the first half of the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: The numbers of single payments made under supplementary benefit legislation in each social security office in Northern Ireland during the period from 15 January 1985 to 4 June 1985 are as follows:

Office	*Number*
Andersonstown	7,203
Antrim	5,565
Armagh	2,733
Ballymena	2,654
Ballymoney	2,724
Ballynahinch	313
Banbridge	1,554
Bangor	1,297
Carrickfergus	2,072
Coleraine	3,756
Cookstown	2,615
Corporation Street	7,774
Downpatrick	1,567
Dungannon	4,085
Enniskillen	3,670
Falls Road	8,654
Hollywood Road	4,412
Kilkeel	597
Knockbreda	1,921
Larne	1,956
Limavady	2,027
Lisburn	6,024
Londonderry	8,741
Lurgan	4,616
Magherafelt	2,243
Newcastle	974
Newry	5,701
Newtownabbey	5,897
Newtownards	1,335
Omagh	4,143
Portadown	2,226
Shaftesbury Square	2,602
Shankill	3,524
Strabane	5,186
Total	122,361

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount of money spent on single payments made under supplementary benefits in each of the past six years and the first half of the current year by each social security office in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is given in the table:

Office	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985‡*
Andersonstown	*	*	*	*	*	301,241	731,085
Antrim	43,917	59,467	106,217	312,811	606,829	976,867	615,739
Armagh	39,965	34,369	45,955	116,833	221,067	446,018	321,252
Ballymena	42,637	51,264	77,235	186,358	289,346	422,885	222,774
Ballymoney	19,108	17,090	30,218	73,037	204,339	359,090	237,118
Ballynahinch	3,820	3,788	6,328	14,747	31,055	44,947	32,183
Banbridge	12,621	11,073	20,678	56,887	116,912	191,351	134,664
Bangor	9,533	11,586	14,338	50,782	134,719	220,760	139,403
Carrickfergus	34,896	39,948	26,831	88,229	211,659	402,890	222,631
Coleraine	46,118	49,243	65,442	159,900	422,513	736,496	370,956
Cookstown	38,402	34,289	84,802	148,837	294,692	733,689	392,022
Corporation Street	68,563	102,019	†69,355	303,285	738,164	1,466,891	970,966
Downpatrick	8,897	14,791	20,654	58,373	132,220	217,704	144,198
Dungannon	64,682	86,751	186,848	378,221	979,249	1,325,356	616,173
Enniskillen	59,562	80,903	101,161	201,686	368,698	610,812	291,649
Falls Road	84,166	129,944	†86,401	443,579	1,457,903	1,937,958	760,905
Holywood Road	21,700	25,296	30,050	150,993	423,319	686,499	526,661
Kilkeel	5,591	3,854	8,700	23,959	51,449	92,377	50,557
Knockbreda	28,816	39,873	†47,294	147,447	220,221	339,653	193,124
Larne	25,155	31,044	†35,629	66,991	152,180	245,094	164,823
Limavady	17,758	25,070	51,624	80,288	173,668	272,613	175,433
Lisburn	65,469	79,534	78,849	269,252	895,573	1,723,169	700,166
Londonderry	253,888	388,068	†378,864	1,073,917	1,550,847	2,016,634	1,197,361
Lurgan	74,641	95,872	†144,093	267,617	445,201	907,953	654,226
Magherafelt	33,883	34,110	†51,907	100,970	203,618	465,689	329,749
Newcastle	9,282	6,842	†10,729	36,040	58,508	116,673	103,816
Newry	50,456	86,236	†102,171	299,699	743,592	1,282,790	653,570
Newtownabbey	59,833	42,531	†89,282	248,579	432,391	877,040	489,179
Newtownards	19,545	27,620	34,130	92,682	152,839	305,872	149,194
Omagh	38,654	53,699	75,799	202,507	368,591	608,315	466,657
Portadown	28,935	34,954	34,623	72,109	172,371	326,730	221,459
Shaftesbury Square	38,189	56,607	77,357	211,781	383,434	587,097	381,665
Shankill	65,322	77,384	†39,657	211,746	398,090	601,249	320,122
Strabane	74,523	120,299	†161,099	544,429	1,247,680	1,669,815	753,417

* Andersonstown Social Security Office opened in October 1984.
† Incomplete returns due to industrial action.
‡ To 4 June 1985.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many urgent needs payments under supplementary benefit regulations have been made in each of the past five years and the first half of the current year by each social security office in Northern Ireland; and what was the total amount of money so paid by each office in each year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many single payments have been made under supplementary benefit regulations for furniture and household equipment in each social security office in Northern Ireland in the first half of the current year and in each of the past five years; and what was the total amount so paid in each office in each year;

(2) how many single payments have been made under supplementary benefit regulations for clothing and footwear in each social security office in Northern Ireland in the first half of the current year and each of the past five years; and what was the total amount so paid in each office in each year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I regret that the information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what figures are available to indicate the numbers of supplementary benefit claimants in Northern Ireland who receive additional requirement payments for some heating costs;

(2) what figures are available to indicate the numbers of supplementary benefit claimants in Northern Ireland who receive additional requirement payments for excessive laundry costs;

(3) what figures are available to indicate the number of supplementary benefit claimants in Northern Ireland who receive additional requirement payments for extra dietary costs;

(4) what figures are available to indicate the number of suplementary benefit claimants in Northern Ireland who receive additional requirement payments for special clothing and footwear or heavy wear and tear on clothing.

Mr. Chris Patten: At 7 December 1983, the latest date for which figures are available, the estimated numbers of supplemenary benefit recipients whose additional requirements included the cost of heating, laundry, diets, clothing and footwear were as follows:

	Number
Heating	104,300
Laundry	1,300
Diets	21,100
Clothing and footwear	350

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry.

The amounts payable for such requirements is reduced in certain long-term cases by £1 a week.

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many appeals have been heard by each of the social security appeal tribunals in Northern Ireland and their predecessors over the past five and a half years; how many of these were upheld; and if there are figures to indicate how many such appeals and decisions related to eligibility for benefits, single payments, additional requirements, urgent needs payments, overpayments, conditions for payment of benefit, amount of benefit awarded, capability of employment or availability for employment.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is as follows:

Supplementary Benefit Appeals

Tribunal	*Numbers heard—year ended 31 March:*				
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Armagh	84	61	35	39	71
Ballymena	241	184	157	171	212
Ballymoney	99	84	65	60	45
Banbridge	24	26	10	21	32
Belfast	874	1,032	511	669	756
Coleraine	92	71	55	76	128
Cookstown	193	110	64	74	56
Downpatrick	57	35	14	42	57
Dungannon	140	145	78	84	128
Enniskillen	164	143	79	60	43
Limavadie	58	46	15	24	16
Lisburn	76	70	44	49	26
Londonderry	302	487	226	461	591
Lurgan	74	114	33	48	38
Magherafelt	106	92	53	60	43
Newcastle	48	45	28	46	48
Newry	169	205	159	126	192
Newtownards	62	57	59	75	113
Omagh	77	121	95	127	125
Portadown	62	60	29	24	42
Strabane	173	109	80	73	179
TOTAL	3,175	3,297	1,889	2,409	2,941
Numbers upheld	2,183	2,160	1,334	1,581	1,886

* The latest year for which figures are held.

Category	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Eligibility	†	†	107	159	112
Single payments	1,768	2,003	965	1,454	2,081
Additional requirements	40	15	19	26	44
Urgent needs payments	†	†	15	6	10
Overpayments	90	66	70	103	105
Amount of benefit	†	†	331	305	236
Condition of registration	42	27	37	39	22
Others	1,235	1,186	345	317	331
TOTAL	3,175	3,297	1,889	2,409	2,941

* The latest year for which figures are held.
† Not available.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the numbers of families in Northern Ireland who received family income supplement in each of the past five years and the first half of the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested is as follows:

Number of families awarded family income supplement

Year	*Number*
1980	9,612
1981	12,297

Year	Number
1982	13,278
1983	12,818
1984	15,530
*1985	8,221

* To 30 June.

Parades

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those parades in Northern Ireland which would normally take place during June, July and August 1985 which he has had brought to his notice as possibly leading to sectarian conflict.

Mr. Hurd: I exercised my statutory powers to prohibit the holding of parades in Castlewellan on 1 and 27 June 1985, following advice from the Chief Constable. It would not be right to disclose any details of confidential discussions about the possible effects of other parades.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list those parades which took place in Northern Ireland in the months of June, July and August 1984 in connection with which he took any action on the grounds that the parade as originally planned might encourage public disorder;

(2) if he will list those parades which took place in Northern Ireland in the months of June, July and August 1984 about which the police made representations to him seeking *(a)* bans and *(b)* re-routeings on the grounds of risk of public disorder; and what action he took in each case.

Mr. Hurd: The maintenance of public order and the routeing of public processions is a matter for the police. My right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney did not exercise the Secretary of State's powers to prohibit the holding of public processions in June, July or August 1984, and I understand that there were no recommendations from the police that such powers should be exercised.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of unemployment in Strabane; and what measures he proposes to take to seek to reduce it.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985]: The number of unemployed claimants in the Strabane district council area on 13 June 1985 was 3,871, giving an unemployment rate of 39·1 per cent. for the area.

The Government, through the Industrial Development Board and Local Enterprise Development Unit, will continue to direct resources to encourage the establishment of new industry, and to develop further those companies already in business so as to secure viable enterprises and long-term jobs. In recognition of the persistent severity of the unemployment problem in Strabane, the area has for some time now been able to offer the investor the highest rate of support available in the United Kingdom. The Department of Economic Development also provides a range of employment and training opportunities for both adults and young people. At present over 800 such places are available in the Strabane area.

Pensioners

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current number of pensioners in Northern Ireland by sex and by five-year age groups.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985]: The numbers of persons in Northern Ireland aged 60 who are in receipt of pensions or allowances, by sex and five-year age bands, where it is possible to provide the information in this form, are as follows:

Retirement Pension—at 31 May 1985

Age Bands	Males	Females	Total
60-64	—	27,702	27,702
65-69	23,743	29,977	53,720
70-74	22,168	29,689	51,857
75-79	14,083	22,900	36,983
80-84	6,698	14,033	20,731
85-89	2,657	6,825	9,482
90-94	676	2,076	2,752
95-99	97	348	445
100+	8	39	47

Non-Contributory Retirement Pension—at 31 May 1985

60-64	—	—	—
65-69	—	4	4
70-74	—	13	13
75-79	—	38	38
80-84	391	1,172	1,563
85-89	202	895	1,097
90-94	72	412	484
95-99	18	113	131
100+	4	28	32

Invalidity Pension—at 5 April 1984

60+	—	320	320
65+	1,315	—	1,315

Widows Benefit—at 31 May 1985

60-64		1,823	
65-69		3	

Attendance Allowance—at 3 January 1985

60-64	—	638	638
65-69	584	705	1,289
70-74	782	1,215	1,997
75-79	801	1,460	2,261
80-84	714	1,826	2,540
85-89	481	1,543	2,024
90-94	214	772	986
95+	87	283	370

Invalid Care Allowance—at 21 February 1985

61-65	—	16	16
66-70	5	3	8
70+	1	5	6

Mobility Allowances—31 March 1985

60-64	—	756	756
65+	581+1 Car	542	1,123+1 car

Non-Contributory Invalidity Pension—at 5 April 1985
(Known as Severe Disablement Allowance)

60-64	—	685	685
65+	255	225	480

Industrial Death Benefit—at 31 December 1984
Females aged 60+ — 414

Supplementary Pensions—at 7 May 1985
Total number of recipients — 53,789

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 17 July 1985

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Incomes

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the gross weekly income required on 1 November 1984 and 1 March 1985, respectively, to maintain the real disposable income of *(y)* a single person and *(z)* a married man with two children under 11 years of age, taking account of payments of tax, national insurance, and 5 per cent. of earnings as superannuation contributions, who on (i) 1 November 1979 and (ii) 1 November 1980 earned *(a)* £30, *(b)* £35, *(c)* £40, *(d)* £45, *(e)* £50, *(f)* £60, *(g)* £70, *(h)* £80, *(i)* £90, *(j)* £100, *(k)* £125, *(l)* £150, *(m)* £175, *(n)* £200, *(o)* £225, *(p)* £250, *(q)* £275, *(r)* £300, *(s)* £325, *(t)* £350, *(u)* £400, *(v)* £450 and *(w)* £500.

Mr. Moore: Information is given in the following tables:

Gross weekly earnings November 1979	*Gross weekly earnings needed to maintain the level of real disposable income* of November 1979 in: November 1984*		*March 1985*	
	Single man	*Married man with 2 children under 11 years of age*	*Single man*	*Married man with 2 children under 11 years of age*
£	£	£	£	£
30	46	46	47	46
35	54	53	56	54
40	62	60	64	60
45	70	66	72	67
50	78	75	80	76
60	94	91	96	92
70	110	106	112	108
80	125	122	128	125
90	141	138	144	141
100	157	154	161	157
125	196	193	201	197
150	238	235	244	240
175	278	275	283	280
200	315	312	321	318
225	353	350	361	357
250	391	387	400	395
275	430	425	440	434
300	467	463	478	473
325	505	500	518	512
350	543	537	557	551

Gross weekly earnings November 1979	*Gross weekly earnings needed to maintain the level of real disposable income* of November 1979 in: November 1984*		*March 1985*	
	Single man	*Married man with 2 children under 11 years of age*	*Single man*	*Married man with 2 children under 11 years of age*
£	£	£	£	£
400	618	613	634	628
450	694	687	713	706
500	769	763	790	783

* Gross earnings plus child benefit (where appropriate) less income tax, NIC and superannuation contributions.

Gross weekly earnings November 1980	*Gross weekly earnings needed to maintain the level of real disposable income* of November 1980 in: November 1984*		*March 1985*	
	Single man	*Married man with 2 children under 11 years of age*	*Single man*	*Married man with 2 children under 11 years of age*
£	£	£	£	£
30	39	34	40	38
35	46	44	47	44
40	52	51	54	51
45	59	57	61	57
50	66	61	68	62
60	80	74	82	75
70	93	87	95	89
80	107	101	109	103
90	120	115	123	117
100	134	128	137	131
125	168	162	172	165
150	202	196	207	200
175	238	232	243	236
200	272	267	277	272
225	305	300	311	305
250	337	332	344	338
275	369	364	377	371
300	401	395	410	404
325	433	427	444	436
350	466	459	477	469
400	529	522	543	534
450	595	587	610	601
500	657	651	675	667

* Gross earnings plus child benefit (where appropriate) less income tax, NIC and superannuation contributions.

Tax and Prices Indices

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* the tax and prices index rose in the 12-month periods to the beginning of each month since May 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Percentage changes on one year earlier

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Retail Prices Index							
January	—	+18·4	+13·0	+12·0	+4·9	+5·1	+5·0
February	—	+19·1	+12·5	+11·0	+5·3	+5·1	+5·4
March	—	+19·8	+12·6	+10·4	+4·6	+5·2	+6·1
April	—	+21·8	+12·0	+9·4	+4·0	+5·2	+6·9
May	+10·3	+21·9	+11·7	+9·5	+3·7	+5·1	+7·0
June	+11·4	+21·0	+11·3	+9·2	+3·7	+5·1	+7·0

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
July	+15·6	+16·9	+10·9	+8·7	+4·2	+4·5	—
August	+13·9	+16·3	+11·5	+8·0	+4·6	+5·0	—
September	+16·5	+15·9	+11·4	+7·3	+5·1	+4·7	—
October	+17·2	+15·4	+11·7	+8·8	+5·0	+5·0	—
November	+17·4	+15·3	+12·0	+8·3	+4·8	+4·9	—
December	+17·2	+15·1	+12·0	+9·4	+5·3	+4·6	—
Tax and Price Index							
January	—	+16·1	+14·0	+15·6	+9·2	+4·2	+3·6
February	—	+16·9	+13·2	+14·4	+9·7	+4·2	+4·3
March	—	+17·6	+13·4	+13·7	+9·8	+4·4	+5·0
April	—	*+18·4	+15·7	+9·7	+5·5	+4·1	+6·4
May	*+12·6	*+18·5	+15·3	+9·8	+5·1	+4·1	+6·5
June	*+13·8	*+17·4	+14·9	+9·4	+5·0	+4·0	+6·4
July	+13·2	+18·5	+14·3	+9·6	+5·1	+5·3	—
August	+13·4	+17·8	+14·9	+8·7	+5·6	+5·8	—
September	+14·1	+17·5	+14·9	+7·9	+4·2	+5·5	—
October	+14·8	+18·8	+15·2	+7·4	+4·0	+5·8	—
November	+15·1	+16·6	+15·6	+6·7	+5·9	+5·7	—
December	+14·9	+16·4	+15·6	+9·8	+4·4	+5·3	—

* These figures are affected by the late timing of the 1979 Budget: the changes introduced by that Budget are included in the Tax and Price Index from July 1979.

Source: CSO, Economic Trends.

Tax Yield

Mr. Hardy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total yield of income tax and of value added tax in the current financial year and in 1979-80.

Mr. Moore: The following is the information requested:

	1979-80 £ million	1985-86 £ million
Income Tax	*20,600	135,200
Value Added Tax	†8,200	118,300

Sources:
* Inland Revenue. 125th Annual Report. Cmnd. 9305 Table 1.
† Customs and Excise. 75th Annual Report. Cmnd. 9501 Table 7.
‡ PSBR. Table 6.8.

Inflation

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Over the 12 months to June 1985, the retail prices index increased by 7 per cent.

Band Aid Record (VAT)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total value added tax revenue raised from sales of the Band Aid record, "Do They Know It's Christmas," in the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Lawson: It is estimated that the total VAT revenue raised from sales of the record was of the order of three quarters of a million pounds.

Customs Officers (Drug Smuggling)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of customs officers who have been on duty at seaports and airports in each year since 1979 and the number of people who have been caught attempting to smuggle drugs into the United Kingdom at such ports in each single year during the same period.

Mr. Hayhoe: The number of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise staff deployed on customs work at seaports, airports and inland premises throughout the United Kingdom for each year since 1979 are

	Number
1979	7,591
1980	7,231
1981	7,089
1982	6,861
1983	6,717
1984	6,553
1985	6,701

The number of people involved in offences against import prohibitions and restrictions on drugs for each year since 1979 are

	Number
1979	857
1980	1,017
1981	1,096
1982	1,207
1983	991
1984	1,256

Income Tax

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total number of persons who paid income tax in the latest available year in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Great Britain as a whole; and how many were aged 16 or 17 years at the time.

Mr. Moore: Provisional estimates of the numbers of income tax payers in 1985-86 by country are as follows:

	Taxpayers (thousands)
England	17,000
Wales	950
Scotland	1,700
Northern Ireland	430
United Kingdom	20,100

* Counting married couples as one.

I regret that information is not available to enable taxpayers aged 16 or 17 to be distinguished.

Customs Officers (Vacancies)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of posts for customs officers which are presently unoccupied; and at which ports these vacancies have yet to be filled.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not possible without disproportionate cost to identify the number of individual posts for Customs Officer that have yet to be filled. At 1 July the total number of staff in the Customs and Excise Department was about 200 below the staff in post ceiling of 25,595.

Airports (Duty-free Facilities)

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is now able to make a statement about the revision of criteria for the granting of duty-free facilities at airports.

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes. Following a review by Customs and Excise, I have decided that the following criteria will apply. In order to qualify for a duty-free shop airports must:

(a) be designated;
(b) have scheduled flights or frequent charter services;
(c) have full-time attendance by Customs for flights to foreign and Channel Islands destinations.

Customs estimate that this could result in the granting of duty-free shop facilities at another eight regional airports.

Live Aid Concert (VAT)

Mr. Baldry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about value added tax treatment of the Live Aid concert at Wembley on 13 July.

Mr. Hayhoe: While the Government has not been able to accept suggestions that VAT collected on the ticket sales for charitable fund-raising events of this kind should be refunded, I can confirm that it has been possible to allow an exceptional waiver of VAT on four-fifths of the ticket proceeds, amounting to about £190,000. The promoters had intended to sell the tickets for £5, plus a voluntary donation of £20. To escape VAT, such a donation must be genuinely voluntary, and advertised as such. In this case the promoters made a mistake, and the £20 was not advertised as voluntary. VAT should therefore have been due on the full £25 admission charge. However, as a genuine mistake had been made, Customs and Excise, with the authority of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, decided not to insist on the VAT on the donational element of the admission charge. This extra-statutory concession sets no precedent for the future treatment of events of this kind, which will have to comply with the normal rules for donations, that these must be in addition to a realistic admission charge, and be completely at the discretion of the purchaser of the ticket. These are clearly set out in the Customs and Excise VAT leaflet on charities, number 701/1/84.

VAT Ceiling

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the maximum level of expenditure in the EEC budget implied by a 1·4 per cent. value-added tax ceiling; and if he will list any similar estimates made by other EEC countries or the EEC Commission.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[pursuant to his reply, 16 July 1985]*: We understand that for 1986 the Commission estimate that a 1·4 per cent. value-added tax ceiling would allow expenditure of about 35·8 billion ecu for the Community of 12.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Winnick asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's latest policy on public expenditure on the social, welfare, housing services and the infrastructure.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

North Sea Oil Revenue

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total contribution of yields from North sea oil to the United Kingdom's gross domestic product in each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Sulphur Dioxide Pollution

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government have not yet signed the protocol committing Canada and 20 European countries to reduce sulphur dioxide pollution by 30 per cent.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer given on 4 July 1985 by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the Member for Bristol, West in reply to a question by the Member for Central Suffolk *Official Report*, column 202.

WALES

Company Failures

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many companies supported by the Welsh Development Agency since 1975 have failed; and what has been the cost to public funds.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Eighty-one of the companies in which the Welsh Development Agency has invested funds since its establishment in January 1976 have subsequently failed. The losses involved amount to just under £8 million.

MV Bridgeness

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action was taken by his Department following the grounding of the MV *Bridgeness* on 16 June.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Central Government responsibility for shipping casualty investigations and for the clearance of oil pollution both at sea and on-shore resulting from

civil accidents at sea rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. From the start of the incident our officials have maintained a close liaison with the marine pollution control unit of the Department of Transport, the local authorities whose areas were affected and the Nature Conservancy Council.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total expenditure of his Department and the agencies responsible to or sponsored by it, in Wales, for each fiscal year since 1978-79, in 1985 prices.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The following list shows the total public expenditure which falls within my responsibility, for each financial year from 1978-79 to 1984-85. The totals shown have been adjusted to 1984-85 price levels by means of the relevant gross domestic product deflators.

£ million (1984-85 base)

	£ million
1978-79	2,652
1979-80	2,696
1980-81	2,703
1981-82	2,587
1982-83	2,610
1983-84	2,712
1984-85	*2,635

* Provisional.

Voluntary Organisations (Awards)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce awards made to voluntary organisations under the special grants programme announced on 5 March.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I am announcing today that awards totalling £60,000 have been made to seven organisations. The details are as follows:

Organisations	*Amount* £
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	14,000
Council for Protection of Rural Wales	10,000
North Wales Naturalists Trust	2,500
The Woodlands Trust	10,000
Planning Aid Service	10,000
Glamorgan Trust for Nature Conservation	3,200
Prince of Wales Committee	10,300
	60,000

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Brewster Housing Project

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of the cost of the Brewster housing project in the Falklands; and if he will give a breakdown of the main components in the cost per house.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 14 January at column 19.

Cabbage Trees (St. Helena)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the varieties of cabbage trees which are present on St. Helena; what estimate he can make of individual numbers of each variety; and what steps he is taking to ensure the survival and general health of the various varieties.

Mr. Raison: There are four species of cabbage tree: the black cabbage tree, white cabbage tree, he-cabbage tree and she-cabbage tree. No estimates have been made of the individual numbers of each species, but the first three are quite widely distributed on the central ridge of the island. Efforts to propagate the rarer she-cabbage tree and introduce it into its natural environment are proving successful. A number of legal and practical measures have been taken to protect the endemic flora of St Helena, including cabbage trees. Earlier this year, a development aid allocation was approved for a five-year forestry project, one element of which is concerned with the conservation of endemic flora.

Famine Relief (Horn of Africa)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his future plans for the relief of the famine in the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: We plan to spend at least £60 million on famine relief in Africa during the 1985-86 financial year. This will be allocated to countries on the basis of need. Among the countries in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is likely to continue to be the major recipient. We shall also maintain the capacity within the aid programme to respond to appeals for famine relief from elsewhere.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been sent to the Horn of Africa as defined by country and per month since June 1984 for the following categories (*a*) the amount of financial aid, (*b*) the number of vehicles sent, (*c*) the number of aircraft sent and (*d*) the number of personnel sent.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on the emergency assistance we have provided to the countries in the Horn of Africa viz Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti, since June 1984 is set out in the following table. This information does not include our share of European Community emergency assistance to these three countries, nor the British response to appeals from international agencies for the famine in Africa, from which these countries are likely to benefit.

Month	*Funds committed £'000**	*Ethiopia Vehicles given*	*Aircraft sent**	*Personnel provided**	*Somalia Funds committed £'000*	*Djibouti Funds committed £'000*
June 1984	—	—	—	—	—	59
July	300	—	—	—	—	—

Month	Ethiopia Funds committed £'000*	Ethiopia Vehicles given	Ethiopia Aircraft sent†	Ethiopia Personnel provided‡	Somalia Funds committed £'000	Djibouti Funds committed £'000
August	—	—	—	—	3	—
September	—	—	—	—	—	—
October	6,500	—	—	—	3	—
November	2,350	9	5	—	342	—
December	4,810	12	4	—	50	—
January 1985	4,900	2	2	2	—	—
February	1,750	11	2	—	—	—
March	1,710	3	9	—	—	—
April	1,790	2	2	1	567	—
May	2,880	12	2	—	—	—
June	2,320	—	2	—	500	—

Notes:
* includes cost of vehicles, aircraft and personnel.
† from November 1984 includes two RAF Hercules each month; other aircraft are special charter flights.
‡ provided directly by ODA; does not include personnel provided by agencies from grants by ODA.
includes two vehicles.
† includes 1 chartered aircraft.
• one water container

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current negotiations about the future of Cyprus.

Mr. Renton: The United Nations Secretary-General is continuing his efforts to make progress towards a settlement in Cyprus. He has our full and active support.

Argentina

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations with Argentina on the future of trade relations and other matters.

Mr. Renton: Our decision to lift our ban on imports from Argentina has given the Argentine Government the opportunity to respond and thereby to open the way to further steps towards normalising bilateral relations. We regret its response has so far not been more constructive, but we still look to it to take practical steps to match our initiative to the benefit of both countries.

British Council

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government seek to extend the funding of British Council cultural programmes abroad.

Mr. Renton: We would not wish to anticipate the result of the public expenditure survey which will as usual be made known in my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement, nor the particular decisions my right hon. and learned Friend will take for the programmes for which he is responsible.

Terrorism (Tel Aviv)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has received from Her Majesty's Ambassador in Baghdad regarding the claim by the Palestine Liberation Organisation on Voice of Palestine Radio in 7 July about two terrorist attacks on bus stations near Tel Aviv with loss of life; and whether any message has been conveyed to the Iraqi Government about these incidents.

Mr. Luce: We are aware of a Palestine Liberation Organisation claim to responsibility for two bomb attacks on 7 July but we have received no confirmation of the incidents or the extent of any casualties. We have not conveyed any message on this subject to the Iraqi Government.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in order the seven criminal offences which have led to the greatest number of people in prison, and if he will show the prison population in each case.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (Tables 1.5, 3.2, 4.1 and 5.1 of the latest issue for 1983, Cmnd. 9363). The 1984 issue will be published in the near future.

Prisons

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women on rule 43 in prisons in the United Kingdom on 30 June.

Mr. Mellor: The number of sentenced prisoners in England and Wales who were segregated under Prison Rule 43 for their own protection or for reasons of good order or discipline as at 31 March 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) was as follows:

	Own Request	Good Order or Discipline
Males	572	73
Females	1	6

Information is not kept centrally on the segregation of unconvicted prisoners. Responsibility for prison establishments in Scotland and Northern Ireland is for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in the United Kingdom where association does not take place.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales, association does not take place at HM prisons Liverpool, Manchester and Wandsworth.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present position regarding his Department's review of existing pay and sick pay rates being paid to prisoners at present in prisons in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: The rates of inmate pay in England and Wales are reviewed annually. They are currently under consideration and revised rates of pay are expected to be brought into force on 7 October 1985. A departmental working party is reviewing the earnings systems currently in force, and will report by the end of the year. The earnings rates of prisoners in Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Prisoners (Outside Hospitals)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of prisoners who have been sent to outside hospitals for treatment and have escaped from the hospital during each of the last three years.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of adult prisoners who escaped from outside hospitals to which they had been sent for treatment, either as in-patients or as out-patients, were as follows:

Year	*Number*
1982	20
1983	19
1984	25

Three such cases were reported in the first half of this year.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what kind of accommodation is provided by outside hospitals for prisoners sent to them for medical treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: This is determined at the time according to the circumstances of the case.

Street Collections

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions of individuals for holding street collections in London without a licence during the period March 1984 to March 1985 are now pending before the courts.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the number of persons summoned under the Street Collections (Metropolitan Police District) Regulations 1979 in respect of alleged unauthorised street collections made between 1 March 1984 and 31 March 1985, whose cases have yet to be dealt with by the courts, is 140.

Animal Experiments

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the introduction of legislation based on the White Paper Cmnd. 9521 entitled "Scientific Experiments on Living Animals" is dependent on the final adoption of the proposed Council of Europe convention for the protection of vertebrate animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: The text of the convention was adopted at a meeting of Ministers' deputies on 31 May 1985. The convention will be opened for signature in the early autumn. I intend to introduce legislation based on the White Paper Cmnd. 9521 as soon as Parliamentary time permits; the introduction of such legislation is not directly dependent on the adoption of the convention.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of entries in the seen or checked in noteworthy circumstances sub-category of the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer for each of the months from April 1984 until September 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Statistics of the number of entries in the "seen" category are collected only once a month. For the period requested they are as follows:

1984	*Number of entries in "seen" category Number*
April	10,330
May	9,246
June	7,757
July	7,506
August	7,383
September	8,539

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe the use of the new convictions index held on the police national computer; whether the index will be linked to the criminal names index; what is the projected size of the convictions index, the anticipated access rates and performance of the index; and when the index will be operational.

Mr. Shaw: The convictions file, which will be linked to the criminal names file, is intended to help the police with their operational duties, including the provision of information to the courts. The file is expected to be available to the service in 1987 by which time it is likely to contain details of some 2·5 million convictions recorded since 1981. It is not possible at this stage to provide an accurate estimate of the extent to which the police will use the new facility; response times are expected to be about five seconds.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of reported

robberies with violence of persons over 60 years for each of the last 10 years and the number of convictions for such robberies for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: Information collected centrally on offences of robbery does not include the age of the victim(s) either for those offences recorded by the police or for those offences which were the subject of court proceedings; nor does it distinguish between robberies involving the use of violence and those involving only the threat of violence. The only information collected centrally on the age of victims of robbery relates to those offences in which a firearm was reported to have been used and is given in the following table; corresponding information for earlier years is not available. Information on all offences of robbery recorded by the police and on persons found guilty or cautioned for offences of robbery is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" in the volume for 1983, Cmnd. 9349, chapter 2 for offences recorded, chapter 3 for those offences in which firearms were reported to have been used and chapter 5 for persons found guilty or cautioned.

Offences of robberies recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used and the principal victim was aged over 60 years

	Number
1979	63
1980	64
1981	91
1982	98
1983	85

Remanded Persons

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were being held on remand at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is given in the following table:

Population of untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 31 May 1985: by age

Age	*Untried prisoners*		*Convicted unsentenced prisoners*	**Number*
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Aged under 21	2,510	60	640	20
Adults	5,440	240	930	80
All ages	7,950	300	1,560	100

* The figures are rounded and components do not always add to the totals, because they have been rounded independently.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time people are held on remand for non-violent minor offences.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available centrally on the average time spent on remand for different types of offences. The available information about the average time spent in custody relates to all untried and all convicted unsentenced prisoners and is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2(g) of the latest issue for 1983, Cmnd 9363). Provisional estimates for males in 1984 were published in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin (Issue No. 8/85) on "The Prison Population in 1984".

Community Service Orders

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the percentage of people who have been sentenced to community service orders and who are later convicted of further crimes; and how this compares with other forms of sentence.

Mr. Mellor: Reconviction rates for those given community service orders, including comparison with reconviction rates for those discharged from custodial sentences, are published in "Reconvictions of Those Given Community Service Orders", Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/83 (tables 1 and 2 and paragraph 12). Information on reconviction after other types of sentences can be found in "Previous Convictions, Sentence and Reconviction," Home Office Research Study No 53 (in particular figure 3.1). Copies of these publications are in the Library of the House. In comparing reconviction rates, it needs to be remembered that the main factors related to subsequent reconviction (sex, age on conviction, the number of previous convictions and the type of offence) are also likely to have influenced the sentence of the court.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now list those police forces which have agreed to participate in Brave Defender.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief officers of all the police forces in England and Wales have agreed to participate except for Durham.

Immigration

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the number of men who fall within the definition of Commonwealth citizens settled in the United Kingdom in section 1 (5) of the Immigration Act 1971; and how many of these men were born in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give, for each of the years 1982, 1983, 1984 and for the first quarter of 1985, the numbers of wives accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom and the numbers refused and the reasons for refusal, together with the nationalities of wives both accepted and refused.

Mr. Waddington: The numbers of wives accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in 1982, 1983 and 1984 were published by nationality in "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom" (Tables 2*(a)* and *(b)* and 3*(a)* and *(b)* of Cmnd. 8944 for 1982; tables 3 and 4 of Cmnd. 9246 for 1983, and of Cmnd. 9544 for 1984). Corresponding figures for the first quarter of 1985 are given in the following table. The information requested on refusals is not available.

Acceptances for settlement on arrival and on removal of time limit, 1st quarter 1985.

Number of wives

Nationality	*On arrival*	*On removal of time limit*	*Total*
Australia	80	60	140
Bangladesh	320	20	350

Nationality	On arrival	On removal of time limit	Total
Barbados	+	+	+
Canada	30	40	70
Cyprus	10	20	40
Ghana	+	60	70
Guyana	10	20	20
Hong Kong	30	50	80
India	180	510	690
Jamaica	20	20	30
Kenya	20	30	50
Malaysia	10	40	50
Malta	+	+	10
Mauritius	30	20	60
New Zealand	50	40	90
Nigeria	+	10	20
Sierra Leone	–	10	10
Singapore	10	20	20
Sri Lanka	10	40	60
Tanzania	10	20	30
Trinidad & Tobago	+	10	10
Uganda	+	+	10
Zambia	+	10	10
Zimbabwe	10	10	10
British Overseas Citizens	50	10	60
Other Commonwealth	10	20	40
Total Commonwealth	910	1,080	2,000
Algeria	+	+	+
Argentina	+	+	+
Austria	+	10	10
Belgium	–	20	20
Brazil	10	20	30
Bulgaria	+	+	+
Chile	+	+	+
China	+	10	20
Colombia	10	20	20
Cuba	–	–	–
Czechoslovakia	+	+	+
Denmark	–	20	20
Egypt	10	20	30
Ethiopia	–	–	–
Finland	+	20	20
France	–	60	60
Germany (Democratic Republic)	–	–	–
Germany (Federal Republic)	–	80	80
Greece	–	10	10
Hungary	10	+	10
Indonesia	10	10	10
Iran	+	70	70
Iraq	–	10	10
Israel	7	30	40
Italy	–	30	30
Japan	10	100	110
Jordan	+	+	+
Kuwait	–	–	–
Lebanon	+	10	20
Libya	–	+	+
Luxembourg	–	–	–
Mexico	10	+	10
Morocco	+	20	20
Netherlands	–	40	40
Norway	10	10	20
Pakistan	280	420	700
Peru	10	+	10
Philippines	50	40	90
Poland	10	50	60
Portugal	10	20	30
Romania	–	–	–
Saudi Arabia	–	–	–
Somalia	+	+	+
South Africa	30	40	60
Spain	20	40	50
Sudan	–	10	10
Sweden	20	30	50
Switzerland	+	10	10
Syria	+	10	1
Thailand	40	20	60
Tunisia	–	+	+
Turkey	10	30	40
USA	140	250	400
USSR	10	+	10
Uruguay	–	–	–
Venezuela	+	+	10
Yugoslavia	+	10	10
Other Foreign	10	30	40
Stateless	20	20	40
Total Foreign	770	1,660	2,440

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each of the years 1982, 1983 1984 and for the first quarter of 1985, the numbers of applications made by wives for entry clearance for immediate settlement, the numbers granted and refused, the reason for refusal and the nationalities of the wives accepted and refused.

Mr. Waddington: Information on applications for entry clearance received, granted and refused for wives in the Indian sub-continent, analysed by country is given in the following table. Information on nationality, reasons for refusal, and on applications in the rest of the world, is not available.

Wives applying for entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent
Number of persons

–	Applications received	Applications granted	Applications refused
Bangladesh			
1982	2,050	1,990	920
1983	2,520	1,440	1,200
1984	2,500	1,340	820
1985†	480	430	230
India			
1982	820	740	30
1983	1,200	1,040	40
1984	1,200	1,180	20
1985†	310	250	*
Pakistan			
1982	1,660	1,670	550
1983	1,710	1,360	430
1984	1,610	1,190	330
1985†	420	330	70
Total Indian sub-continent			
1982	4,530	4,390	1,500
1983	5,420	3,840	1,690
1984	5,370	3,710	1,160
1985†	1,210	1,000	300

* Less than 5.
† 1st Quarter.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future of Holloway prison.

Mr. Brittan: The report of the Holloway project committee, which was set up last December under the

chairmanship of the director of the south east region, Prison Department, has now been submitted to the Director General of the Prison Service and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The project committee's report provides a valuable analysis of Holloway's difficulties. I very much welcome the committee's positive programme for an urgent increase in the prison's remand capacity, the development of its regimes, improvements in management structure, and ways of reviewing staff deployment to ensure that the prisoners get more time in association and more access to Holloway's extensive facilities. I want to see particular progress in the following areas.

I have asked for urgent consideration to be given to how Holloway's operating capacity can be increased to 400 as soon as possible, as the committee recommends. A manpower appraisal will be carried out and staff deployment at Holloway will be closely monitored, to ensure the most effective use of resources. The aim must be to provide as positive a regime as possible.

The specialist functions consequent on Holloway's role as the major local prison for women in the south-east will remain. These include the capacity to accommodate unsentenced women who are highly disturbed, many of whom will come within the ambit of mental health legislation but for whom a period of assessment in secure conditions may be required. These prisoners are presently accommodated on C1 unit. I accept the committee's view that C1 unit is not currently meeting their needs as well as it should, despite the best efforts of the staff, which I also commend, and that urgent action is needed to rectify its deficiencies. Its physical state is wholly unsatisfactory and its management structure is not clear. I acknowledge the desirability of re-siting C1 unit in purpose-built accommodation in a different part of the establishment and have asked for an urgent assessment of whether this is feasible.

But C1 cannot be rebuilt overnight. Immediate steps will be taken to improve conditions on the unit. Particular attention will be paid to improvements to the fabric, the replacement of potentially dangerous fittings, and the provision of more space for association. High priority will be given to improving the regime on C1 so that the prisoners there can take full advantage of the specialist training and therapeutic facilities available. The management structure and oversight of the unit will be reviewed. Particularly attention will be paid to the need to improve liaison between the nursing and discipline officer staff, and the need to create an environment conducive to the assessment and treatment of disturbed inmates. For as long as the unit contains both remand prisoners for assessment and difficult sentenced prisoners for special care, its routines must recognise the different requirements of these groups.

The rapid throughput of prisoners at Holloway has limited the extent to which the therapeutic unit for women prisoners with drug and other dependency problems has been able to fulfil its role. The unit will, as the committee recommends, be discontinued in its present form. Meanwhile, women with dependency problems who might benefit from a therapeutic regime will continue to be provided with specialist professional care on an individual basis.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Ethnic Minority Children

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in putting into effect the commitments given in his statement on 14 March, *Official Report*, columns 451-52, about the report of the committee of inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: In the statement I made on the publication of the Swann committee's report, at columns 451-52, I said that the problem of underachievement at school was not confined to children from the ethnic minorities; and that one way in which the Government would try to improve the position of those children would therefore be through measures intended to raise performance generally. In the White Paper "Better Schools", published shortly after the Swann report, a wide range of policy initiatives — on the curriculum, on examinations and in other areas—was described. They will help tackle the obstacles to higher achievement and as they take effect ethnic minority children will share in the benefit. These policies form the background to the more specific steps we have been taking in response to the Swann report, some of which are outlined below.

We need improved statistical information in order to monitor and secure progress. I informed the House on 11 July, at columns *483-84*, that the Department was issuing a consultation paper setting out specific proposals for the collection of statistics on the ethnic origins of teachers and students in teacher training. I intend to establish a working group in the autumn to explore how the scheme might operate. I have also considered an interim report from a working group on the collection of ethnically based statistics on school pupils. I am aware that there is particular concern about the implications of the collection of such statistics by central Government. As a first step, I have therefore asked the group to report to me by the end of the year with proposals for the collection of statistics on a compatible basis at local level.

The response of the education system to ethnic diversity is the theme of some 40 different pilot projects, at a total cost of £1 million, which are being supported through education support grants in 1985-86. A further £1 million is being made available under regulations made on 10 July to support new projects in this area in 1986-87. Officials of the Department have also held preliminary discussions with the local authority associations on the possibility that the in-service training grants scheme should, as the Swann committee recommended, be extended to include training dealing with the need to respond to ethnic diversity: I shall propose this formally to the associations in the autumn. As to initial teacher training, I shall be writing to the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education drawing attention to those of the criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses which bear on the response to ethnic diversity and to the Swann committee's recommendations that all teacher training students should have an opportunity to gain teaching experience in a multi-racial school.

Equally important is the need to recruit more ethnic minority teachers. I informed the House on 11 July, at columns *484-85*, that the Department was issuing a

consultation paper which invites views on the possible reasons for the apparent under-representation of ethnic minorities in the teacher force and on ways of countering this. Comments are being sought from a wide audience including many ethnic minority organisations.

I have referred to our policies for reforming the curriculum and the examination system generally. Attention is also being paid specifically to the implications of ethnic diversity in both contexts. The School Curriculum Development Committee and the Secondary Examinations Council have agreed to co-operate on multi-ethnic matters. The SCDC has agreed to ensure that all its projects have due regard to the ethnic diversity of our schools. The SEC will explore means of improving its syllabuses and examinations in community languages, and is enlisting specialist advisers to help in this work. Meanwhile, Her Majesty's Inspectorate is continuing to encourage good practice in English language and mother tongue teaching; an HMI conference on the teaching of mother tongues is being held for chief education officers and others in September.

Much remains to be done, but I believe that a worthwhile start has been made.

Teachers, Pupils and Schools

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state *(a)* the number of teachers, *(b)* the number of pupils and *(c)* the number of schools, in 1960, 1970 and 1985 in local education authorities throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers of maintained schools, pupils and teachers in England in the years 1960, 1970 and 1984 are:

	Full-time equivalent number of teachers in schools	*Pupils* *Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Number of schools*
January 1960	256,891	6,481,648	1,703	26,698
January 1970	329,387	7,477,247	27,631	26,137
January 1984	*390,279	7,216,962	194,469	24,464

* The figure for 1984 relates to qualified teachers only. Data for January 1985 will be available later this year. Information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

School Books (Hertfordshire)

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the expenditure on books for schools by Hertfordshire county council in each of the last five years in terms of *(a)* cash, *(b)* real terms and *(c)* real terms per pupil in school.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the table:

Hertfordshire LEA
Expenditure (£) on text and library books

Year	*Primary schools* *Cash*	*Real terms**	*Real terms cost per pupil*	*Secondary schools* *Cash*	*Real terms**	*Real terms cost per pupil*	*Primary and secondary schools* *Cash*	*Real terms**	*Real terms cost per pupil*
1979-80	505,796	737,850	8·3	675,919	986,030	11·4	1,181,715	1,723,870	9·8
1980-81	576,858	709,110	8·3	709,547	872,230	10·1	1,286,405	1,581,340	9·2
1981-82	643,760	719,580	8·7	806,638	901,640	10·6	1,450,398	1,621,220	9·7
1982-83	677,747	708,720	8·9	829,117	867,000	10·4	1,506,864	1,575,720	9·7
1983-84	741,011	741,011	9·6	909,123	909,123	11·2	1,650,134	1,650,134	10·4

* Real terms figures are the cash figures adjusted to 1983-84 prices, using the GDP deflator at market prices.

HMI Report

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what data were available to Her Majesty's inspectorate on the basis of which it reported, in paragraph 7 of its report on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education provision in England in 1984, a statistically significant association between certain levels of resource provision and certain qualities of work; what is its definition of a satisfactory level of resource provision; what test it applied to the information to establish its statistical significance; and what data were used by Her Majesty's Inspectorate to establish the order of importance of four factors, mentioned in the same paragraph, as influencing effective teaching.

Sir Keith Joseph: During the autumn term 1984 Her Majesty's Inspectorate gathered information about 13,880

classes which had been observed. It first assessed the quality of work in each class, both in terms of the quality of the provision made by the teacher, and of pupils' response.

Where provision was satisfactory, the resources were adequate and appropriate to support the material being taught. What is adequate and appropriate will vary not only with the work taught but with the age, ability and aptitude of the pupils.

Having judged the quality of the work, Her Majesty's Inspectorate then indicated those factors which, in the light of the evidence available, were considered to be influencing the quality of the work in each lesson. The aggregation of these responses from the 13,880 lessons, when analysed using a chi-squared test, revealed that work assessed as satisfactory or better was significantly more likely than chance alone would lead one to expect to be found where resource provision was judged satisfactory and helpful to the work. This does not imply a direct casual relationship between levels of resources and quality of education.

The four factors mentioned in paragraph 7—quality of teaching, identification of pupils' and students' needs, the level of resources available and their effective management and deployment—were among those whose contribution to effective learning Her Majesty's Inspectorate assessed in its observation of the classes. The identification of the four factors as important, and the order of their importance, was established by the frequency of their mention in reports of these observations.

Student Support

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish his Department's review of the student financial support system.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the Government's consultative paper on student support; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am now considering the publication later in the year of a consultative document in which loans would not feature as an option.

Local Authority Business (Inquiry)

Mr. Howard asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will be submitting evidence to the committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department is submitting evidence today and a copy of the memorandum is being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENVIRONMENT

Derelict Land

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the priorities for derelict land grant and the operation of the grant regime.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Since taking office we have increased derelict land grant from £23 million in 1979-80 to £76 million in 1985-86. This shows our continuing commitment to the recovery of derelict land. This makes a vital contribution to urban renewal. I have today issued for consultation a draft circular on derelict land grant. The circular underlines the need to reuse land in our towns and cities. It stresses that priority will be given to reclamation schemes which lead to land being made available for private housing, industrial or commercial development, especially in urban areas. The early commitment of a developer in such schemes will no longer be required; the important factor is the intended use by the local authorities of the reclaimed land. Environmental schemes in the worst areas of derelication, where the surroundings often inhibit investment, will also be encouraged.

Rolling programmes will be considered for the extensive areas of derelication, allowing authorities to plan reclamation over a number of years with greater confidence.

The draft circular also draws attention to the important part private owners can play in reclaiming their land, with the help of grant, to bring it back into productive use.

Besides improving the quality of life, reclamation relieves pressure for development on our green belts and agricultural land. We must now maintain the progress we have made over the past few years.

Copies of the draft circular have been placed in the Library.

Swans

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet received a report by the Nature Conservancy Council on lead poisoning of swans; and what action he proposes to take on it.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Yes. The Nature Conservancy Council has reported to me on the problem of lead poisoning of swans. Its recent review concluded that, whilst there has been a small increase in total swan numbers since 1978, more than 3,000 swans continue to die each year by ingesting anglers' lead weights. Evidence suggests that it is recently discarded weights, not yet sunk into the mud, which do the most damage. This is despite the co-operation of anglers' associations in encouraging the use of non-toxic alternatives to lead.

The NCC therefore confirms its recommendations to phase out the use of lead shot by anglers by December 1986. If the voluntary phasing out which it supports proves to be ineffective, it recommends that the sale and use of split lead weights (except the smallest weights) and ledger weights (up to 2oz) should be prohibited.

The Government accept these recommendations and the timetable for action set out in them. We propose to take action in two stages aimed at securing the total withdrawal of the relevent split lead weights for angling purposes by the end of 1986. First, we have asked the NCC and the Sports Council actively to campaign to persuade anglers not to use lead weights during the coarse fishing season that has just opened. Meanwhile, a technical group, including representatives of the National Angling Organisations and of manufacturers, is considering ways to speed the further refinement and encourage wider use of the alternatives to lead weights which are now available. I welcome the group's recent announcement that one range of products provides satisfactory alternatives to lead shot and that development of other products is also encouraging.

I welcome the support for the ending of the use of lead weights given by sections of the press including the *Daily Mirror*.

I am also pleased to learn that a meeting of representatives of national angling organisations has subsequently agreed that the supply of angler's lead shot ought to end within two years.

For their part, the Government propose immediately to ban the use of lead weights by those applying for new licences to fish in the royal parks. Existing licences will not be affected, but steps will be taken to encourage all anglers in the royal parks to use alternative weights.

Water authorities in England and Wales have powers to make byelaws to ban the use of lead weights for fishing. My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales will shortly be issuing draft model byelaws, to aid the water authorities in considering whether they wish to propose such a ban in their areas. We hope that the voluntary approach, supported as it is by the responsible angling organisations, may achieve success during the present angling season of 1985-86. However, if the voluntary approach has had insufficient effect by the end of the season the Government will be prepared to introduce regulations to control the sale and import of lead shot for fishing in the United Kingdom. Consultations on regulations, under section 100 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, will begin as soon as possible, so that if necessary they may be brought into effect on 1 January 1987.

Smith Houses

Sir Reginald Eyre asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will name the building societies referred to in the Adjournment debate on 18 June, *Official Report*, column 275, as being prepared to lend upon the security of Smith houses.

Mr. Gow: I understand that the Halifax and the Abbey National building societies are prepared to lend on Smith houses in the west midlands, subject to the usual requirement of a satisfactory survey and valuation; and that certin local societies, including the West Bromwich and the Staffordshire, would be willing to lend subject to a satisfactory structural survey or engineer's report.

Housebuilding

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public sector houses were completed in 1975, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Sir George Young: The number of public sector dwellings completed in England in each of the years 1975 to 1984 appear in table 2 of my Department's press notice No. 324 issued on 4 July; a copy is available in the Library.

Sewers (Standards)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to harmonise the standards laid down in respect of new sewers by *(a)* water authorities and *(b)* the building regulations.

Mr. Gow: This complex and important matter is being examined in a review of water and sewerage law being carried out by my Department. I will inform the House of our conclusions.

St. Barnabas Community Centre, Bristol

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet approved an application under the urban programme for 1985-86 for St. Barnabas Community Centre, St. Pauls, Bristol.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend recently approved an application for capital works totalling £45,839 to improve the Old School. In addition, he approved £37,100 revenue for staff and running costs.

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain the precise reasons for his decision to cut urban aid programme funding for the Moss Side information technology centre 6502; and what assessment he has made of the impact of his decision on the viability of the centre.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The exceptional extension of urban programme assistance towards running costs for a further period of three years should allow the centre to continue to operate.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of all moneys given to each information technology centre, and of moneys for which each of them is still eligible under the urban aid programme;

(2) if he will indicate what criteria are used in determining the level of support for each information technology centre under the urban programme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The criteria for support of urban programme projects are set out in the ministerial guidelines for the urban programme, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House on 9 May 1985. The precise level of support for each ITEC depends, among other things, on the amount of funding obtained from other sources, and the priority given to the project by the local authority concerned.

Details of the moneys made available to individual ITECs for each year under the urban programme are not readily available, but in 1984-85 they received a total of about £600,000.

Consent Applications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications have now been received under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act from each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is set out in the table below.

Applications received under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 as amended by clause 93 of the Local Government Bill

	Number
Greater London Council	521
Inner London Education Authority	28
Greater Manchester Council	208
Merseyside County Council	83
South Yorkshire County Council	236
Tyne and Wear County Council	105
West Midlands County Council	264
West Yorkshire County Council	95
Total	1,540

Domestic Rates

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he makes of (i) the number of households in England paying domestic rates *(a)* in full and *(b)* rebated, and (ii) the total number of adults, 18 years and over, resident in those households.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are about 18 million domestic hereditaments in England. Based on local authority returns, it is estimated that 6·2 million ratepayers received rate rebates in 1984-85. The total number of adults aged 18 years and over in England is estimated to be 35·7 million in mid 1984.

Widdicombe Committee of Inquiry

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects that the interim report of the Widdicombe committee of inquiry will be published.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Widdicombe committee of inquiry has been asked to submit its interim report by the end of this month. The precise date of submission is, however, a matter for the committee. The report will be published as soon as possible thereafter.

Building Act 1984

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to table regulations to give effect to the Building Act 1984.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 March 1985, c. 11]: I have today laid before Parliament two sets of building regulations. The Building Regulations 1985 will come into operation on 11 November. They are much shorter and simpler than the present regulations, and eliminate controls over the erection of certain small buildings and small extensions and over some alterations and changes of use. The regulations will be subject to continuing review to ensure that they comply fully with the principles for minimising regulatory controls set out in the Government's White Paper "Lifting the Burden".

The new regulations will be supported by approved documents giving practical guidance on how to meet the requirements and by the mandatory rules for means of escape in case of fire, published by HMSO on 8 July. There will also be a manual to the building regulations which will contain the regulations, explain the new systems of control and provide a link between the technical requirements and the approved documents. Copies of these documents have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and should be available to the public before the middle of August.

The Building (Approved Inspectors etc) Regulations 1985 set out the detailed procedures for operating the system of private certification, to provide developers with an alternative option to local authority supervision. Those who continue to use the local authority system will be able to provide certificates given by approved persons that their plans comply with the regulations on structural stability or energy conservation.

I am considering an application from the National House-Building Council to be approved as an inspector for dwellings, and the insurance scheme which it is proposing to offer, when acting in this new capacity. I intend in due course to designate professional bodies for the purpose of approving individual inspectors and persons, and will be continuing discussions with them and the insurance industry on possible ways of providing adequate protection for those who suffer damage resulting from the negligence of an approved inspector or person.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment and Training Schemes (Funding)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Employment what financial assistance the European Economic Community has given towards employment and training schemes in Scotland in each of the past two years; and if he will make a statement on future funding.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The European Commission allocated approximately £52 million from the European social fund towards employment and training schemes in Scotland in 1983, and approximately £49 million in 1984. Figures for 1985 are not yet available. Future allocations from the social fund will depend on the ability of promoters to mount schemes which meet the guidelines for the management of the fund in 1986-88 recently announced by the Commission.

EEC Directives

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on recent discussions in the EEC Labour and Social Affairs Council concerning the proposals for directives on *(a)* information and consultation of workers and *(b)* voluntary part-time work stating in particular the stance taken by each EEC country.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) on 25 June at column 370. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the stance taken by other EC member states at the Council.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has held with his EEC counterparts concerning the draft directive on parental leave; if he will list the remaining Government objections to the draft directive; if he will place in the Library a copy of the most recent draft under discussion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson)

on 10 June at column *358*; and to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) on 25 June at column *370*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter submitted to the EEC Labour and Social Affairs Council concerning the equal treatment of men and women and the implementation of Directive 76/207/EEC.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library of the House. I am arranging for a copy to be sent to the hon. Member.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had registered as willing to work at jobcentres in the area covered by the Enfield, Southgate parliamentary constituency at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 954 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Enfield, Southgate. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit; jobseekers are no longer required to register at a jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Enfield, Southgate parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 2,632. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had registered as willing to work at jobcentres in the area covered by Edmonton parliamentary constituency at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 686 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Enfield, Edmonton. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit; jobseekers are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Edmonton parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 3,971. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had registered as willing to work at jobcentres in the area covered by the Cannock and Burntwood parliamentary constituency at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 964 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Cannock and Burntwood. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit; jobseekers are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Cannock and Burntwood parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 5,351. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had registered as willing to work at jobcentres in Southampton at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 2,738 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Southampton, Itchen. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit; jobseekers are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Southampton, Itchen parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 6,351. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had registered as willing to work at the Stirling jobcentre at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 1,047 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Stirling. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit; jobseekers are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Stirling parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 4,171. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people had registered as willing to work at jobcentres covered by the area of the Brigg and Cleethorpes parliamentary constituency at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 2,730 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Brigg and Cleethorpes. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit; jobseekers are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the Brigg and Cleethorpes parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 6,357. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Sheep Worrying

41. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what was the number of proceedings instituted by procurators fiscal in Scotland for offences related to sheep worrying in 1984 and in 1985 to date.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Provisional figures for 1984 indicate that 130 persons were proceeded against for contraventions of the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953. No figures are yet available for 1985. The provisions of the Act extend to animals other than sheep and it is not possible to determine which cases relate specifically to sheep worrying.

Speeding Offences

42. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many road users have been prosecuted in the latest convenient year for exceeding the speed limit; and how many cases used evidence obtained *(a)* by radar gun, *(b)* by stop watch and *(c)* by trailing by police car, respectively.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Provisional figures for 1984 indicate that 5,692 persons were proceeded against for speeding offences. As I have previously indicated, no figures are separately kept of the means used to detect motorists committing speeding offences.

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980

43. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been under part V of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Between 1 February 1981, when the provisions of part V of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1980 were brought into force, and the end of 1984, 1,197 persons were prosecuted under sections 69, 70, 72, 73 and 74 of the Act.

46. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he next intends to meet procurators fiscal to discuss the operation of sections 1 to 3 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have no immediate plans to meet procurators fiscal to discuss the operation of sections 1 to 3 of the 1980 Act.

Travelling People

44. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions of travelling people have taken place in Scotland for offences other than trespass in the last year.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: This information is not available. My department does not discriminate between different groups in the community either in enforcing the general criminal law or recording information about prosecutions.

Legal Aid

45. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he will next meet the Scottish Law Commission to discuss legal aid.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I have meetings, formal and informal, with the commission from time to time, but no meeting to discuss legal aid has been arranged.

Diligence

47. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he expects to receive the report from the Law Commission on the reform of the law of diligence in Scotland; and when Her Majesty's Government expects to bring forward legislation on the subject.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Scottish Law Commission's first and main report on diligence was received in the middle of last month. The report is now being printed and will be laid before Parliament and published in the autumn.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I are very conscious of the public concern that the diligences used to enforce debts should be reformed. It is, however, necessary to take full account of the public reaction to the commission's detailed recommendations, when they are published, before determining when appropriate legislation might be brought forward.

Police (Alleged Assaults)

48. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many cases of alleged police assaults were reported to procurators fiscal in each of the past five years; and how many resulted in successful prosecution.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The number of cases of alleged assault by police officers reported to procurators fiscal or regional procurators fiscal is not available. The following table shows the number of such cases reported by regional procurators fiscal to Crown Office for consideration of proceedings, and their outcome:

	Number of Cases	*Number of Persons Prosecuted*	*Number Convicted*
1980	278	17	N/A
1981	278	17	N/A
1982	317	28	N/A
1983	366	16	5
1984	428	12	1

N/A=not available

General statistics of complaints against the police, which however draw no distinction between alleged assaults and other forms of alleged misconduct, are available in the annual reports in the Library of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Crown Office (Proceedings)

49. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland in what circumstances the Crown Office makes a statement announcing its decision that no further proceedings will be taken against an individual when it decides not to proceed.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: An intimation to an accused person that no proceedings are to be taken constitutes a complete bar to any proceedings thereafter, at the instance of the Crown, and such intimation is given only where it is clearly correct to do so. On the other hand, it is recognised that accused persons, complainers and indeed the public have a legitimate interest in knowing at the earliest possible date what is to happen in cases of interest to them. It is therefore essential that a balanced and careful judgment be made in every case according to its own circumstances.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Steel Industry

37. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Scottish works of the British Steel Corporation have made a valuable contribution to the corporation's performance in 1984-85, which is reflected in its published accounts.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the proportion of all capital investment in the United Kingdom made in manufacturing industry for each year since 1980.

Mr. Channon: The required information is given in the following table:

Investment in UK manufacturing industry as a proportion of total gross domestic capital formation*

Year	*Per cent.*
1980	18
1981	15
1982	14
1983	13
1984	14

* Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980) including assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries.
Source: United Kingdom National Accounts (The CSO Blue Book).

EC (Trade Documents)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made in the introduction of the single administrative document for all inter-Community trade; and what is the expected date by which it will be used for all such trade.

Mr. Channon: The basic regulation and regulation introducing the specimen single document itself were approved by the Internal Market Council in December 1984. Subsequent discussions on the implementation provisions are now nearing completion. The form and its associated procedures are to be tested in trials, to take place later this year and early next year, and will be implemented on 1 January 1988.

EC (Health Protection)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made within the European Community for the complete harmonisation of national rules for health protection.

Mr. Channon: A number of directives harmonising national rules in the area of health protection have been adopted. A list of further Commission proposals for directives to be adopted by 1992 on veterinary and phytosanitary controls, food law, pharmaceutical and high-technology medicines, and chemical products and other manufactured goods are given in the annex to the Commission's White Paper—"Completing the Internal Market". A copy of this White Paper is available in the Library.

High-technology Exports

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what conveniently available figures he has for the average time it takes a British exporter of high-technology equipment to receive a decision or a COCOM application, compared with the practice by Governments in Germany and Italy.

Mr. Channon: I regret that this information is not available.

Small Businesses

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what specific measures he plans to undertake to implement the proposals contained in his Department's report on the scrutiny of administrative and legislative requirements in small businesses.

Mr. Butcher: The White Paper "Lifting the Burden" laid yesterday before the House announced action on both company and consumer law, including rationalising company law filing requirements; taking decisions after consultation on the need for statutory audits of small companies and on simplifying the content of small company accounts; rationalising legislation on misleading price indications; introducing a new general duty on product safety and taking decisions, after consultation, on action to implement recommendations in the Eden report.

Shipbuilding (Aid)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has held with the European Commission concerning aid to the shipbuilding industry; what action the Government intend to take following the limits to aid announced by the Commission; what is the Government's assessment of the degree of overcapacity in the EEC shipbuilding industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) on 5 July, at column 275.

Copyright

Mr. Ashe asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards assisting those whose United Kingdom copyrights are infringed in Singapore, particularly with regard to printed works; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps Her Majesty's Government take in the countries concerned to protect the interests of United Kingdom copyright holders *(a)* generally and *(b)* of printed works, where products which have been produced elsewhere in violation of United Kingdom copyrights are offered for sale; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions the Minister for Trade, the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) had with the Government of Singapore about infringements of United Kingdom copyrights in Singapore in the course of his recent visit *(a)* generally and *(b)* with particular reference to books; what response was made; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has as to measures being taken by the Government of Singapore to protect *(a)* by legislation, *(b)* by enforcement of existing law and *(c)* by administrative measures the copyright of foreign works; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to take action to seek to reduce the level of infringement in Singapore of United Kingdom copyrights of printed works; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what information he has as to the estimated annual cost to the United Kingdom book industry of infringements in Singapore of United Kingdom copyrights of printed works and as to the trend in the level of such costs over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Government take every available opportunity to impress on countries whose copyright law and enforcement procedures fail to protect United Kindgom copyright owners the inequity of permitting unauthorised exploitation of foreign copyright material. Such countries are urged to join the international copyright conventions and to enact effective copyright law. The Government continue to be concerned at the inadequacy of copyright protection for foreign works in Singapore and at the extent of piracy there of United Kingdom copyright material, including printed works. The scale of such piracy cannot be accurately estimated, but it is known to be considerable. The high commission maintains contact with the Singapore authorities on this issue, which I also raised during my recent visit to Singapore. I was informed by the acting Minister of Trade and Minister of Finance that the authorities recognised the need for revision of existing law. New legislation was under consideration, although no timetable could be given. Singapore copyright law is at present based on the United Kingdom Copyright Act 1911. The Singapore High Court has recently confirmed that this law is applicable to works first published in the United Kingdom. However, the available penalties and enforcement procedures are inappropriate to modern conditions.

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish details of moneys made available by his Department to each information technology centre for each financial year since its inception, and of moneys for which each one is eligible in the future.

Mr. Pattie: The information is not available without disproportionate costs. Each ITeC is entitled to £75,000 DTI grant over a period of three years. For each of the financial years since the inception of the programme the total DTI expenditure on ITeCs has been:

Financial year	*£ million*
1982-83	1·2
1983-84	3·0
1984-85	4·1

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of Trade and Industry if he will indicate what criteria are used in determining the level of support for each information technology centre.

Mr. Pattie: There are no selective criteria which determine the level of DTI support for ITeCs. Provided the original application to establish an ITeC is sound, each centre is entitled to £75,000 over its first three years of operation. DTI funds are mostly used for capital purchases and top-up of staff salaries, and enable centres to involve themselves in activities in addition to their main role of providing YTS training.

BL (Corporate Plan)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent provision is made in the BL corporate plan for initial investment in engine technology necessary to comply with the European Economic Community requirements on car exhaust emissions; what estimate is available to him of the likely eventual cost of this investment; and if he will make it his policy to authorise any necessary additional investment for this purpose within the framework of BL's corporate plan.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The assumptions and investment forecasts for particular elements in the BL corporate plan are commercially confidential. Any adjustments to the company's plans on account of European Community vehicle emissions requirements would be considered by the Government in the framework of the corporate planning process operated under the memorandum of understanding between BL and the Secretary of State.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Defendants (Medical Treatment)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Attorney-General if he will list the number of defendants in Crown courts in each year since 1979 who had been recommended for medical or psychiatric treatment but whom the judge subsequently sent to prison.

The Attorney-General: This information is not available.

DEFENCE

Military Assistance

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many countries in the Caribbean received visits by advisory teams and loan personnel or received military assistance in 1984; and if he will name the countries;

(2) if he will list the countries to which the United Kingdom has given military assistance in the last financial year.

Mr. Stanley: The list of countries and territories provided with military assistance in 1984-85, either in the form of training by Her Majesty's Armed Forces in the United Kingdom or through members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces serving overseas on loan or secondment, is as follows:

Algeria	Malaysia
Australia	Maldives
Bahamas	Mauritius
Bahrain	Montserrat
Bangladesh	Mozambique
Barbados	Nepal
Belgium	Netherlands
Belize	New Zealand
Bermuda	Nigeria
Botswana	Norway
Brazil	Oman
Brunei	Pakistan
Canada	Philippines
Chile	Portugal
Denmark	Qatar
Ecuador	St. Vincent
Egypt	Saudi Arabia
Fiji	Senegal
Federal Republic of Germany	Sierra Leone
Fiji	Singapore
Finland	South Korea
France	Spain
Gambia	Sri Lanka
Ghana	Sudan
Greece	Swaziland
Guyana	Sweden
Hong Kong	Switzerland
Iceland	Tanzania
India	Thailand
Indonesia	Trinidad and Tobago
Iraq	Tunisia
Israel	Turkey
Italy	Uganda
Jamaica	UAE
Japan	USA
Jordan	Venezuela
Kenya	Yemen Arab Republic
Kuwait	Yugoslavia
Lebanon	Zaire
Lesotho	Zambia
Libya	Zimbabwe
Malawi	

All these countries in the Caribbean area who received military assistance in the form of United Kingdom loan service or secondment personnel or training in the United Kingdom in calendar year 1984 are included in this list. Records of other miscellaneous types of military assistance are not held centrally on a world-wide basis.

Submarines

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if any British uranium will be sent to the United States of America for enrichment to provide fuel for the Trident submarines;

(2) whether facilities in the United Kingdom are adequate for all stages of enrichment, manufacture and reprocessing of fuel materials for *(a)* nuclear-powered submarines in service and *(b)* nuclear-powered Trident submarines; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether facilities in the United States of America have been used in the enrichment and manufacture of fuel materials for British nuclear-powered submarines; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether facilities in the United States of America will be used in the enrichment and manufacture of fuel materials for nuclear-powered Trident submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The United Kingdom does not currently have adequate facilities to deal with all the stages involved in the manufacture and reprocessing of fuel materials either for nuclear-powered submarines already in service or for Trident submarines. Facilities in the United States of America have been used in the past to enrich uranium for United Kingdom submarine fuel. For the future, under the arrangements outlined by the then Secretary of State for Defence in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bebington and Ellesmere Port (Vol. 26, column *128-9*), the fuel requirements for the United Kingdom's Trident submarines will be met by the enrichment of natural uranium to an intermediate level at British Nuclear Fuels plc's site at Capenhurst, from where it will be transported to the United States of America for final enrichment to the level required for defence purposes.

Naval Explosions (Solent)

Mr. Hamerock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many claims for compensation have been made to his Department due to damage caused by various naval explosions in the Solent over the last 10 years; and if his Department has paid compensation for any damage caused.

Mr. Lee: Two claims have been received for property damage compensation arising from naval explosions in the Solent over the past 10 years. Compensation was agreed in one case; the second was repudiated on the basis of expert advice.

Installations (Ground Defence)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether United States of America and British plans for the ground defence of vital installations in the United Kingdom have been integrated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Plans for the ground defence of US vital installations in the United Kingdom are integrated into our overall home defence plans. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 21 March (Vol. 75, columns *585 to 586*) exercise Brave Defender will test our revised home defence plans and procedures and some US forces will participate in the exercise.

SCOTLAND

NHS (Patient Care)

13. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of the likely

effects on the quality of patient care in the National Health Service of his proposed arrangements for financing the recent pay awards for medical and nursing staff.

Mr. John MacKay: It should be possible for health boards to meet the full cost of pay awards to medical and nursing staff this year from within the resources made available to them, without affecting services to patients.

Agricultural Research and Advisory Services

14. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the funding of agricultural advisory and research services by his Department.

Mr. John Mackay: A consultative paper was issued in May by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland discussing a possible strategy for agricultural research and development services over the next decade and having regard to projected reductions in public funding. A similar consultative document about the advisory services provided by the Scottish agricultural colleges under revised funding arrangements will be issued later this year. Responses to these consultation papers will be carefully considered before any final decisions are made.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on current levels of unemployment in Scotland.

28. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures for Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On 13 June 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland was 345,635, a fall of 2,273 from the May figure. The seasonally adusted figure showed a slight increase in unemployment over that month. The increase was the lowest recorded this year.

Teachers

16. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make an up-to-date statement on the latest position relating to the pay and conditions of service of teachers in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Following the Secretary of State's meeting with the education committee of COSLA last month at which there was broad agreement on a teacher's job description, technical discussions are proceeding within the management side of the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in school education about the outline of a possible package on pay and conditions of service. Adjusting the existing expenditure plans for the current financial year is no longer a practical proposition. However, the Government would be willing to provide some additional resources for teachers' pay in the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87, provided that agreement can be achieved on an acceptable package. I very much hope that progress can be made towards that objective.

17. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average salary of an un-promoted secondary school teacher in Scotland in *(a)* June 1980 and *(b)* today, expressed (i) as a real figure and (ii) in relation to the retail price index.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information about the average salaries of un-promoted secondary school teachers is not separately available from the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in school education. However, the SJNC carries out a salaries survey in October of each year and, based on this information, the average annual salary of a secondary school teacher was £8,037 in 1980 and £10,296 in 1984. Based on movements in the retail price index between October 1980 and October 1984, the 1980 salary is equivalent to an indexed salary of £10,577 at October 1984.

Council House Sales

18. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the progress being made with the sale of council houses in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. Since 1979 over 69,000 public sector tenants have bought their houses; binding contracts of sale have been concluded in a further 3,250 cases; and there are approximately another 5,500 applications at an earlier point in the pipeline. Authorities are also increasingly appreciating the need to process sales quickly. The average time taken to complete transactions has fallen to approximately nine months.

Leasehold Property

19. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to deal with the problem of house owners whose property is on land the lease of which is due to expire in the next 15 years.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Roads (Ayrshire)

20. **Mr. Lamble** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will discuss with Strathclyde regional council a new roads programme to connect Ayrshire with the main Scottish motorway system.

Mr. Ancram: Improvements to trunk roads A75, A76, A77 and A78 are in preparation. The development of the local road network is a matter for Strathclyde regional council. I would naturally consider carefully any proposals that the region puts to me in its periodic transport policies and programme statements.

Coal Industry

21. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will discuss the level of investment in the Scottish coalfield.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board. The Government remain committed to very substantial financial support for the coal industry over the next two years. It is for the NCB to determine how these funds can best be invested in the Scottish and other coalfields. This

year alone the NCB is investing more than £20 million in Scotland in new developments and some of the most technically advanced mining machinery.

Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council

22. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The chairman of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council has informed my right hon. Friend that the council expects to submit its report on the future strategy for higher education in Scotland by about the end of October.

Teachers (Dispute)

23. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the course of the teacher's dispute in Scottish schools.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There has been no strike action since the week beginning 17 June, and Scottish schools are now on holiday. I understand that the EIS has threatened intensified industrial action next session. Since the teachers' side of the Scottish joint negotiating committee has refused to submit a pay claim, no increase can be negotiated for the current year. I hope that negotiations on a medium-term pay and conditions of service package will begin. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that extra resources would be made available in the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 if an acceptable package is negotiated by October.

Rate Relief

24. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet in a position to estimate how much of the money recently allocated to rate relief is expected to be paid out under the provisions of the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985.

Mr. Ancram: I told the House on 19 June, at column 281 that the cost of rebates in 1985-86 under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985 was estimated to be around £30 million. I shall let the hon. Member have a copy of a table giving the breakdown of these costs by rating authority, as estimated by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Fife Regional Council (Expenditure)

25. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the cost to Fife ratepayers of the expenditure in excess of guidelines by Fife regional council.

Mr. Ancram: The rate set by Fife regional council for 1985-86 includes 8·1p in respect of the council's budgeted excess over guidelines and provision for a grant penalty in 1985-86 and a deficit carried forward from 1984-85 resulting from the grant penalty for overspending in that year. This amounts to some £14·72 million of rate income and is costing the average domestic ratepayer in Fife almost £50.

Employment Situation

26. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will have discussions with the Scottish Trades Union Congress about the employment situation in Scotland following the dispute in the mining industry.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to hold discussions of this sort.

Whisky Industry

27. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been lost in the Scotch whisky industry in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information in the form requested is not available, but the estimated changes in the numbers employed in each of the years 1974 to 1982 from each previous year, in the spirit distilling and compounding industry in Scotland, are +2,600, −1,200, −500, +500, +1,300, 0, −700, −2,000 and −1,900 respectively. Estimates for the years to 1978 are based on the annual census of employment; those for the later years shown are based on the annual census of production. Estimates for 1983, 1984 and 1985 are not available.

Scottish Institute of Agricultural Engineering

29. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on the basis of the proposed reduction in grant of the Scottish Institute of Agricultural Engineering.

Mr. Younger: The proposals set out in the consultation paper "A Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development" are based on the need to adjust programmes of research and development in tune with the changing circumstances and needs of the industry and the wider community, to achieve savings in public expenditure and to encourage increased funding from the industry itself. Responses to the paper are being received and considered. No decision has been taken on the level of the future funding of the Scottish Institute of Agricultural Engineering.

Scientific Research and Development

30. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on support from his Department's budget for scientific research and development in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: Expenditure by my Departments on support for research and development in Scotland is estimated to total about £55 million during the current financial year.

Steel Industry

31. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next proposes to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the steel industry.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I met STUC representatives on 7 June when we discussed a number of subjects, including future investment at Ravenscraig. We have no plans for a further meeting in the near future.

Elderly Mentally Ill Persons

32. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the present provision of facilities for the care and treatment of the elderly mentally sick in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I have urged health boards to give high priority to the development of mental health services including services for the elderly with mental disability and I am monitoring performance. The Scottish Health Service planning council has set up a working group to review, inter alia, recommendations concerning this group in the report "Scottish Health Authorities' Priorities for the Eighties" and to prepare revised guidelines covering the period up to 1992.

Salmon Stocks

33. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland from what organisations and individuals he has recently received representations about the state of salmon stocks.

Mr. John MacKay: Further to the reply I gave my hon. Friend on 19 June 1985 I can say that representations have been received from a number of organisations representative of salmon fishing interests including the Association of Scottish District Salmon Fishery Boards, the Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland, the Atlantic Salmon Trust and the Salmon Conservancy, from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents and from individual members of the public.

Inverclyde Training Centre, Greenock

34. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the Inverclyde training centre, Greenock.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I met a delegation from the Inverclyde training centre support group, which the hon. Member accompanied, on 20 June. I was impressed by the case the group made for taking over responsibility for the centre from British Shipbuilders (Training, Education and Safety) Ltd. and I subsequently wrote to support the group's proposals. I was pleased to learn that the BS(TES) board has now agreed in principle to the transfer of the training centre to the group.

Agricultural Research and Advisory Services

35. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has had about the reduction in the research and development and advisory services of the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Younger: Representations have been received from a number of organisations and individuals expressing their views on the proposed reductions in public expenditure on agricultural research and development and advisory services, and in response to my Department's consultation paper "A Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development" on which comments were sought by the end of June.

Electricity Boards

36. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman of the electricity boards in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet the chairmen of the boards. I met the chairman and members of the North of Scotland Hydro-electric Board in March and the chairman and members of the South of Scotland Electricity Board in April this year, when a number of general issues of current interest were discussed.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and locations of the broadleaved woodlands for which felling licences for conversion of the land to agriculture were issued in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 in the Forestry Commission's east Scotland conservancy and west Scotland conservancy.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Name of Wood	*Location*	*Region*
East Scotland Conservancy		
Year to 31 March 1983		
East Muir Wood, Newmiln Estate	Guildtown	Tayside
Woodlands on Greigston Farm	Cupar	Fife
Woodlands on Turin Estate	Forfar	Tayside
Woodlands at Milton of Guthrie	Forfar	Tayside
Woodlands at Woodend, Aldbar	Forfar	Tayside
Woodlands at Strathkinness House	St. Andrews	Fife
Woodlands at Dundevie	Aberfeldy	Tayside
Year to 31 March 1984		
Woodlands on Langleas Farm	Dunfermline	Fife
Woodlands on Bogside Farm	Alloa	Central
Woodlands at Knowehead of Dunrune	Kellas	Angus
Woodlands at Anglepark Sand and Gravel	Ladybank	Fife
Woodlands at Mounie	Crieff	Tayside
Woodlands at Aytonhill	Newburgh	Fife
Woodlands at Newton	Laurencekirk	Grampian
Woodlands at Redhall	Auchenblae	Grampian
Year to 31 March 1985		
None		
West Scotland Conservancy		
Year to 31 March 1983		
Woodlands at Auchinsden	Blairfield	Central
Year to 31 March 1984		
None		
Year to 31 March 1985		
None		

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the negotiations with the European Commission concerning the issue of the calibration of refrigerated sea-water tanks on board Community fishing vessels.

Mr. John MacKay: The European Commission is aware of the value of having such tanks calibrated for monitoring pelagic fisheries and are in the initial stage of considering the extension of their use. It should be stressed that whether this method is available or not, member states are obliged to check and report the catches of their vessels. The recent introduction of log books and landing declarations is expected to lead to more accurate recording.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Research Vessel

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why the latest fisheries research vessel is not to be built in the Appledore shipyard.

Mr. MacGregor: A full evaluation was made of competing bids for the latest fisheries research vessel. Shipyards were visited and assessments made of, among other things, design capability, construction standards and previous experience. On this basis, the contract was awarded to Ferguson-Ailsa Ltd.

Surplus Food Stocks

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the most up-to-date estimate of the amount and value of surplus food stocks in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the entire European Economic Community.

Mr. Jopling: On 30 June intervention stocks of beef, breadwheat, butter and skimmed milk powder in the United Kingdom were 341,000 tonnes valued at about £530 million using the buying-in prices valid at that date. The volume of Community stocks of these products at the latest available dates was 6,527,000 tonnes, but these are valued only once a year, on 30 November.

Hops

Mr. Rowe asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any representations for the reintroduction of the Hop Marketing Board.

Mrs. Fenner: I have received no such representations.

Grain Surplus

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of the storage of grain surplus to needs for each of the last three years.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure on storage, including handling and other incidental costs, of cereals purchased into intervention in the United Kingdom was as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	19·6
1983-84	30·6
1984-85	*30·4

*Provisional.

Peaches, Apricots, Oranges and Lemons

Mr. Skinner asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of *(a)* peaches, *(b)* apricots, *(c)* oranges and *(d)* lemons, respectively, were destroyed by the European Economic Community in 1983 and 1984.

Mrs. Fenner: Figures for the two latest marketing years for which information is available are as follows:

Commodity	*Quantities withdrawn from the market and assumed to be spoilt*— '000 tonnes*	
	1982-83	*1983-84*
Peaches	98	170
Apricots	—	50
Oranges	124	477
Lemons	121	382

*Defined as produce not disposed of to one of the outlets provided for in European Community regulations, such as charitable organisations or animal feed.

EC (Intervention Stores)

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the refusal of the Home Cereals Authority to accept Merseyside companies offering space for the storage of EEC Intervention Board grain; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985]: Representations have been received from two hon. Members on behalf of employees of the Liverpool Grain Stores which I understand are due to close. In reply, I pointed out that intervention grain must be allocated to the nearest available store, the aim being to limit the cost to the Community budget of transporting surplus grain from the areas of production into store. There are few offerers of grain from the area adjacent to Liverpool and sufficient intervention storage to serve the needs of the north-west of England is already under contract.

EC (Agriculture Expenditure)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate of the dollar/ecu exchange rate was used in determining the level of agricultural spending contained in the 1986 draft EEC budget.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985]: A rate of 1·2 ecu to the US dollar has been assumed by the Commission in drawing up its preliminary draft budget proposals for agricultural expenditure.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list all categories of agricultural and rural spending or support not included in the 20·6 billion ecu limit on EEC agricultural spending for 1986; and if he will state for each category *(a)* the level of spending in 1984, *(b)* the level of spending for 1985 and *(c)* the estimated level of spending as contained in the 1986 preliminary draft budget;

(2) what assumption regarding the increase in cereal prices was made in deciding on *(a)* the limit for EEC agricultural spending in 1986 and *(b)* the 1986 draft budget.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985]: For the purposes of the financial guideline calculation for 1986, it is assumed that EAGGF guarantee expenditure in 1985 will be at the level fixed in the budget. The budget was drawn up on the assumption that the Commission's original price-fixing proposals, including a reduction of 3·6 per cent. in cereal prices, would be agreed. Changes to these proposals will not, however,

affect the calculation of the financial guideline as the Commission has undertaken to take any necessary measures to avoid a supplementary budget this year.

I understand that in its preliminary draft budget for 1986 the Commission will assume a cut of 1·8 per cent. in cereal prices for the 1985-86 marketing year, as in the amended proposals from the Commission and Presidency of 16 May.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assumption regarding the increase in cereal prices was made in deciding on *(a)* the limit for EEC agricultural spending in 1986 and *(b)* the 1986 draft budget.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 11 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). The figures requested are as follows:

	(mecu)	
	EAGGF guidance (except fisheries)	*Section IIIB Chapter 38*
1984 outturn (provisional)	634	56
1985 budget	632	55
1986 preliminary draft budget	865	Not yet known

Rural areas may also benefit from expenditure under other parts of the Community budget, notably the other structural funds, but the amounts cannot separately be identified.

Dieldrin

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which uses of dieldrin are likely to be approved once the Food and Environment Protection Bill becomes law.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 July 1985]: Currently dieldrin has clearance under the pesticides safety precautions scheme for use as an insecticidal lacquer in food storage and for the industrial pre-treatment of timber. With the introduction of statutory controls, all current clearances of pesticides and their uses will be reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. I cannot prejudge what advice will be given in respect of any individual chemical or its uses. It has, however, been a principle of Government policy for some years to phase out organochlorine and organomercury compounds as less persistent, efficacious alternatives become available.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what levels of dieldrin were found by the analyses carried out upon the dead herons found on the River Avon near Evesham; and if he will report on the efforts made to locate the source of this pollution.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 July 1985]: MAFF laboratory analyses of two heron carcases found on the River Avon near Evesham have revealed dieldrin levels of 19 mg/kg and 54 mg/kg respectively. Residues of DDE and PCBs have also been confirmed.

The sampling programme being carried out by the Severn Trent water authority to determine the source of the residues has yet to be completed.

Industrial Fishing (By-catch Level)

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has been informed by the European Commission that it will recommend an increase in 1986 in the industrial fishing by-catch level.

Mr. MacGregor: The European Commission has submitted a draft regulation to the Council which, if adopted, would have the effect of re-introducing for the period 1 October 1985 to 31 May 1986 a derogation to allow a by-catch of 18 per cent. of whiting in the Norway pout fishery similar to that applying for the same period in 1984-85. The Government does not consider this proposal to be justified and will make this clear in any Council discussions.

Council of Agriculture Ministers (Meeting)

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting in Brussels on 15 and 16 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I represented the United Kingdom at the Agriculture Council on 15-16 July at which Spain and Portugal were present for the first time as observers.

On cereals, the German Minister maintained his opposition to the 1·8 per cent. reduction in support prices for 1985-86. There was no change in the position of other delegations. Moreover, the Commission stated that they had no intention of varying the proposals which were before the Council in June.

With the Council still unable to reach agreement, the Commission stated that it would continue to apply the measures already taken for oilseed rape and durum wheat, and that it would also from 1 August introduce analogous measures for other cereals based on a price abatement of 1·8 per cent. and authorise member states to make an end-of-season payment for common wheat and rye of breadmaking quality in accordance with the proposals that were before the June Council.

The Commission stated its intention under Management Committee procedures to reduce the delay in the payment period for cereals bought into intervention from 120-140 days to 90-120 days which was also in the June proposals; and to operate a special intervention for breadmaking wheat towards the end of the 1985-86 marketing year.

The President said that he intended to keep cereal prices on the agenda for future meetings of the Council with a view to reaching a decision in the autumn. The Commission said that it would bring forward at the beginning of October, proposals for modifying the cereals regime to enable decisions to be taken by the end of 1985. The President and the Commission envisaged that these new proposals may facilitate discussions in the Council.

The Council reached agreement on a directive governing intra-community trade in heat treated milk. This lays down public health and animal health requirements for the production and processing of heat treated milk and the procedures to apply when this is traded between member states. There is provision for member states with high domestic standards, like the United Kingdom, to apply such higher standards to imports as soon as the directive comes into effect on 1 January 1989. This is a very satisfactory outcome; the directive is entirely consistent with the views which our industry put to us. The

Council also agreed the minimum import price arrangements for currants, raisins and sultanas to apply from 1 September 1985. Consignments entering the Community up to 9 per cent. below the minimum price will be subject to a graduated levy, the full levy of 22 per cent. only coming into effect at lower prices. In addition, the minimum price in sterling terms will normally not be changed at intervals of less than two months. We would have preferred a three-monthly interval as better suited to our importers needs and I voted against the two month compromise on this ground. But the two month interval will be a major improvement on the one week that applies at present. Overall, we have pressed for and achieved changes in the original proposals which give greater certainty to our traders.

I am pleased to announce also that agreement was reached on an extension of the arrangements for aiding capital investment in animal feed mills in Northern Ireland. This provides an additional 4·5 million ecus over the period to the end of 1987.

I again expressed my concern about the delays in reaching a conclusion over the continued preferential price of gas to Dutch horticultural growers. Mr. Andriessen indicated that the Commission had yesterday made a formal application to the Court on this matter.

The Council agreed a regulation allowing the levels of export restitutions on pasta to be differentiated between destinations.

Mr. Andriessen introduced to the Council the Commission paper on "Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy". This is an important document in which the Commission sets out its thoughts as the basis for discussion within the Community. The Council will be discussing this in depth in the autumn.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Central Heating (Additions)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the extent of the financial loss likely to be suffered by the unemployed, sick and disabled as a result of his review of central heating allowance;

(2) if he will monitor the effect of his recent review to ascertain how much benefit will be lost by first time claimants for central heating allowances after 5 August.

Mr. Newton: No-one will have a central heating addition withdrawn as a result of the proposal announced by my right hon. Friend on 18 June: this was that no new awards of these additions should be made with effect from 5 August. The current rates of central heating additions are £2·10 and £4·20 a week, depending on the size of the home.

We have no plans for a specific monitoring exercise on the effects of these changes. Information on central heating additions in payment will however continue to be collected as part of our annual statistical inquiry. I refer the hon. Member to our estimates of the effects of the change in entitlement to these additions contained in my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan on 1 July at column *61*.

A large number of claimants, including many who are long-term sick or disabled, will of course be entitled to heating additions under other provisions, in some cases at a higher rate than either of the central heating additions. As my right hon. Friend also announced on 18 June, all sick and disabled householders receiving the long-term rate of benefit will from November be automatically entitled to at least the lower rate of heating addition.

Mentally Handicapped Children (Hospitals)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what priority he is giving to the issue of children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals in his regional review meetings with regional chairmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have given and continue to give high priority to this issue. Services for mentally handicapped children are always considered as part of the preparation for each regional review, and are raised at review meetings where appropriate. In 1984 tasks relating to services for mentally handicapped children were set in the action plans for most regions.

Patients Statistics (Hereford)

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table showing for the Hereford district general hospital for each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1984 the numbers of in patients treated, the numbers of new outpatients, the total numbers of operations performed and the number of knee replacement operations and hip replacement operations performed.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information is given in the table. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of Herefordshire health authority who may be able to provide the remaining information.

Hereford District General Hospital

	1980 *	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*†1984*
All specialties					
In-patient cases	2,874	3,335	3,539	3,317	3,669
*Day cases	703	639	484	669	584
Out-patient attendances:					
New attendances	4,245	4,622	4,710	5,097	5,559
Total attendances	17,303	18,220	18,891	21,280	21,232
Surgical specialties					
In-patient cases	2,231	2,438	2,640	2,315	2,605
Day cases	547	487	484	669	584

* Figures for 1980 and 1981 included attendances by psycho-geriatric patients which were subsequently coded as regular day patients.
† Provisional.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the findings of the management consultants' study commissioned by his Department and undertaken during the first quarter of the current year concerning the character of the market for board and lodging accommodation and the effect on it of supplementary benefit payments.

Mr. Whitney: Copies of the report by Ernst and Whinney on the operation of the ordinary board and lodging market have been placed in the Library today. Copies may be purchased by the public from the Department of Health and Social Security. Room 432 New Court, Carey Street, London WC2A 2LS (price £4).

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has so far received concerning the effects for ordinary board and lodging claimants of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985; and if he will list from whom each has come.

Mr. Whitney: For the latest available information, I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds Central yesterday. A list of correspondence on this subject is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people under the age of 25 years are receiving board and lodging allowances in Lambeth for a period limited to eight weeks.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Derby South on 9 July at column *371*.

Pensions

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* men over the age of 65 years and *(b)* women over the age of 60 years do not qualify for a pension as their contributions fall below 25 per cent. of full contribution; and if he will break these figures down to show how many in each category have paid contributions in the following bands: under 5 per cent., 5 to 10 per cent., 10 to 15 per cent., 15 to 20 per cent. and 20 to 25 per cent.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the number of people who do not qualify for any basic pension because of contribution deficiencies is not recorded centrally. In 1984-85 of 837,000 forms issued to local offices to invite a claim to retirement pension from men and women within four months of pension age 102,000 showed no entitlement to any state retirement pension. This number does not include those people who had no entitlement to basic pension but were entitled to some graduated pension or additional component.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total value of the contributions paid during their working life by *(a)* men over 65 years and *(b)* women over 60 years who are not eligible to receive a pension because their contributions fall below the required 25 per cent.; and what is the average contribution paid in each category, since 1955, or such later date as information is available.

Mr. Whitney: This information could not be produced without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women retired at 60 years on a full basic state pension in 1983-84 and 1984-85 respectively.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *66*]: In the year ended 31 March 1984, 32,650 women retired at 60 with a 100 per cent. basic pension based on their own contributions. Information for the year 1984-85 is not yet available.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government will prescribe all repetitive strain injuries, including carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow and frozen shoulder, as industrial diseases for *(a)* clerical and *(b)* other workers, respectively, in the telecommunications industry; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The repetition strain injuries writer's cramp and tenosynovitis are already prescribed. Carpal tunnel syndrome is also covered if it occurs as a result of tenosynovitis. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, which advises the Government on the prescribed diseases, considered repetition strain injuries, including carpal tunnel syndrome, epicondylitis of the humerus (tennis elbow) and rotator cuff syndrome (frozen shoulder), in its 1981 "Review of the schedule of prescribed diseases" (Cmnd. 8393, paragraphs 51-55). In 1983 the council studied two of these conditions, epicondylitis of the humerus and rotator cuff syndrome, in more detail. This report was not published but copies are available in the Library. Both reports decided against widening the terms of prescription for these conditions, because they were common in the general population and there was insufficient evidence to link them with specific occupational groups. However, the council is keeping the evidence on repetition strain injuries under review.

Child Benefit

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the additional cost of raising child benefits in line with other benefits rather than only two per cent. this November.

Mr. Whitney: It would cost an additional £175 million in a full year to increase child benefit in line with the increase in the retail price index over the 12 months to May 1985.

Benefits

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make arrangements to provide claimants whose applications for social security benefits are refused with the names and addresses of local agencies offering advice and information about social security benefits.

Mr. Newton: All forms and letters conveying an adjudication officer's adverse decision in cases where there is a right of appeal are being amended to include a section referring to the availability of advice from such

bodies as the Citizens Advice Bureau or local law centre, and indicating where their addresses and telephone numbers can be found.

In board and lodging cases where supplementary benefit is being restricted as a result of recent changes in the regulations, local offices are including lists of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of local agencies, in addition to the local DHSS office itself, that may be able to give further advice.

Dentistry (Sterilisation Methods)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue new guidelines to dentists about sterilisation methods of dental instruments.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Health authorities provide adequate facilities for sterilisation of instruments for the use of dentists in the hospital and community dental services. We have issued comprehensive advice on sterilisation to all dentists, including those in the general dental service, in the report of the expert group on hepatitis in dentistry.

Population Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate for Government expenditure on state pensions in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1996 and *(c)* 2001.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *104*]: The figures requested are as follows:

Estimated expenditure on state retirement pensions

	£ billion
1991-92	17½
1996-97	18½
2001-02	20¼

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Executive

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many fully qualified supervisory officers are employed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on site supervision work;

(2) how many unqualified supervisory officers are employed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on site supervision work.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searches)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will meet ex-prisoners from Armagh prison and relatives of current prisoners to discuss their complaints concerning strip searches in the prison.

Mr. Scott: No.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a young offender suffered an epileptic fit while being stripped naked in Armagh prison on 31 December 1984.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for each district of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board the number of people on waiting lists for each specialty for the last three years for which figures are available, together with the average length of time a patient had to wait.

Mr. Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Central Reference Library, Belfast

Rev. Ian Paisley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if the Department of Education has specified to the Belfast education and library board the sum to be allocated to the Belfast central reference library;

(2) whether special financial provision is made to the Belfast central reference library to take account of its responsibilities for providing reference facilities for the whole province;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that all the money allocated to the Belfast central reference library is spent on that particular library.

Mr. Scott: While the Department of Education for Northern Ireland in determining the financial allocations for the education and library boards does take account of the reference facilities provided by the Belfast central library for Northern Ireland as a whole, it does not specifically earmark funds for this purpose within the resources made available for the Belfast board.

It is a matter for each board to determine its own priorities for the services for which it has a responsibility, including the library service, and allocate funds accordingly.

TRANSPORT

DVLC, Swansea

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what check is made on identity when new licence holders are registered into Swansea vehicle licensing centre;

(2) what proposals he has to change the basis of registration of vehicles at Swansea vehicle licensing centre;

(3) what check is made to eliminate previous keepers when new owners or keepers of vehicles are registered in Swansea; and what notification is given to the original ones.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Seven million used vehicles change hands every year and carrying out a full check on keepership in every case would make the process of buying and selling vehicles much less convenient for motorists as well as adding significantly to costs to the Department and thus to the public. Special checks are already made when a vehicle is reported as stolen and the new computer now being installed at Swansea will open up possibilities to strengthen these safeguards. I am proposing to review the registration system as the new computer becomes fully operational. Full account will also be taken of the views of the police.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proof of ownership is required for registration of vehicles with the Swansea vehicle licensing centre.

Mr. Michael Spicer: DVLC maintains a register of vehicle keepers not vehicle owners. No proof of ownership is therefore required when a vehicle is registered at the centre.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the difference between owner and keeper for the purpose of registration of cars at the Swansea vehicle licensing centre.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The keeper of a vehicle is the person who normally uses it on the public road. The police will usually want to contact the keeper in the investigation of an offence and the keeper is also most likely to be responsible for taxing the vehicle. The owner of a vehicle could be a hire purchase company or a large business concern and the recording of this information at DVLC would be less useful for police or departmental purposes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether registration of a vehicle at Swansea vehicle licensing centre is proof of ownership for the purposes of his Department.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The registration of a vehicle at DVLC does not constitute proof of ownership. A prominent note on the front of the vehicle registration document makes clear that the registered keeper is not necessarily the legal owner. We will shortly be mounting a publicity campaign to remind motorists of the need to check other documentation—for instance a bill of sale—before buying a used car.

Commuter Services

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any information as to how many private operators who set up commuter services in London under the Transport Act 1980 were still in operation one year later.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information in the form requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

British Airways (Aircraft Purchases)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many British-made aircraft have been purchased by British Airways in the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from British Airways that it has purchased or leased 20 British-made aircraft during the past 10 years. In addition, it bought Rolls Royce engines worth over £230 million for use on other aircraft during this period.

Road Signs

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the junction signpost 33 on the M1 motorway northbound to Sheffield and Rotherham was reported damaged; and when it will be painted and repaired.

Mr. Ridley: There is no record of the date when damage to the signpost was first reported. A new sign will be installed as part of the current M1 maintenance scheme between junctions 32 and 33.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the junction signposts 31, 32 and 33 on the northbound section of the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield were last painted and maintained.

Mr. Ridley: Motorway sign plates are not repainted. Replacement signing work was carried out on M1 at junction 32 during the first week of July this year. Other signs between junctions 31 and 33 which need attention will be dealt with during the current financial year.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport when road sign maintenance was last carried out on the signpost at junctions 10, 11 and 12 on the M1 northbound between London and Wakefield.

Mr. Ridley: The signs have been inspected regularly and some cleaning has been carried out. They are however now reaching the end of their useful life. Those at junctions 11 and 12 are due for renewal later this financial year and the need for replacement of those at junction 10 is under review.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy with reference to periodical inspection of all motorway signs.

Mr. Ridley: Arrangements for the periodical inspection of motorway signs are described in the code of practice for the routine maintenance of motorway and all purpose trunk roads. A copy of the code is in the Library.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will identify each respective authority responsible for the repair and maintenance of M1 motorway road signs between London and Wakefield.

Mr. Ridley: The following local authorities, acting as the Department's agents are responsible for the repair and maintenance of road signs on the M1 motorway between London and Wakefield:

London borough of Barnet
County Councils of—
Hertfordshire
Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Northamptonshire
Leicestershire
Nottinghamshire
Derbyshire
South Yorkshire
West Yorkshire

Bottesford (Bypass)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest position regarding the announcement of a date for a public inquiry into the A52 proposed bypass around Bottesford, Leicestershire.

Mrs. Chalker: Draft orders for Bottesford bypass are due to be published in a few weeks. If, after publication, there are any outstanding unresolved objections, we will hold a public inquiry probably in the spring of 1986. Details will be announced about two months beforehand.

A47 Wardley Hill

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on the public inquiry into the A47 Wardley Hill improvement scheme.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received the report of the inspector who held a public inquiry in April and I hope to announce a decision within the next two months.

Glaston (Bypass)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will add a bypass around Glaston, Rutland, Leicestershire, on the A47 trunk road, to the preparation pool.

Mrs. Chalker: A route assessment report for the A47 trunk road in Leicestershire has recently been completed, and Glaston is one of the candidates under consideration for inclusion in our regional programme for small schemes.

MV Bridgeness

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), *Official Report*, 27 June, column *464*, whether the surveyor appointed to inquire into all the circumstances of the grounding of the MV Bridgeness on 16 June, will also be inquiring into remedial measures to control oil pollution taken immediately after the grounding.

Mr. David Mitchell: No, that was outside the scope of his inquiry. However, in view of widespread concern about the clean-up response at sea, I have agreed that a departmental report should be prepared and published on the measures taken.

Singapore International Airlines

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any indication from the Singapore Government of their satisfaction with the implementation of the agreement which was concluded during consultations in May for the provision of air services to Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no reason to suppose that the Singapore Government are other than satisfied with the implementation of this agreement, which is proceeding normally.

Company Cars

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of company cars in 1960, 1970 and in each year since 1974; and what proportion this represented of the total number of cars in each year.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to the reply*, 16 July 1985]: Figures for the number of cars registered in company names are not available before 1980. The information requested from that date is as follows:

Year	*Total No. of Licensed Cars and Light Vans*	*No. of Cars Registered in Company Names*	*Proportion of Total*
			per cent.
1980	15,072,000	1,748,000	11·6
1981	15,266,000	1,794,000	11·8
1982	15,685,000	1,813,000	11·5
1983	15,854,000	1,814,000	11·6
1984	16,399,000	1,917,000	11·7

It is estimated that a further 3 per cent. of all cars are registered in the name of a private individual but owned by a company.

Roads

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the amount spent by local authorities in each of the last 12 years on *(a)* maintenance and repair of roads and *(b)* new road building expressed at constant prices.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to the reply*, 16 July 1985]: The amounts, for England at 1982-83 prices, are:

	Maintenance £ million	*Capital £ million*
1973-74	923	1,031
1974-75	905	724
1975-76	899	665
1976-77	859	661
1977-78	816	451
1978-79	872	403
1979-80	825	419
1980-81	791	444
1981-82	849	392
1982-83	838	454
1983-84	825	495
1984-85	Not available	Not available

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 18 July 1985

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

W. B. Gurney and Sons (Exhibition)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the work of W. B. Gurney and Sons to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Tebbit: Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from 21 October 1985 to 25 October 1985.

Broadcasting Organisations (Programme Schedules)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about alleged anti-competitive practices by broadcasting organisations in relation to restrictions placed by them on the publication of programme schedules in newspapers and magazines other than those sponsored by those broadcasting organisations; when he expects to receive the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I have received no representations since the matter was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The commission is required to report on the reference by 28 July.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the future of the loan guarantee scheme; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: My Department receives frequent comments on the loan guarantee scheme from small businesses and representative organisations. Close contact is also maintained with the participating lending institutions. Most comments received are in favour of loan guarantee arrangements, but some representations suggest improvements in the terms of the scheme. I shall take account of these comments when reviewing the future of the arrangements.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what factors he based his decision to meet only half the cost of the £200,000 a year advisory service on profitable ways to recycle waste to be established at the Warren Spring laboratory in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Pattie: It is most important that the work of the unit to be formed at Warren Spring laboratory is of a direct relevance to industrial needs. This can best be achieved by involving industry both in the formulation of the work of the unit and in its cost. Furthermore it is entirely appropriate that industry, one of the main potential beneficiaries from the expertise at Warren Spring laboratory, should contribute to their programme. Such a contribution is entirely in accord with the general support policies of my Department.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which was the organisation that made an offer to his Department to purchase the Warren Spring laboratory in Hertfordshire after his original announcement of his intention to sell it off to the private sector.

Mr. Pattie: A number of approaches were made to my Department last year by organisations expressing an interest in Warren Spring laboratory and it would not be appropriate for me to give information about those organisations or their interests, which I must regard as commercially confidential.

Product Liability

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what reservations Her Majesty's Government hold about the scope of the European Community directive on product liability; what consultations on the matter have taken place with the European Commission, food processors and consumers' organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: We do not hold any reservations about the scope of this proposed directive. Consulations with all concerned about the directive and its scope have been carried out on a number of occasions in the nine years since the first draft of the directive was put forward. We now hope that the directive will be adopted as soon as possible.

Manufactures (British Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the market for manufactured goods within the original six members of the European Economic Community was taken up by British exports in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable percentage in 1973.

Mr. Channon: In 1984, the United Kingdom accounted for an estimated 6·9 per cent. of the imports of manufactures by the original six members of the European Community. The comparable figure for 1973 was 6 per cent.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of regulations, industrial practices or aids to industry of any kind, which have had to be cleared with, or which have been challenged by, the European Economic Community Commission since May 1979 as being inconsistent with the United Kingdom's obligations under the treaty of Rome, together with the outcome.

Mr. Channon: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Howard asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Government's review of the exchange risk guarantee scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 29 March, I announced that the review was nearly complete. The Government have now decided, in view of the increase in the scheme's costs in recent years, the unpredictability of future liabilities, and the availability of other sources of finance, that the scheme should be targeted more cost-effectively in line with the Government's regional policy objectives. The following arrangements take effect from today, subject to suitable transitional provisions.

(a) Exchange risk cover will no longer be available on loans provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB);

(b) Exchange risk cover for loans from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) will be limited to a maximum of £500,000 or each supported project;

(c) The sterling interest rate for ECSC finance enjoying cover will be increased from 3 per cent. below the broadly commercial rate (as used under the Industrial Development Act 1982) to 2 per cent. below the broadly commercial rate, subject to charging a minimum premium of 1 per cent.

It sould be remembered that companies dealing with the EIB and ECSC are creditworthy enterprises, often backed by third party guarantees, who can generally raise finance on the commercial money markets. In addition, the Government's regional selective assistance grants are available to worthwhile projects in the assisted areas that require assistance to enable them to proceed.

As well as taking advantage of the Government's facilities, it is opeen to United Kingdom firms to seek EIB and ECSC loan finance in sterling, thus avoiding contingent liabilities for possible exchange losses. Alternatively, they can if they wish seek foreign currency loans with or without measures to reduce exposure to risk. I hope that United Kingdom companies will take full advantage of these European opportunities, within the limits of what is available.

The Government will be prepared to provide cover under the terms of the previous scheme to eligible cases submitted to it before the date of this announcement, and will discuss suitable transitional arrangements with the scheme's agents in respect of their cases.

Vehicle Exhaust Emission

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated cost to the consumer of full implementation of the European Economic Community requirement on car exhaust emission of (i) a 1·6 litre car and (ii) a 2·5 litre car, including purchase price and running cost.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July, c. *6*.]: The newly agreed Community standard for medium size cars cannot be implemented before October 1991 (new type approvals) and October 1993 (new registrations). It is not yet possible to calculate the cost of implementation with any degree of assurance. Whilst it is hoped that lean burn engines now under development, fitted with an efficient oxidation catalyst, will be able to meet the standard by 1991 it may be necessary to resort to three-way catalyst technology in some cases. Costs on the lean burn route depend on the ignition, fuelling and other equipment used to meet the emission limits without compromising performance and fuel consumption, but would be lower (if that technology can reach the standard in time) than the less efficient catalyser system.

The newly agreed Community standard for large cars, will, for the foreseeable future, require the use of the three-way catalyst system as already developed for the US market. This would add about £500 to the pre-tax purchase price of a 2·5 litre car, and reduce its fuel economy by around 10 per cent.

The Government do not intend to impose standards on vehicles sold or used in the United Kingdom which would not be cost-effective, or would have the effect of requiring manufacturers to use three-way catalyst technology rather than more cost-effective systems.

ENVIRONMENT

Football

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the football authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: I met the Football Association and the Football League in my working group on measures to combat football hooliganism on 17 July. We continued the discussions between the Government and the football authorities on measures to be taken, jointly and separately, to deal with the problems of crowd control and safety confronting the game. The Football League presented a memorandum and reported specifically on membership cards.

The issue of membership cards is one which concerns the responsibility of football clubs for ensuring safety and security within their own premises. The Government expect them to take that responsibility seriously, and regret the delay. I am glad to note that the Football League has established a working group to give this option the full but speedy consideration it requires. I look forward to seeing an early report, which will be completed by early September.

In the meantime, a Government-football authorities package is being constructed for the new season. The Government have already announced a range of actions, within their responsibilities, to reduce and contain hooliganism. The police role should be strengthened in particular with new powers to be proposed under the Public Order Bill to be introduced next Session. I hope that Parliament will approve our legislation to restrict alcohol at matches and on journeys to and from them; we know alcohol can incite and inflame trouble. I took the initiative to agree binding measures with European Governments and with UEFA. A convention has been agreed upon and should be adopted very soon; discussions have started with UEFA. To meet public concern about safety, divisions 3 and 4 Football League clubs are to be designated under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act; chief fire officers have been inspecting all sports grounds; and there is a full inquiry under Mr. Justice Popplewell. His interim report will be available very soon.

The football authorities are developing plans for more all-ticket and morning matches. Known hooligans will be banned from grounds. CCTV will be installed quickly at as many grounds as possible. Problem matches are being identified early so that effective precautions can be taken.

The resolve and the effort are there. The Government are determined that all possible steps will be taken to restore the good name of football and our country. Our discussions of possible actions with the Football Association and the Football League will continue with the same sense of urgency.

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what activities his Department plans to arrange to mark the United Nations International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987.

Sir George Young: Since the focus of the year is on assistance to developing countries, action to mark it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Widdicombe Interim Report

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the Widdicombe interim report regarding advertising and other forms of publicity by local authorities.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the interim report of the Widdicombe committee; and what arrangements he will make to publish it.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 17 July.

Consent Applications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consent applications under each of section 7, section 8 and section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act have now been refused for each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is as follows:

Authority	*Section 7*	*Section 8*
Greater London Council	3	—
Greater Manchester Council	1	3
Totals	4	3

No application under section 9 has been refused consent.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the longest period a case submitted under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act has remained with his Department before consent was given.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Two hundred and thirty two days. This case was held in abeyance pending resolution of the authority's related request for financial assistance.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many consent applications have been received under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act from each of the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council;

(2) how many consent applications have now been received under section 8 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act from each of the metropolitan county councils, the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is set out in the table.

Authority	*Section 7*	*Section 8*
Greater London council	186	2,257
Inner London education authority	24	707
Greater Manchester council	20	630
Merseyside county council	18	224
South Yorkshire county council	30	485
Tyne and Wear county council	366	218
West Midlands county council	61	591
West Yorkshire county council	15	261
Total	720	5,373

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are employed by his Department to process consent applicationa under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act; and what are their grades.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Details of Department of the Environment staff employed on administering specific applications for consent under section 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government Act 1984 and sections 91, 92 and 93 of the Local Government Act 1985 are set out in the following table:

Grade	*Estimated full-time equivalents*
3	0·02
5	0·6
6	0·27
Principal	0·6
Principal Professional and Technology Officer	0·05
Principal Planning Officer	0·04
Principal Research Officer	0·05
Principal Estates Officer	0·05
Senior Legal Assistant	0·6
Senior Executive Officer	1·01
Senior Research Officer	0·2
Estate Officer	0·15
Higher Executive Officer	1·6
Executive Officer	4·06
Clerical Officer—Clerical Assistant	5·30
Total	14·6

These figures exclude related typing and messengerial staff.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will grant a general consent for all projects, excluding the enterprise boards, funded under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, from the provisions of section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A number of general consents have been issued under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984. Any other applications for general or specific consent from the GLC or the metropolitan county councils will be considered carefully and on their merits.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each consent applied for under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act by the Greater London council and each of the

metropolitan county councils and give the date the application was made, together where appropriate with the date on which consent was granted.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon Member to my answer of 3 June 1985, at column 54. Updated information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each consent applied for citing sections 92 and 93 of the Local Government Act 1985 by the Greater London Council and each of the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the delays in granting consent on certain disposals submitted by the Greater London council under section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon Member to my answer of 16 July 1985, at column 79.

American Bar Association

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many staff in the House have been occupied in preparing Westminster Hall and other facilities for the American Bar Association's function;

(2) what is the cost of preparing Westminster Hall for the American Bar Association's functions to be held there;

(3) how much money has been paid by the American Bar Association for the preparation of Westminister Hall for its function.

Sir George Young: 26 staff of the Property Services Agency were involved in the preparations. I have no information relating to staff of the two Houses, which is a matter for the authorities of those Houses. The estimated cost, including PSA's staff costs, of preparing Westminster Hall is £22,250 and this sum is to be refunded in full by the American Bar Association.

Palace of Westminster (Pesticides and Herbicides)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what pesticides and herbicides are used inside the grounds of the Palace of Westminster.

Sir George Young: The only herbicide or pesticide used on the grounds of the Palace is for control of algae on gravel paths in New Palace Yard and on Cromwell Green. It is a contact herbicide, in the form of a sodium salt, which can be bought in most garden shops. Its main constituent is dichlorophen. Within the Palace itself appropriate pesticides are used in the kitchens when necessary by specialist contractors brought in from time to time as and when the need arises.

Housing Stock

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the money required by local authorities in England and Wales to bring their housing stock up to decent standards.

Sir George Young: On 11 April my Department launched an inquiry into the condition of local authority housing stock, in order to establish how much local authorities estimate needs to be spent to put their stock into good condition. Their responses are now being analysed and first results should be available by the end of this month.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much grant aid his Department has provided through the Countryside Commission to owners and occupiers of land in areas of outstanding natural beauty; and what was the corresponding figure three years ago;

(2) how much grant aid his Department has provided through the Countryside Commission to local authorities to cover expenditure in areas of outstanding natural beauty; and what was the corresponding figure three years ago.

Mr. Waldegrave: Total expenditure by the Countryside Commission on grants to private individuals, and to organisations and local authorities and public bodies throughout the countryside for the years 1981-82 and 1984-85 was as follows:

	£million 1981-82	*£million 1984-85*
Private	1·9	2·6
Public	5·1	5·3

The figures for 1984-85 are provisional and subject to audit.

The commission does not record figures separately for expenditure in areas of outstanding natural beauty, nor does it distinguish between landowners and other private persons or between local authorities and other public bodies.

Water Quality

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce before 26 July his decision on applications to the European Community for derogations or time limits in respect of the European Economic Community directive on water quality; and if he will publish the derogations and time limits.

Mr. Macfarlane: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to promote public access to information on environmental water quality.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is tomorrow issuing a circular concerning the form, content and availability of public registers of data on discharges to surface and underground waters and related information on the licences under which they are made and on environmental water quality.

The registers are to be maintained by water pollution control authorities in accordance with the regulations laid before this House on 5 June and to be open to the public from 31 July.

Establishment of the registers substantially completes the Government's programme for implementing the main provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, and will further strengthen the framework available for promoting our objectives for the maintenance and improvement of water quality.

The opening of the registers will mark an important step forward in accountability and access to information on environmental matters and one which will, I believe, be widely welcomed by water authorities, industry and environmental interests.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many persons are currently housed under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

Sir George Young: During 1984 local authorities accepted responsibility for securing accommodation for some 83,000 households under the Act. Figures for earlier years are available in the Library.

North Sea Pollution (Intergovernmental Conference)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the United Kingdom intends to host the next intergovernmental conference on pollution in the North sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I announced at the international conference on the protection of the North sea in Bremen last year, the United Kingdom will host a second conference in 1986 or 1987. I expect to announce a firm date soon.

Housing Associations (Exhibition)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the work of the housing association movement to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Gow: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 22 July to Friday 26 July.

EMPLOYMENT

Gas Appliances

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the safe installation of gas appliances.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is evidence of an improvement in the level of gas safety over the past few years. We are anxious further to reduce the risks. The chairman of the Health and Safety Commission has told me that in the commission's view the greatest risk arises from installation downstream of the service pipe. One of the major tasks is ensuring adequate standards of competence of gas installers. The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 require competence in installation work. Precise requirements have not been defined. The commission considers that an essential step is to set standards for training. These can be widely promulgated as well as provising a legal framework.

The commission has asked the Health and Safety Executive to bring together a panel of experts, including representatives from the gas industry, to develop an approved code of practice on standards of training for gas installers, under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974, which will also provide evidence for the better definition of requirements for competence. The text will be considered by representatives of gas consumers and the trade unions, and will be issued next year, after publication for consultation.

The commission does not at present consider that the addition of mandatory registration could achieve much that would not be effectively brought about by firmer training and competence requirements; and if would in addition impose a bureaucratic and costly system on the large number of installers — costs which would be passed on to the numerous consumer population in the form of higher charges, with the result that poorer ones would be even less likely to call in installers for essential servicing. The commission advise, however, that this is an option which might be considered if, for instance, the balance of risk were to change and the recent encouraging trend were reversed.

Training Organisations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will provide figures showing the overall operating budgets of industry training boards and non-statutory training organisations in 1984-85, distinguishing industry funding from Manpower Services Commission funding;

(2) if he will give figures for the number of staff employed by industry training boards in 1979 and by industry training boards and non-statutory training organisations together in 1984, broken down into permanent staff and staff funded on a 12 month basis by the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *418*]: Training in sectors of industry covered by non-statutory training arrangements is the responsibility of employers in those sectors and financial and manpower information relating to them is not collected centrally by the Manpower Services Commission. The table shows figures for the numbers of staff employed by the seven industry training boards currently operating. The other information requested is either not available or could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

*Staff employed by ITBs**

	1979	*1984*
Clothing and Allied Products ITB	73	67
Construction ITB†	810	797
Engineering ITB	990	764
Hotel and Catering ITB	279	336
Offshore Petroleum ITB	82	73
Plastics Processing ITB	103	63
Road Transport ITB	800	405

* There are no ITB staff directly funded by the MSC.
† Full-time equivalents.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Engineering Ltd. (Employment)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many jobs have been lost by British Rail Engineering Ltd. since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail Engineering Ltd. currently employs about 10,300 fewer men than it did in January 1979.

Motorways (Litter)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has placed any restrictions on the removal of litter debris by local authorities from motorway verges.

Mrs. Chalker: Local authorities who carry out routine maintenance of motorways on our behalf are guided by the recently published code of practice for routine maintenance for motorways and all-purpose trunk roads, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The code is designed to ensure consistent and safe maintenance standards. The basic provision for the clearance of litter may be varied on safety grounds or where litter is a particular problem.

Ship Repair Work (Trinity House)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Transport what ship repair work on behalf of Trinity House has been placed with British shipyards over each of the last three years.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for Trinity House to decide, but I understand that in each of the last three years five lighthouse tenders have used British shipyards for dry docking and repair. In addition, 10 of their major floating aids have also been serviced and repaired each year in British shipyards.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to introduce to ensure that the work of the existing metropolitan county council and the Greater London council accident investigation and analysis units continues if the Local Government Bill is enacted.

Mrs. Chalker: It is for successor authorities to decide on what arrangements they wish to make to continue the work of accident investigation and analysis units. The Department has issued advice to London boroughs and metropolitan district councils and stands ready to offer further advice and assistance.

Under the Local Government Act 1985 the residuary bodies have been given a duty to ascertain from successor authorities what professional and technical services they wish to see continued, and if necessary to enter into agreements with those authorities to maintain the services until permanent arrangements are settled. Successor authorities will want to consider the arrangements for accident investigation and prevention, including the link with traffic and accident data banks, and then decide whether these activities should be undertaken by the appropriate residuary body or by a lead district council or London borough.

Sidcup Bypass

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was his projected date for the opening of the A20 Sidcup bypass; what is now the likely date of completion; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: When the award of the contract was announced last February, the bypass improvement was expected to be completed in the spring of 1988. That is still our expectation.

Chelmsford Bypass

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the projected date for the opening of the A12 Chelmsford bypass; what is now the likely date of completion; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The contract completion date remains 21 September 1986, but meeting this will depend on the weather and unforeseen circumstances.

Heavy Lorries

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport which of the recommendations of the Armitage report on "Lorries, People and the Environment," have been superseded by other decisions of his Department; what those decisions were; and when they took place.

Mr. Ridley: The White Paper on the Armitage report (Cmnd. 8439) remains the document on which my policy on lorries, people and the environment is based.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport which of the recommendations of the Armitage report on "Lorries, People and the Environment", he has implemented; and when they were implemented.

Mr. Ridley: Since my hon. Friend last reported on 3 April 1984 on progress on implementation of measures in response to the Armitage report a further 25 bypasses have been added to the trunk road programme with 177 in preparation or under construction that spray suppression equipment should be fitted to new trailers was effective from 1 May 1985. Work on further noise reduction is continuing. Motoring taxes (VED and fuel duty) on lorries as a whole have exceeded road track costs by a substantial margin since before 1980 and those on each class of lorry have done so since March 1985. VED rates on lorries below 12 tonnes have been reduced by 19 per cent. to 24 per cent. since 1982 and the emphasis of taxation has been shifted each year towards the heaviest lorries. The position on the 58 main recommendations can be summarised as:

51 accepted (5 in part); of these:
38 recommendations have been implemented
9 are being implemented
4 are addressed not to Goverment but to local authorities and hauliers.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by London Regional Transport in achieving the objectives set for it last July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Shortly after the establishment of London Regional Transport on 29 June 1984, I set its chairman, Dr. Keith Bright, objectives in four crucial areas — reducing costs and the call on taxpayers' and ratepayers' money; improving management through the estabishment of smaller and more efficient units; involving the private sector; and improving services within the resources available. I am glad to say that, in the course of only 12 months, LRT has set in train radical changes in the way its business is managed, as a result of which it has made substantial progress towards these objectives.

In its first year, LRT expects to exceed its target of reducing real unit costs by 2½ per cent. per annum. This is good news for Londoners. LRT's achievement here

means that revenue support will be reduced in 1985-86 by £60 million compared with the GLC's budget for 1984-85 without excessive increases in fares or major cuts in services. This will enable over £40 million more to be made available in grants for capital projects in the current financial year than the GLC proposed for 1984-85. LRT has made a good start towards achieving its task of halving the level of revenue support, from £190 million in 1984-85 to £95 million in 1987-88.

LRT has now formed subsidiary companies for its bus and underground businesses and for bus engineering. This will increase management accountability and improve LRT's cost-effectiveness. The LRT Act also required LRT to invite tenders for the provision of services on its behalf. An early example of this — the tendering of 12 bus routes — will reduce by £¾ million the annual subsidy bill of £4 million for these routes, while annual mileage operated on the 12 routes will be increased by 2½ per cent. LRT has recently announced the tendering of about 40 more bus routes.

In our proposals for LRT, we made clear that we wanted to see closer co-operation with British Rail. I set up the London passenger transport group last July, with the chairmen of LRT and BR, to keep a regular watch on this. The decision to proceed with capitalcard—the combined travelcard for LRT bus, underground and BR rail services in Greater London—was an early result. Capitalcard has been a resounding success. Over 100,000 users are expected by the end of the year.

A further example of increased co-operation between LRT and BR is demonstrated in their proposals for improvements to interchanges. A programme of schemes is being developed, designed to help passengers changing from one public transport mode to another.

In my objectives for LRT, I asked it to keep in mind the needs of disabled people. It has set up a new unit to work full-time on initiatives for disabled passengers. Its recent statement, "Transport for disabled People: The LRT approach", shows how seriously it is taking its responsibilities towards disabled people. The new buses to be ordered by London Buses Ltd. from 1986 onwards will be the first to incorporate new design features which will improve access for elderly and less mobile people.

The Government's recent decision to endorse LRT's proposals for investment in a new ticketing system for London's underground will save money and streamline the operation of the system, making it more convenient for passengers.

The past year has also seen the letting of the contract for the docklands light railway, an important component in the strategy for revitalising London's docklands. I look forward to seeing the railway in operation by July 1987.

I am pleased with the excellent start LRT has made in its first year and I am confident that this progress will be maintained.

Leeds and Liverpool Canal

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department proposes to provide any financial assistance towards the scheme to revitalise the Leeds and Liverpool canal in Lancashire.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to the reply*, 15 July 1985, c. 29]: I have been asked to reply. Whilst a scheme for the revitalisation of the Leeds and Liverpool canal is known to be under consideration locally in Lancashire, no firm proposals have yet been put forward. I cannot therefore say whether any financial assistance would be available.

ENERGY

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of regulations or aids and practices within the energy field which have to be cleared with, or which have been challenged by the European Economic Community Commission since May 1979 under the European Economic Community treaties, together with the outcome.

Mr. Peter Walker: The following regulations, aids and practices are cleared with the European Economic Community Commission:

—Information relating to plans to dispose of radioactive waste
—State Aids for Coal
—Breaches of EC oil stocking obligations
—New formal bilateral oil stocking arrangements with other Member States

There is general accord with the European Community on energy matters, and such procedures as are necessary and appropriate are usually completed expeditiously and satisfactorily.

WALES

Long-Stay Hospitals

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of persons aged between 16 and 21 years who are currently resident in long-stay mental hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of persons aged between 16 and 21 years who were resident in mental hospitals and units on 5 April 1985 is provisionally estimated to have been 163. Of these, 118 were resident in mental handicap hospitals/units and 45 in mental illness hospitals/units.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons, who had been immediately previously resident for a period in excess of 12 months in long-stay hospitals in Wales, have over the past 12 months been brought out of such hospitals to reside within the community.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of persons discharged from mental hospitals and units during 1984 to reside in the community, having immediately previously been resident in an institution for over 12 months, is estimated to have been 185. Of these, 142 were discharged from mental illness hospitals/units and 43 from mental handicap hospitals/units.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the joint funding projects in Wales geared to helping integrate persons resident in long-stay mental hospitals into the community, indicating those authorities involved in such schemes and the amount of funding associated with each project.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The schemes listed below either fully offer places in the community to patients from long-stay mental hospitals or are projects capable of so doing.

In addition, the all Wales strategy for the development of services for the mentally handicapped places emphasis on community based initiatives. An additional £5 million is available in 1985-86 increasing annually to £28 million at current prices in 1992-93 which is mainly allocated for developments in line with county plans.

Authorities	*Scheme*	*Duration*	*Total funding from all joint financing authorities* £ million*
Clwyd Health Authority and Clwyd Social Services Department	12 place residential unit for EMI at Colwyn Bay	13 years	0·557
Clwyd Health Authority and Clwyd Social Services Department	Extension of Rhyddlan Resettlement Team	13 years	0·294
Dyfed County Council, East Dyfed Health Authority and Pembrokeshire Health Authority	Mental Illness Services to enable people to move from St. David's Hospital, Carmarthen to more appropriate community care	10 years	2·222
Dyfed County Council and East Dyfed Health Authority	Llanelli Area Mental Health Team	7 years	0·133
Dyfed County Council and Pembrokeshire Health Authority	Pembrokeshire Area Mental Health Team	7 years	0·176
Gwent Health Authority and Gwent Social Services Department	Newport Day Centre for the promotion of Mental Health	5 years	0·433
Gwent Health Authority and Gwent Social Services Department	Care of elderly confused people in residential homes	7 years	2·420
Gwent Health Authority and MIND Group	Halfway House for the mentally ill	8 years	0·079
Gwynedd Health Authority, Gwynedd Social Services Departments and Voluntary Organisations	Abbey Road Centre	3 years	†0·064
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority and South Wales Federated Housing Association	Housing for the mentally handicapped at Porthcawl	10 years	0·031
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority and South Wales Federated Housing Association	Bridgend, staffed house for mentally handicapped	10 years	0·093
Powys Health Authority and Powys Social Services Department	Establishment of hostel for mentally ill persons in Powys	9 years	0·458
Powys Health Authority and Powys Social Services Department	Community homes for the mentally ill in Powys	10 years	0·456
Powys Health Authority, Powys Social Services Department, Local District Councils and Housing Associations	Aids and adaptations for people moving into community from hospital	7 years	0·181
South Glamorgan Health Authority, South Glamorgan County Council and Cardiff City Council	NIMROD project	7 years	2·932
South Glamorgan Health Authority and South Glamorgan Social Services Department	Day care provision for mentally handicapped	10 years	1·428
South Glamorgan Health Authority and South Glamorgan Social Services Department	Day Centre for mentally ill in Cardiff	5 years	0·233
South Glamorgan Health Authority and South Glamorgan Social Services Department	Additional staffing for Elms Day Centre for Mentally Ill	7 years	0·100
West Glamorgan Health Authority and West Glamorgan Social Services Department	Special care unit	6 years	0·701
West Glamorgan Health Authority and West Glamorgan Social Services Department	Minibus for special care unit	6 years	0·062
West Glamorgan Health Authority and West Glamorgan Social Services Department	Transfer of mentally handicapped people from Drymma Hall Hospital into the community	12 years	0·743

* At 1985-86 cash prices.

† Abbey Road Project: This represents the Welsh Office contribution to the Scheme. Contributions from the Health Authority and Social Services Department have yet to be finalised.

Farmers

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers there were in Wales in each year since 1978.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Estimates of the numbers of farmers, partners and directors doing farm work on agricultural holdings in Wales are as follows:

	Numbers
1978	34,900
1979	35,200
1980	34,300
1981	34,700
1982	34,600
1983	33,200
1984	35,700

These estimates are based on the annual June censuses of statistically significant holdings. A more detailed analysis of the farm labour force up to 1983 is given in table 4.01 of "Welsh Agricultural Statistics No. 6, 1984", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Cwmbran Development Corporation

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is to happen to the industrial assets of Cwmbran development corporation when that body is wound up.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: As part of the Government's policy of reducing public sector borrowing, the corporation is expected to take all reasonable steps to dispose of its assets to the private sector. However, I have decided that any residual industrial assets should be transferred to the Welsh development agency. Discussions have been held with Cwmbran development corporation and the WDA and it has been agreed that the transfer should take place on 30 September 1987.

"Local Choice in Public Transport"

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has considered the responses he has received to the consultation paper, "Local Choice in Public Transport"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The consultation paper was issued to stimulate debate and discussion in the principality about local authority involvement in local rail services and the possibility of providing more effective support for important local rail services about which there was concern at the time. There was a very full response from local authorities in Wales as well as from organisations and individuals with an interest in public transport matters. The main suggestion put forward in the paper was that county councils might in future become more directly involved in financing certain local rail services. There was considerable support for the principle of local involvement, but the idea that county councils might in future take over responsibility for providing revenue support for services on a number of local lines was not generally welcomed.

A particular concern of respondents was that the practical difficulties arising from this transfer of responsibilities (difficulties to which the consultation paper itself drew attention) would outweigh the advantages. I have considered all the responses very carefully, including the report prepared by the committee on Welsh affairs. The conclusion I have reached is that, given the views expressed, the idea of making county councils responsible for providing revenue support for certain local rail services should not be pursued. The consultation focused attention on the importance that a wide cross section of people and organisations in Wales attach to the Welsh rail network.

Local authorities already have powers to provide financial and other assistance to British Rail in certain circumstances. I very much welcome the fact that there has been an increase in the scale and number of cases in which Welsh local authorities have co-operated with British Rail to provide improved services or facilities; and more initiatives of this nature are planned. As a result of the co-operative efforts of British Rail, local authorities, Government agencies and the Welsh Office services have been improved and costs reduced on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth, Cambrian coast and central Wales lines.

In the light of these developments and the comments I have received on the consultation paper I am satisfied that the development of an increased partnership between local authorities and British Rail using existing powers offers the best way of helping to secure the future of Welsh railways and of achieving the increased local involvement that so many people want. I shall therefore be writing to all local authorities in Wales reminding them of the powers that are available and urging them to consider how they might make use of these in future. I am sure BR will welcome the opportunity to work more closely with Welsh authorities and to build on the successful joint initiatives that are already being taken.

PRIME MINISTER

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Forth asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the reports of the pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 6 June 1985, col. *194-6*]: Report No. 22 of the Top Salaries Review Body, which recommends new salary rates as from 1 April 1985 for senior civil servants, senior officers of the armed forces, and members of the judiciary, is being laid before Parliament as a Command Paper this afternoon. Copies will be available in the Vote Office.

The review body has on this occasion undertaken a comprehensive review not only of the salary levels of the groups concerned but also of the salary structures. It is for this reason that the review body's report has, by agreement with the Government, been delivered rather longer after the date to which the recommendations relate (1 April 1985) than usual. I should like to put on record the Government's gratitude to the chairman and the other members of the review body for the care and thoroughness with which their conclusions and recommendations have been prepared.

For senior civil servants the review body has recommended certain changes in the salary structure with a view to introducing into the pay arrangements at these levels a greater degree of flexibility to take account of differences of performance and of job weight, and of other factors such as, for example, the state of the market for particular appointments. In particular, it has recommended:

> a greater degree of salary differentiation in grade 1 (permanent secretaries) by reference to broad considerations of job weight;
> the introduction of incremental scales, including some discretionary increments to be awarded for high performance, for grades 2 and 3 (deputy and under secretaries and equivalents);
> the consolidation of London weighting into grade 3 pay.

In formulating its recommendations on salary levels for senior civil servants, the review body has taken into consideration such evidence as it has been able to gather on recruitment, retention, motivation and morale, and rewards available at comparable levels of responsibility in other walks of life. It has also taken into account the importance of being able to offer a reasonable career structure, in terms of salary, in order to achieve an adequate supply of people of the right quality to fill the top posts in the public service. Its consideration of these matters has led the review body to recommend a widening of differentials for the senior civil service which would entail substantial increases of remuneration at the top levels, though it would still leave those levels well below the salary levels of people at comparable levels and with broadly comparable responsibilities in the private sector.

Similar considerations have been taken into account in arriving at recommendations for senior members of the armed forces and the judiciary, with broadly similar results. The review body has also recommended certain changes in the salary structure of the judiciary.

The new salary structures and levels recommended by the review body would increase the pay bill in a full year by 12·2 per cent. for senior civil servants, by 17·6 per cent. for senior members of the armed forces and by 16·3 per cent. for the judiciary.

The Government accept the view of the review body that it is of great importance for the health of the public service in this country that it should offer a career pay structure which will attract and retain people of the high quality which that service requires and deserves, and offers to the most able the prospect of being able eventually to attain levels of remuneration which, while not matching the highest levels of remuneration available in the private sector, provide rewards which can be regarded not only by themselves but also by Parliament and the public as fair but not generous in relation to the responsibilities carried.

We accept in principle the review body's recommendations on salary levels. But the amounts involved are so considerable that we feel bound to implement the salary increases recommended for these groups by stages, as has been done on other occasions in the past. Accordingly those concerned, with a very few exceptions, will receive half of the increases recommended, with a minimum of 5 per cent. with effect from 1 July 1985 and the balance with effect from 1 March 1986. It is proposed that London weighting for grade 3 and equivalent in the Civil Service should after appropriate consultation be built into pay. This would mean average increases for the financial year 1985-86 of 5·1 per cent. for senior civil servants, 7·3 per cent. for senior members of the armed forces and 7·1 for the judiciary. The cost of these increases in 1985-86 will be absorbed in existing public expenditure provisions and cash limits. I am circulating a note of the resulting rates of pay as an annex to this answer.

The review body recommends that the permanent secretaries of three Departments — the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Security — should be paid at higher salary rates than other permanent secretaries in charge of Departments. The Government do not consider that there is a sufficiently strong case for departing from the long-established position that permanent secretaries in charge of Departments (other than the permanent secretary to the Tresury and the secretary of the Cabinet) are paid at the same rate, and have decided not to implement this recommendation. Accordingly the permanent secretaries of the three Departments concerned will continue to be paid at the same salary levels as other permanent secretaries in charge of Departments.

The review body propose that the system of discretionary increments for high performance recommended for senior civil servants in grades 2 and 3 should be introduced with effect from 1 April 1986. We shall give further consideration to this proposal, and to the arrangements for assessment, appraisal and review, on which such a system will depend, if it is realistically and fairly to reward high performance and to take account of cases in which high performance is not sustained, and I shall make a further statement on this aspect of the review body's recommendations in due course.

In accordance with the principle which was set out in my reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 13 April 1984, the superannuation entitlements of members of the groups in question will continue to be based on levels of salary actually in payment at or in the period before the date of retirement.

Also, the Armed Forces Pay Review Body has submitted to me a supplementary report on the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces. It recommends increases of between 4·9 per cent. and 8·4 per cent. according to rank with effect from 1 June 1985. This reflects the awards to civilian doctors and dentists that I announced in the House on 6 June 1985 at column *194-6*.

The Government have decided to accept in full the recommendations in the supplementary report on the pay of medical and dental officers. The report has been published as Cmnd. 9568 and copies are available in the Vote Office.

Senior Public Servants

	Salaries currently in payment £	*Salaries net 1 July 1985* £	*Salaries net 1 March 1986* £	*Numbers in post at latest available date*
Senior grades of the higher Civil Service				
Head of Home Civil Service	51,250	63,125	75,000	1
Permanent Secretary to the Treasury *(note 1)*	51,250	60,625	70,000	1
Secretary of the Cabinet *(note 1)*	51,250	60,625	70,000	
Permanent Secretary	45,500	52,750	60,000	22
Second Permanent Secretary	42,000	48,500	55,000	15
Deputy Secretary				
on promotion	36,500	38,325	40,000	126
after 1 year in grade *(note 2)*		39,250	42,000	
Under Secretary				
on promotion *(note 3)*	29,500	30,975	31,000	499
after 1 year in grade *(note 2)*		31,000	32,500	
after 2 years in grade *(note 2)*		31,750	34,000	
Senior officers of the Armed Forces				
Admiral of the Fleet				
Field Marshal	51,250	63,125	75,000	1
Marshal of the Royal Airforce				

	Salaries currently in payment £	Salaries net 1 July 1985 £	Salaries net 1 March 1986 £	Numbers in post at latest available date
Admiral General Air Chief Marshal	45,500	52,750	60,000	20
Vice-Admiral Lieutenant General Air Marshal	36,500	39,250	42,000	32
Rear Admiral Major General Air Vice-Marshal	29,500	31,750	34,000	153
Judiciary				
Lord Chief Justice	64,000	69,500	75,000	1
Master of the Rolls	58,500	63,750	69,000	
Lord of Appeal	58,500	63,750	69,000	13
Lord President of the Court of Session (Scotland)	58,500	63,750	69,000	
Lord Chief Justice (Northern Ireland)	57,000	63,000	69,000	
President of the Family Division	57,000	61,500	66,000	
Vice Chancellor	55,500	60,750	66,000	
Lord Justice of Appeal	55,500	60,750	66,000	25
Lord Justice of Appeal (Northern Ireland)	55,500	60,750	66,000	
Lord Justice Clerk (Scotland)	55,500	60,750	66,000	
High Court Judge	51,250	55,625	60,000	
Judge of the Court of Session (Scotland)	51,250	55,625	60,000	102
Puisne Judge (Northern Ireland)	51,250	55,625	60,000	
Chairman Scottish Land Court and President Lands Tribunal (Scotland) *(note 6)*	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Sheriff Principal (Scotland)	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Official Referee (London)	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Vice Chancellor of the County Palatine of Lancaster	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Senior Circuit Judge	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Recorder of Liverpool	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Recorder of Manchester	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Recorder of Belfast	35,000	39,750	44,500	30
Chief Social Security Commissioner (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)	36,000	40,250	44,500	
President Industrial Tribunals (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)	36,000	40,250	44,500	
Judge Advocate General	33,000	38,750	44,500	
President Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals (England, Wales and Scotland)	33,000	38,750	44,500	
Chairman, Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	35,000	39,750	44,500	
Circuit Judge	33,000	36,500	40,000	
Sheriff (Scotland)	33,000	36,500	40,000	
County Court Judge (Northern Ireland)	33,000	36,500	40,000	
Social Security Commissioner (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)	33,000	36,500	40,000	
Chairman, Scottish Land Court	35,000	37,500	40,000	
President, Lands Tribunal (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)	36,000	38,000	40,000	
Registrar of Criminal Appeals	33,000	36,500	40,000	
Chief Metropolitan Magistrate	33,000	36,500	40,000	
Senior and Chief Masters and Registrars of the Supreme Court	33,000	36,500	40,000	
Master, Court of Protection	33,000	36,500	40,000	523
Chairman, Foreign Compensation Commission	31,000	35,500	40,000	
Regional Chairman, Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales and Scotland)	31,000	35,500	40,000	
Judge Advocate of the Fleet	31,000	35,500	40,000	
Vice-Judge Advocate General	31,000	35,500	40,000	
President, Value Added Tax Tribunals	36,000	38,000	40,000	
President, Immigration Appeal Tribunal	31,000	35,500	40,000	
Presiding Special Commissioner of Income Tax	33,000	36,500	40,000	
President, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals (Northern Ireland)	31,000	35,500	40,000	
Regional Chairman, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals	31,000	35,500	40,000	

	Salaries currently in payment £	Salaries not 1 July 1985 £	Salaries not 1 March 1986 £	Numbers in post at latest available date
Chairman, Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Metropolitan Magistrate	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Provincial Stipendiary Magistrate	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Resident Magistrate (Northern Ireland)	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Member, Lands Tribunal (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) *(note 7)*	33,000	30,500	30,500	
Masters and Registrars of the Supreme Court	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Master, Supreme Court (Northern Ireland)	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Registrar of Civil Appeals *(note 7)*	33,000	30,500	30,500	390
County Court Registrars and District Registrars of the High Court	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Circuit Registrar (Northern Ireland)	28,500	29,925	30,500	
President, Pensions Appeal Tribunals	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Vice-President, Immigration Appeal Tribunals	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Vice-President (Scotland) and Chairman Value Added Tax Tribunals	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Chairman, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals	28,500	29,925	30,500	
Special Commissioner of Income Tax	28,500	29,925	30,500	

Notes

1. If not also Head of the Home Civil Service.
2. Deputy and Under Secretaries will be credited with existing seniority.
3. It is proposed that London Weighting for Under Secretaries should be built into basic pay in two stages. Half will be assimilated on 1 July 1985 and the remainder on 1 March 1986 but for the period 1 July 1985 to 1 March 1986 the maximum rate of pay plus London Weighting for Under Secretaries with less than one year in the grade is £31,000.
4. Rates for grades consequential on the salaries of senior grades of the higher Civil Service will be promulgated separately.
5. The salary of the Head of the Diplomatic Service will correspond to those of the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Secretary of the Cabinet as shown.
6. When both appointments are held by one person.
7. Members of the Lands Tribunal and the Registrar of Civil Appeals will retain their present salaries on a mark-time basis until exceeded by the recommended salaries increased by subsequent pay awards.

European Union

Q.55 **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her statement of 3 July, if she has yet decided on the representation which the United Kingdom will have at the European Economic Community special conference which is to discuss the draft treaty of European union.

The Prime Minister: Arrangements for the proposed intergovernmental conference, including the level of representation, will be discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 and 23 July.

Confederation of British Industry

Q63. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the recommendations about employment policy in the report "Financing the Future" by the Confederation of British Industry, a copy of which has been sent to her.

The Prime Minister: The CBI's report argues for a release of resources to the private sector as vital to the success of the economy. Within this, it calls for an increase in spending on infrastructure, especially roads, pointing to its beneficial impact on the economy generally, including employment. But the CBI stresses that this extra capital expenditure should be more than offset by reductions in public sector current spending. The Government's policies are similarly directed to containing public spending and borrowing as the best route to a growing economy and lasting jobs. Since we first took office in 1979, capital spending on national roads has increased by about a quarter in real terms.

Beirut Airport

Q.70 **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister what is the latest situation regarding the negotiations intended to co-ordinate international action over security at Beirut airport.

The Prime Minister: We are continuing our efforts to reach effective international agreement on measures relating to security at Beirut international airport. We hope that the international community will work together to ensure that the airport will not be used again as a safe haven for terrorists.

Engagements

Mr. Hunter asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 18 July.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 18 July.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 18 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 18 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

EEC Assembly (Powers)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will give an undertaking not to agree to any European

Economic Community proposals which would in any way increase the powers of the European Economic Community Assembly.

The Prime Minister: To increase the powers of the European Assembly would require a change in the treaty which would have to be agreed by each national Parliament. I see no need for such a change. We shall continue to put forward suggestions of our own which would enable the assembly to play a more positive role within its existing powers.

Agriculture Industry

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on the proposals to reduce financial support for research, development and advisory services to the agriculture industry.

The Prime Minister: There is always room for improvement but there is already close and continuing collaboration between the two Departments on these matters.

Swavesey Fen Drainage

Dr. David Clark asked the Prime Minister what action Her Majesty's Government is now taking following the representations made to her by Cambridge Friends of the Earth with regard to the drainage scheme for Swavesey Fen.

The Prime Minister: I have received the representations from the Cambridge Friends of the Earth. I understand that the Swavesey internal drainage board started work on this scheme earlier this month. A meeting with statutory conservation bodies and the Anglian water authority was held in May to discuss the feasibility of amending the scheme which had been the subject of both a public inquiry in 1980 and of full discussions with the Nature Conservancy Council and the County Naturalist Trust throughout its design. A modification to the original scheme has now been approved by the Government that will allow the exclusion of Mare Fen and I understand that negotiations are now well advanced that should enable Mare Fen to be taken out of the scheme.

In these circumstances I doubt whether an article 4 direction is appropriate in this case.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

American Bar Association (Function)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal of he will estimate the total number of visitors coming to the Palace of Westminster as part of the American Bar Association function.

Mr. Biffen: Approximately 1,500 people were present in Westminster Hall for the American Bar Association function on Monday 15 July.

Official Opposition (Public Funds)

Mr. Beith asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) by how much the amounts disbursed from public funds to the official Opposition in the form of benefits in kind, such as office machinery, postal services, telecommunications and travel have been increased in each of the last five years;

(2) whether, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Woolwich on 15 July, he will specify what office machinery, postal services, telecommunications, travel and other benefits are included in the annual sums of £1,747 and £53,970 provided for the official Opposition from public funds.

Mr. Biffen: I shall reply as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the measures he is taking on enforcement action against drug trafficking.

Mr. Brittan: I have today announced a number of measures to strengthen police effort against drug trafficking and its co-ordination with customs. These measures accord with the key proposals submitted to me by the Association of Chief Police Officers earlier this month and I am acting immediately on them.

First, regional crime squads in England and Wales will be strengthened by the addition of dedicated drugs "wings". I am ready to consider any appropriate requests for the necessary adjustments in establishments and I have in mind an increase of more than 200 officers. The addition of dedicated drugs wings to RCSs will increase very substantially the capacity of the police to catch major drug trafficking groups. In London, the Commissioner has agreed to make a substantial increase in the strength of the Metropolitan police central drugs squad.

Secondly, there is to be a new national drugs intelligence unit, superseding the present central drugs intelligence unit. The new NDIU will be staffed by both the police and customs services and have an enhanced intelligence-gathering and analytical capability sharing common data in place of the present divided system. The new NDIU will provide both services with the intelligence capacity needed to counter today's sophisticated drug trafficking groups.

Thirdly, a new senior post of national drugs co-ordinator is being created in New Scotland Yard to head the new NDIU and co-ordinate drugs intelligence with the operations of regional crime squads. This will enable a greater concerted and co-ordinated attack to be mounted on drug traffickers. The first holder of this new post will be Mr. Colin Hewett, at present deputy assistant commissioner in charge of the Metropolitan police special branch and anti-terrorist squad.

Fourthly, I am establishing a top level steering group, on which both police and customs will be represented, to keep the working of the new arrangements and the effectiveness of liaison between police and customs under review and to give me periodic assessments of the nature and extent of the drugs threat.

I believe that the initiatives which I am announcing today represent a most significant advance in police operations against drug offences. They build on the proven

work of the RCSs and the already close and effective co-operation between police and Her Majesty's customs and will ensure that both services are better placed than ever before to take forward the fight against drug traffickers.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from Central and South America were accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom for each year since 1970; and how many were refused leave to enter.

Mr. Waddington: Figures have been published annually from 1970 of persons refused leave to enter and from 1973 of persons accepted for settlement in respect of nationals of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guyana, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela, and from 1978 of Uruguay, in "Control of Immigration Statistics" (tables 1 and 2 of the latest issue for the 1984 figures, Cmnd. 9544, and corresponding previous tables). Information is not available on nationals of other countries in Central and South America and Uruguay before 1978.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the proportion of wives admitted for settlement in the United Kingdom in 1984 who were admitted as wives of persons referred to in section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Waddington: It is estimated that about half the wives admitted for settlement from the Indian subcontinent in 1984 were wives of persons referred to in section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. It is not possible to estimate a corresponding proportion for wives from other countries as information on applications for entry clearance is not collected for these countries.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will estimate the number of male persons born in the United Kingdom to whose wives and children section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971 does not apply;

(2) if he will estimate the number of men who fall within the definition of "Commonwealth citizens settled in the United Kingdom" in section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971; and how many of these men were born in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: This reply also contains information pursuant to my reply to the right hon. Member on 17 July.

It is estimated that there are about 2·1 million males now resident in the United Kingdom to whom section 1(5) applies as a result of their being Commonwealth citizens (including British citizens) who were settled in the United Kingdom on 1 January 1973. It is estimated that about ½ million of these were born outside the United Kingdom.

About 4½ million males have been born in the United Kingdom since 1 January 1973 and are therefore not within the scope of the provision.

The great majority of the wives and children of men born in this country will themselves be British citizens who are not subject to immigration control.

Deportations

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from Central and South America were deported in each year between 1970 and the present time; what were the reasons for these deportations; and to which countries they went.

Mr. Waddington: The available information, which is for 1973-84, is given in the following table. It is the normal practice to remove a person to the country of which he is a national, unless he can show that he is acceptable to another country. Information on the numbers removed to other countries is not readily available.

Deportation orders enforced against nationals of Central and South American Countries 1973-84*

Number of deportations

Reason for deportation (Section of Immigration Act 1971)	*Year*											
	1973	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Breach of conditions of leave to enter (S.3(5)(a))	—	2	—	3	1	1	3	8	19	13	12	11
Conducive to the public good (S.3(5)(b))	—	2	4	4	2	2	2	1	3	—	3	—
Following court recommendation (S.3(6))	9	9	29	24	20	25	44	43	31	21	22	25
All reasons	9	13	33	31	23	28	49	52	53	34	37	36

* Includes all mainland countries from Mexico southwards.

Small Businesses

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what specific measures he plans to undertake to implement the proposals, on matters within his responsibility, contained in the recent Department of Trade and Industry report on scrutiny of administrative and legislative requirements in small businesses.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government's response to the proposals in the report, including those relating to the Home Office, are set out in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" which was published on 16 July (Cmnd. 9571).

Police Women

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands police as to the number of police women as a percentage of the total force of the west midlands police constabulary, their levels of pay in comparison with those of their male counterparts and how many women have held the rank of detective inspector in the divisions of the West Midlands police constabulary during the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 30 June 1985 there were 860 women police officers in the West Midlands police, 13 per cent. of the force. One woman officer in the force has held the rank of detective inspector during the last five years. The salaries of women police officers are the same as those of their male counterparts.

London Schools (Police Involvement)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any formal discussions have taken place between the Metropolitan police and the Inner London education authority over the issue of police involvement in inner London schools.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Regular consultations take place between the Metropolitan police and all local education authorities, including the Inner London education authority on matters of mutual interest. These matters would clearly include the schools involvement programme.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many schools in the inner London area have established formal consultative arrangements with the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that his statistics on schools which participate in the force's schools involvement programme do not distinguish between those in inner London and elsewhere, but that most schools in inner London receive liaison visits as part of the programme.

Police Stations (Lay Visitors)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there is any plan to extend the lay visitors to police stations initiative started in Lambeth and operated by members of the Lambeth community police consultative group.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend, as police authority for the Metropolitan police district, has appointed lay visitors to police stations in the London borough of Enfield and they are now receiving the necessary training; the scheme will begin on 1 September. He is at present considering nominations for appointment to panels in Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow and Wandsworth and is awaiting nominations from Croydon and Hounslow. There have been discussions between officials on the establishment of panels in Bexley and Tower Hamlets and a meeting will shortly take place with Newham. Westminster city council has been invited to comment on a proposal to establish a scheme in that borough.

Metropolitan Police (Liaison)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will identify the range and type of community groups which he considers suitable to participate in liaison and consultation arrangements with the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The guidance on consultation between the community and the police in the Metropolitan police district which my right hon. and learned Friend issued last January under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 states that membership of consultative groups should be open to

"all bona fide formally constituted bodies which represent a significant number of local people".

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the London boroughs and district councils within the Metropolitan police district who currently co-operate in police liaison and consultation committees and who service such a structure in their area; when each structure was established; what is the composition of each committee; and how many elected members serve on the committees;

(2) if he will identify those London boroughs where consultation in the police liaison and consultation committees has been rejected by the local authority or where there are no plans to establish a consultation or liaison scheme.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police (Early Retirement)

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from chief constables about how many of those police officers who have retired early due to ill health were on duties relating to the miners' strike; and what duties they performed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Parks (Dogs)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Wirral council has now resubmitted the draft byelaws to give park rangers greater control over dogs and dog owners using parks in its area; and when he expects to give his decision on them.

Mr. Mellor: On 14 May approval in principle was given to revised draft byelaws submitted by the council on 10 May. I understand that the council has adopted the byelaws and has just submitted them to the Home Office for confirmation. We are about to consult the council on an objection which we have today received and we hope very shortly to be in a position to decide whether the byelaws should be confirmed.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount of new disbursement by health authorities to nurses consequent upon 5 per cent. of the recent pay award now being paid at the end of August; what is his estimate of the interest at current rates which has been saved by health authorities as a result of payment not having been made on the due date of 1 April; and if he will take steps to disburse this sum in the form of a Christmas bonus in December additional to normal monthly salary payments.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The total cost to health authorities in England in 1985-86 of the pay award to nurses and midwives is £173 million. The Government do not draw funds in advance of need. Although health

authorities are notified of their annual allocations before the start of the financial year, they only draw cash on a daily basis. The question of interest does not therefore arise and there are no savings to health authorities as a result of the first stage of the award not being put into payment on 1 April. I am glad to say that most nurses are likely to receive their first stage awards backdated to 1 April in their August pay packets.

Snapethorpe Hospital, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of Snapethorpe hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. John Patten: Proposals about the future of Snapethorpe hospital are the responsibility of Wakefield health authority. The right hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the information available to his Department from sample surveys of the charges being made for ordinary board and lodging accomodation at the time when the weekly upper limits for ordinary board and lodging claims provided under the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Regulations 1985 were set.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 20 June at column *197* and on 17 July.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much was being paid in board and lodging allowances in each year since 1979 in respect of people living in residential homes and registered nursing homes, respectively; and what is his estimate for 1985-86 and 1986-87;

(2) how many people receiving board and lodging allowance were living in residential homes and registered nursing homes, respectively, in each year since1979; and what is his Departmemnt's estimate of the likely total at the end of 1985-86 and in 1986-87.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The following table gives numbers of residents in private and voluntary homes receiving supplementary benefit and total amounts of benefit paid for each year from 1979 to 1984. Reliable forecasts for subsequent years are not available.

	Number of residents	*Total Annual Expenditure (based on December Figures) £ million*
1979	11,000	10
1980	12,000	18
1981	12,000	23
1982	15,700	39
*1983	25,800	102
†1984	42,500	190

* provisional.
† estimate.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment has been made by his Department of the likely impact of the change in board and lodging allowance of the standard of provision for residential care in the private and voluntary sectors, respectively.

Mr. Newton: The new limits are intended to allow reasonable charges to be met in homes satisfying the registration requirements. We have undertaken to keep the limits under review. We shall take careful account of representations and of monitoring and inquiries we have initiated.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the likely impact of the change in board and lodging allowance on the quality and extent of the policy of care in the community.

Mr. Newton: Existing arrangements for people with special needs living in the community in ordinary board and lodging accommodation under adult fostering schemes and similar arrangdments will be unaffected, save by changes in the level of the local limits. They will remain eligible for the £16·15 extension to the local limits, and where attendance allowance is in payment it will be disregarded in the normal way. It will, as now, be possible for local authorities to top up these payments if additional help is needed.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for social Services what consultation took place with chief medical and nursing officers in his Department on the likely impact of the change in board and lodging allowances on the programme to increase and improve care in the community.

Mr. Newton: It is not the practice to disclose details of internal discussions among officials within Government Departments.

Epilepsy

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has for the establishment of special assessment centres and clinics as recommended in the 1984 report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy.

Mr. John Patten: The report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy was made to the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office. Following consultation with the standing medical advisory committee and the standing nursing and midwifery advisory committee, it is hoped to issue the report shortly to health authorities and local authority social services departments. It is not the intention that the report should be treated as a blueprint for the provision of services by all authorities. The scope for adoption of particular recommendations in different areas will depend on the pattern of existing services, availability of resources and local priorities.

NHS (Private Medicine)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department monitors contractual arrangements between the National Health Service and the private medical sector.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We know from the annual accounts of health authorities the expenditure on

contractual arrangements for patient care. and we know from statistical returns the number of patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements. We encourage health authorities to make increased use of private sector facilities for the treatment of National Health Service patients wherever this is a cost-effective way of improving or extending the service they can provide.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an indication of the effect on (a) the capital spending approvals and (b) the revenue allocations for a district health authority if private care and treatment is purchased by an authority for National Health Service patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Neither is affected.

Drugs

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the light of the 15th report of the doctors and dentists review body. whether he will initiate an inquiry into the costs, other than those of drugs, incurred by doctors in dispensing National Health Service drugs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no proposals for such an inquiry.

Housing Benefits

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to give effect to the recommendation on the extension of local authorities' discretionary powers to provide extra help to individual beneficiaries, contained in paragraph 4.20 of the report of the housing benefit review team, Cmnd. 9520.

Mr. Newton: This is something we shall consider further in the light of any views received as part of the consultation process.

Spectacles (Unlawful Sale)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many prosecutions have been mounted by the general optical council for the unlawful sale of glasses without a prescription since the optical provisions of the Health and Social Services Act 1984 came into operation;

(2) how many prosecutions have been mounted in each year since 1979 by *(a)* the general optical council and *(b)* trading standards officers for the unlawful sale of spectacles to persons aged under 16 years by suppliers other than a registered ophthalmic and dispensing optician;

(3) how many prosecutions for the unlawful sale of glasses without a prescription have been mounted by trading standards officers since the optical provisions of the Health and Social Services Act 1984 came into operation;

(4) how many prosecutions are under consideration by the the general optical council for the unlawful sale of glasses without a prescription.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am informed by the general optical council that it is unable to identify any prosecutions mounted since 1979 for the unlawful sale of spectacles to persons under the age of 16 years. Since the optical provisions of the Health and Social Security Act 1984 came into operation the general optical council has not instituted any prosecutions for supplying glasses without prescription. However, it has one possible case concerning the unlawful sale of glasses without prescription under consideration. I am informed by the Office of Fair Trading that it is unable to identify details of any such prosecutions mounted by trading standards officers.

Nurses (Manpower Levels)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list nursing manpower levels in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1979; and which district or regional health authorities have been affected most resulting from decreases in such manpower.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have such comparable information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Services for Children

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many regional reviews during the last six years have involved services for children; whether there will be any reviews in the near future concerning the implementation of circular HM(71)22; and whether his Department will examine the regional strategic plans with the needs of children in hospital in mind.

Mr. John Patten: Regional reviews are not intended to carry out monitoring of particular questions in every region but are used for follow up major strategic issues selectively with individual regions, and the consequent action plans which should reflect local priorities. It is not possible to say to what extent implementation of HM(71)22 will feature in future reviews — this will depend on the nature of the major issues in particular regions. Officials in the Department examine all regional strategic plans to ensure that proposed developments in services for children in hospital are consistent with Departmental policy.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what conclusions he has reached following his monitoring of action taken by regional health authorities on the three reports of the maternity services advisory committee.

Mr. John Patten: We are currently examining regional strategic plans but we are not yet ready to draw conclusions.

Spectacles (Prices)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies his Department has made and is making of the movement in the price of glasses before and after the implementation of the optical provisions of the Health and Social Services Act 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I see no worthwhile purpose in carrying out detailed studies in an attempt to arrive at statistically sound before-and-after comparisons in such a diverse field as spectacles. Such studies could be very expensive and time consuming. We are collecting general

information on opticians' prices and the selections of new budget frames that are coming on the market. We are satisfied that a wider range of lower priced spectacles has become available as a result of the implementation of the Act.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing in terms of 1985 prices expenditure under the social security budget under the principal heads in 1973, 1979 and 1984 compared with the estimate for the current year; and if he will provide similar figures for employee's and employer's contributions.

Mr. Whitney: Social security benefit expenditure and national insurance fund contribution receipts are set out for financial years 1973-74, 1979-80, 1984-85 and 1985-86 in the tables.

Table 1

Expenditure	*1973-74**	*1979-80**	*1984-85**	*1985-86*
	£ million at 1985-86 prices			
Retirement pension	10,980	14,106	16,167	16,585
Non-contributory Retirement Pension	111	58	42	41
Widow's Benefits	978	901	834	831
Unemployment Benefit	694	1,045	1,677	1,644
Sickness Benefit	1,221	1,048	281	282
Invalidity Benefit	964	1,592	2,178	2,300
Attendance Allowance and Invalid Care Allowance†	143	328	608	681
Severe Disablement allowance‡	—	136	244	297
Mobility Allowance‖	—	126	379	424
Christmas Bonus	318	162	116	111
All Industrial Injuries benefits	549	456	460	456
Maternity benefits	168	226	184	194
Benefits paid in respect of children¶	1,378	4,531	4,616	4,570
Family Income Supplement	50	43	138	140
Death Grant	53	26	18	17
War pensions	654	600	571	564
Supplementary Benefit•	2,808	3,898	6,685	6,607
Housing benefit•■	—	765	4,364	4,327
Total Social Security benefit	21,069	30,047	39,562	40,071

Notes

* The figures have been converted to 1985-86 prices by use of the GDP deflator.

† Invalid care allowance was introduced in July 1976.

‡ The 1979-80 figure is for non-contributory invalidity pension. That benefit was introduced in November 1975 and replaced by severe disablement allowance in November 1984.

‖ Mobility allowance was introduced in January 1976.

¶ The 1973-74 figure is for family allowance. Later years include child benefit and one parent benefit. All years include guardian's allowance and child's special allowance.

• The supplementary benefit figures for 1973-74 and 1979-80 include assistance with housing costs which is covered by housing benefit in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

■ Includes rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates. Comparable figures for 1973-74 are not available.

Table 2
Receipts

The corresponding figures for National Insurance Contributions credited to the National Insurance Fund in respect of Class 1 National Insurance Contributions paid by employers and employees are as below. Figures are in £ million at 1985-86 prices

	Employees		*Employers*
1985-86	9,385		10,986
1984-85	9,067		10,622
1979-80	6,323		9,931
1973-74		14,927	

No breakdown between employees and employers is available for 1973-74.

Benefit Payments

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are currently in receipt of one or more of the following benefits: supplementary benefit, housing benefit and family income supplement.

Mr. Whitney: The information, for the latest dates available, is as follows:

	Number (thousands)	*Date*
Supplementary benefit	4,600	*August 1984
Housing benefit	about 7,500	†current estimate
Family income supplement	199	‡April 1985

Source:

* Quarterly statistical inquiry August 1984.

† Local authority subsidy estimates for 1985-86.

‡ 10 per cent. sample of all FIS claims.

More than one of the benefits may be paid to the same person at the same time. Householders receiving supplementary benefit generally also receive housing benefit.

Sick Pay

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he proposes to follow up the options for changes in statutory sick pay identified in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" Cmnd. 9571, published on 16 July.

Mr. Whitney: Before considering whether the options on statutory sick pay contained in the White Paper should be pursued, the Government are seeking the views of interested parties. I have accordingly issued a consultation paper today to organisations representing both employers and employees interests. The purpose of the consultation paper is not at this stage to put forward Government proposals but to provide an appropriate opportunity for comment from those who would be affected if such changes were to be made. Decisions will then be taken in the light of the comments received.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many men and how many women earned extra retirement pension by deferring retirement to 70 and 65 years respectively during 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what was the average size of the increased weekly basic pension.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. 66]: Information for 1984-85 is not yet available. Information for 1983-84 is as follows:

	Number	Average rate of increased basic pension £
Men who deferred retirement to age 70	7,660	45·76
Women who deferred retirement to age 65	2,270	44·71
Married women aged 65 whose husbands deferred their retirement to age 70	2,380	24·77

These rates are at November 1983 benefit levels (basic retirement pension in November 1983 was £34·05, £20·45 for a married woman on her husband's insurance).

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *45-6* how many households recorded in the annual statistical inquiry for December 1983 were having deductions made from their supplementary benefit for electricity and how many for gas in £1 bands above £12 per week.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985, c *534-5*]: The table sets out the information requested on deductions for electricity, as recorded in the annual statistical inquiry for December 1983. Because of the sample size, a reliable breakdown cannot be made in bands over £18 a week.

Electricity direct arrangements—December 1983

Range of deductions £	Number of arrangements
12·01 – 13·00	4,916
13·01 – 14·00	4,295
14·01 – 15·00	3,855
15·01 – 16·00	2,408
16·01 – 17·00	1,899
17·01 – 18·00	2,049
18·01 and over	3,497

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

CSCE (Cultural Forum)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's attitude towards the conference on security and co-operation in Europe cultural forum which will take place in Budapest from 15 October to 25 November.

Mr. Renton: We intend to play a full and positive role in this important part of the whole CSCE process. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. St. John-Stevas) has kindly accepted my invitation to lead our delegation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Postgraduate Certificate in Education

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applicants there were for the postgraduate certificate in education course for 1985-86 in *(a)* mathematics and *(b)* physics; and how the applications for this coming year compare with those for the years 1984-85 and 1983-84.

Mr. Dunn: As at 10 July the numbers of applications received by the graduate teacher training registry for entry in September 1985 to postgraduate certificate in education courses in mathematics and physics were 1,119 and 474 respectively. The corresponding figures for September 1984 entry were 1,420 and 657; and for September 1983 entry 1,634 and 747.

School Standards (Report)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the conclusions of the second report of the National Council for Educational Standards on standards in English schools, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the latest survey by the National Council for Educational Standards, a copy of which has been sent to him, in so far as it affects Government policy towards comprehensive schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: I welcome the report of this further study examining various factors affecting examination performance in schools and confirming the strong statistical association between that performance and social background. The study highlights wide differences in examination results both between types of school—selective and non-selective—and different schools of the same kind. The suggested focus for future research is not inconsistent with the decision I announced last November about the nature of research which the Department might be willing to fund if suitable proposals were submitted.

As the authors state, the findings are capable of a variety of interpretations, the issues are very complex and the inferences drawn tentative. It will take a little time to study in detail the report and its findings.

Drug Abuse

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what basis he calculated the sum of £2 million as being suitable to provide to education authorities for appointing drug abuse co-ordinators for schools; which specific education authorities are to benefit from this allocation; and what particular projects he is funding to prepare curriculum material for secondary school teachers and to analyse how education authorities are tackling drug misuse.

Mr. Dunn: The sum is based on average expenditure of £20,000 by every local education authority. This should be sufficient to appoint, or second, from April 1986 a member of staff to stimulate and co-ordinate action in the education service aimed at the prevention of drugs misuse (or to provide an equivalent level of activity in other ways). In addition to the salary costs of the staff involved, the level of grant is intended to cover appropriate overheads and operating expenses including arrangements for training teachers and other professional staff. All authorities are being invited to submit bids and are eligible to benefit from the support grants.

The Department is providing some £85,000 for the Health Education Council for the preparation and testing of a comprehensive range of suitable curriculum materials for teachers and teacher trainers; £10,000 for the Wirral education authority to assess the effects of curriculum

materials in use locally and designed to counter drug misuse; and £11,000 for the National Foundation for Educational Research to prepare an account using the educational management information exchange network of how individual education authorities are tackling drugs misuse.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what training will be given to the drug abuse co-ordinators; and how they will be assisted.

Mr. Dunn: This will be for each local authority to determine in the light of the individual staff appointed and the range of activity to be undertaken.

Teachers (Resignations)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many teachers on pay scale I and II under the age of 40 years have resigned from the profession in the last five years.

Mr. Dunn: The wastage rates of teachers on specific pay scales by age are not readily available but total wastage of all teachers under the age of 40 in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales was:

	Number
1979-80	23,723
1980-81	21,573
1981-82	17,825
1982-83	16,572
1983-84	*16,174

* provisional.

Higher Education

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make additional resources available to enable university and polytechnic lecturers who according to their current levels of pay are in the upper limit of the lowest teaching grade to gain access to greater promotion prospects.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. In the polytechnics, fewer than 1 per cent. of all lecturers are paid on the lowest scale, and almost all teachers have automatic career progression to senior lecturer at maximum annual salary of over £14,000. In the universities the maximum of the lecturer scale is £14,925.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the extent to which levels of pay have risen year by year from each academic year since 1978-79 for lecturers, senior lecturers and heads of department at universities, polytechnics and colleges of further or higher education.

Sir Keith Joseph: Pay increases varied only minimally between the various grades and were as follows:

Academic year (1 October to 30 September)	*Percentage increases*	
	Lecturers, senior lecturers and heads of department in maintained establishments of further and higher education	*Assistant lecturers/lecturers/senior lecturers/readers in universities*
1978-79	9·3	15·6
1979-80	*34·4-37·9	‖25·3
1980-81	7·5	‖¶19·2
1981-82	†5·0	5·0
1982-83	5·0	•4·6
1983-84	‡4·6	■4·6

* Compounded of a 2-stage arbitral award and a 2-stage "comparability award" (Clegg). The resulting increases varied within the range indicated according both to scale and scale point.

† Plus £69 at each scale point, plus a further £108 at the maximum of the Lecturer 1 scale. (Settlement worth 5·8 per cent. overall).

‡ Plus £330 at the maximum of the Lecturer 1 scale. (Settlement worth 5·1 per cent. overall).

‖ Includes 17 per cent. phased comparability award.

¶ Plus £100 on the maximum of the Lecturer and corresponding points on other scales. (Settlement worth 19·4 per cent. overall).

• Plus increase arising from adjustments to the Lecturer scale. (Settlement worth 4·7 per cent. overall).

■ Plus £150 on maximum of the Lecturer and corresponding points on other scales. (Settlement worth 4·8 per cent. overall).

Schools (Political Indoctrination)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to amend the Education Act 1944 so as to prohibit political indoctrination in schools.

Mr. Dunn: We have made it clear that what is provided in schools should always be education and never indoctrination; we have no plans to introduce legislation on this matter.

Pre-school Playgroups

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number and proportion of children entering school who have previously attended a pre-school playgroup.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his oral reply*, 21 May 1985, c. 853]: The figure of 33 per cent. quoted is an estimate of the places available at all playgroups in England, as a proportion of the total three and four-year-old population. Most children attend playgroups for fewer than the total number of sessions per week that are available. About 70 per cent. of playgroups are members of the Pre-school Playgroup Association, which estimates that, in 1984, 42 per cent. of all three and four-year-olds attended PPA playgroups.

ENVIRONMENT

Wild Birds

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department received from the European Commission the report entitled, "Apercu des zones de grant interet pour la conservation des oiseaux sauvages"; and if he will *(a)* place a copy in the Library and *(b)* list in the *Official Report* those sites contained in the report which relate to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: My Department has not received this report, but the Nature Conservancy Council received a copy in November 1984. The report is a European Commission working document and is not intended for publication. The hon. Member may however find it helpful to know that the Nature Conservancy Council has identified the following sites which in its opinion meet the criteria for listing under the EC birds directive and/or designation under the Ramsar convention:

England

Lindisfarne, Northumberland—Designated as Ramsar site
Farne Islands, Northumberland—Designated as a Special Protection Area
Coquet Island, Northumberland—SPA
Holburn Moss, Northumberland—Ramsar + SPA
Irthinghead Mires, Northumberland and Cumbria
Teesmouth Flats and Marshes, Durham
Upper Teesdale, Durham and North Yorkshire
Malham Tarn, North Yorkshire
Derwent Ings, Wheldrake to Budwith, North Yorkshire and Humberside—Ramsar + SPA
Bempton Cliffs, Humberside
Humber Flats and Marshes, Humberside
Tetney Marshes, Lincolnshire
The Wash, Lincolnshire and Norfolk
Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire
Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk—Ramsar
North Norfolk coast, inc. Scolt Head, Holkam, Blakeney Point, Clay and Salthouse Marshes, Norfolk—Ramsar
Roydon Common, Norfolk
Scarning Fen, Norfolk
Surlingham Marshes, Wheatfen and Rockland Broads, Norfolk
Bure Marshes, Norfolk—Ramsar
Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere, Norfolk—Ramsar
Redgrave—South Lopham Fen, Norfolk and Suffolk
Minsmere—Walberswick, Suffolk—Ramsar
Havergate Island and Orfordness, Suffolk—SPA
Stour and Orwell Estuary, Suffolk
Hamford Water, Essex
Abberton Reservior, Essex—Ramsar
Blackwater Flats and Estuary inc. Colne and Dengie Flats, Essex
Foulness and Maplin Sands, Essex
Leigh Marsh, Essex
The Swale and South Sheppey, Kent—SPA + Ramsar
South Thames Marshes, High Halstow, Kent
Medway Estuary and Marshes, Kent
Pagham Harbour, West Sussex
Chichester and Langstone Harbours, West Sussex and Hampshire
North Solent Marshes, Hampshire
New Forest Valley Mires, Hampshire
Christchurch Harbour, Hampshire
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes, Rockcliffe and Burgh Marshes, Cumbria
Mallerstang-Swale Dale Head, Cumbria
Duddon Sands and Millom, Cumbria
Walney and Fauley Islands, Cumbria
Estwaite Water, Cumbria
Irthinghead Mires, Cumbria and Northumberland—Ramsar
Moor House, Cumbria—SPA+Ramsar
Morecambe Bay, Inc Wyre, Lune and Cockerham, Cumbria and Lancashire
Leighton Moss, Lancashire
Ribble Estuary, Lancashire—SPA+Ramsar
Martin Mere, Lancashire
Alt Estuary, Merseyside
Mersey Estuary, Merseyside
Dee Estuary, Clwyd, Cheshire and Merseyside — SPA + Ramsar
Kinder — Bleaklow, Derbyshire and S Yorks
Rostherne Mere, Cheshire — Ramsar
New Grounds, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire
Severn Estuary, Gloucestershire, Avon, Somerset, Gwent and S Glamorgan
Bridgewater Bay, Inc Fenningand and Stert Islands, Somerset — Ramsar
The Somerset Levels, Somerset
Chew Valley Lake, Somerset —SPA
Taw and Torridge Estuary, Devon
Isles of Scilly coastal habitats
Slapton Lea, Devon
Exe Estuary, Devon
Chesil Beach and the Fleet, Dorset — Ramsar +SPA
Horton Common and Holt Heath, Dorset
Poole Harbour and adjacent heaths, Dorset inc:
(a) Codlinston Heath
(b) Studland Heath
(c) Stoborough and Creech Heaths
(d) Grange Povington and Coombe Heaths (Heath Range), Lulworth
(e) Hartland Moor
(f) Decoy Heath, South Wareham
(g) Arne Peninsula
Chamberlayne's Heath and Rimsmoor, Dorset

SCOTLAND

Hermaness, Unst, Shetland
Gruncy, Shetland
North Fetlar, Shetland
North Roe, Mainland, Shetland
Papa Stour, Shetland
Foula, Shetland
Bressay, Shetland
Noss, Shetland
Fair Isle, Shetland
West Westray, Orkney
Papa Westray and North Hill, Orkney
Marwick Head, Orkney
Lochs of Harray, Stenness and Skall, Orkney
North Hoy, Orkney
Copinsay, Orkney
Swona, Orkney
Pentland Skerries, Orkney
Sule Skerry and Stack, Orkney
Moray Firth (Eastern part) inc Findhorn Bay, Culbin Sands and Nairn Bar, Grampian
Loch Spynie, Grampian
Loch of Strathbeg, Grampian
Ythan Estuary and Sands of Forvie, inc Meikle and Slaine Lochs, Grampian
Lock Insh and Marshes, Highland
Cairngorms, Highland and Grampian
Cairngorm Lochs: Loch Einich, Loch Coire, Loch Avon and Loch Etchachan, Grampian—Ramsar
Loch of Skene, Grampian
Fowlsheugh Cliffs, Grampian
Lochnagar, Grampian
Caenlochan, Grampian and Tayside
Drumochter Hills, Highland
Rannoch Moor, Highland, Strathclyde and Tayside—Ramsar
Montrose Basin, Tayside
Forfar Lochs, Lochs Forfar, Rescobie and Balgavies, Tayside
Loch of Kinnordy, Tayside
Loch of Lintrathen, Tayside—Ramsar
Tay Isle Valley inc Monk Myre, Marlee Loch, Stormont Loch, Meikelour and Loch of Clunie, Tayside
Dupplin Lochs, Tayside
Drummond Pond and Penny Beg Pong, Tayside
Carsebrook and Rhynd Lochs, Tayside
Loch Leven, Tayside—Ramsar
Firth of Tay, Tayside

Tentsmuir Point and Abertay Sands, Fife
Eden Estuary, Fife
Cameron Reservoir, Fife
Firth of Forth and Aberlady Bay, Central
Central Lothian and Fife
Forth Islands: Inchmickery, Fidra, The Lamb, Eyebroughty and Craighleith, Lothian and Fife
Loch Mahaick, Central
Flanders Moss, Central
Endrick Mouth, Loch Lomond, Central
Loch Lomond, Central and Strathclyde—Ramsar
Brass Rock, Lothian
Gladhouse Reservoir, Lothian
Fala Flow, Lothian
Westwater and Baddingsgill Reservoirs, Borders
Moorfoot Hills, Ettrick, Lauderdale and Tweeddale, Borders
St. Abb's Head to Fast Castle, Borders
Greenlaw Moor and Hule Moss
Hoselaw Loch, Borders
North Rona and Sula Sgeir, Western Isles
Flannan Isles, Western Isles
St. Kilda, Western Isles
Shiant Islands, Western Isles
Islands in the Sound of Harris, Western Isles
Loch An Duin, North Uist, Western Isles
Monarch Islands, Western Isles
Loch Druidibeg, A'Machair, South Uist
Western Isles—designated as a SPA and Ramsar Site
Howmore Estuary, (Loch Roag and Loch Fada), Western Isles
Lochs Hallan and Kilphedder, South Uist
Western Isles
Islands in the Sound of Barra, Western Isles
Berneray and Mingulay, Western Isles
Stroma, Highland
Dunnett Head, Easter Head to Chapel Hill, Highland
Blar Nam Faolleag, Highland
Strathy Bogs, Highland
Caithness Lochs, inc: Calder, Brubster, Heilen and Meadle, Highland
Caithness Cliffs, Duncansby Head to Skirza Head, Highland
Caithness Cliffs, Wick to Lybster, Highland
Caithness Cliffs, Dumbeath to Ord Point, inc Berriedale, Inver Hill and Badbea Cliffs, Highland
Isles at the Mouth of Kyle and Tongue inc
Rabbit Islands, Highland
Durness Lochs and Streams (Lochs Croispol, Lanlish and Borralie), Highland
Cape Wrath, Aodann Mhor, Highland
Handa, Highland
Inchhadamph, Highland
The Summer Isles, inc Priest Island, Highland
Loch Fleet, Highland
Lower Dornoch Firth, Highland
Loch Eye, Highland
Isay, Skye, Highland
Cromarty Firth, Highland
Beauly Firth, Highland
Moray Firth (Western Part) Highland and Grampian
Rhum, Highland—designated as SPA+Ramsar site
Loch Morar, Highland
Loch Shiel and Kentra Moss, Highland
Claish Moss, Highland—Ramsar
Monadhliath, Highland
Tiree and Coll, Strathclyde
Treshnish Isles, Strathclyde
Islay, especially Lochs Gruinart and Indaai, Strathclyde
Inner Clyde, Dumbuck Foreshore, Pillar Bank, Strathclyde
Rhunahaorine, Strathclyde
Machrihanish and Tangy Loch, Strathclyde
Ailsa Craig, Strathclyde
Lochylock and Cleuch Reservoirs, Strathclyde
Loch Ken and Dee Marshes, Dumfries and Galloway
White Loch, (Lochinsh), Dumfries and Galloway
Silver Flowe, Dumfries and Galloway—Ramsar
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes, (North side), inc Blackshaw Bank, Nith Mersea and Caerlaverock to Southerness Point, Dumfries and Galloway

Wales

Ynys Feirig, Rhosneigr, Anglesey
Traeth Lafan, (Lavan Sands), Conwy Bay
Gwynedd
Llyn Idwal, Gwynedd
Llyn Tegid, Gwynedd
Cors Fochno and Dyfi, Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys—Ramsar
Llangorse Lake, Powys
Skomer, Dyfed—designated as SPA
Grassholm, Dyfed
Skokholm, Dyfed
Bosherston Lake, Dyfed
"Three Rivers", Taff, Tywi and Gwendraeth
Estuaries, Dyfed
Burry Inlet, Dyfed and West Glamorgan

SCOTLAND

Eye Clinics

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of the average waiting time for appointments for specialist eye clinics in each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Hip Replacement

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of the average waiting time for hip replacement operations in each health board area in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information relates to mean waiting times (in days) in 1983 and is as follows:

	Days
Argyll and Clyde	289
Ayrshire and Arran	237
Borders	100
Dumfries and Galloway	181
Fife	317
Forth Valley	349
Grampian	211
Greater Glasgow	188
Highland	238
Lanarkshire	170
Lothian	220
Orkney	—
Shetland	—
Tayside	281
Western Isles	—
All Scotland	232

Waiting times for 1983 were affected by the consequences of industrial action in 1982.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the names and locations of the broadleaved woodlands for which felling licences for conversion of the land to agriculture were issued during the years 1982-83, 1983-84, and 1984-85 in the Forestry Commission's north Scotland conservancy and south Scotland conservancy.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Name of Wood	Location	Region
North Scotland Conservancy		
Year to 31 March 1983		
None		
Year to 31 March 1984		
Woodlands at Torbreck, Ness Castle	Inverness	Highland
Year to 31 March 1985		
None		
South Scotland Conservancy		
Year to 31 March 1983		
None		
Year to 31 March 1984		
Jervis Wood	Newsteadings	Strathclyde
Woodlands at Greenend	Georgefield, Earlston	Borders
Woodlands at Crossgates	Goremile Road, Carluke	Strathclyde
Woodlands at Burnhouses	Duns	Borders
Year to 31 March 1985		
Birch Wood, Holylee Farm	Peebles	Borders
Broad Wood, Drumcoyle Estate	Coyleton, Sundrum	Strathclyde

Acute Services (NHS)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the averge cash value of total National Health Service acute services received by a person living in each of the Scottish regional health authorities and in each district authority, respectively.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for health and social work gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 17 December 1984, at columns 55-56.

Land Court

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the present composition of the Scottish land court together with the dates on which each of the present members retires and any conditions such as a knowledge of Gaelic or a crofting background which will be applied to the filling of any vacancy.

Mr. Younger: The Scottish land court consists of a chairman (the hon. Lord Elliott MC) and three members (Mr. A. B. Campbell OBE, Mr. A. Gillespie MBE and Mr. D. D. McDiarmid JP). The chairman has to be an advocate of 10 years' standing and has the same rank and tenure of office as if he had been appointed a judge of the Court of Session. He is required to retire on reaching age 75, and Lord Elliott will be 75 in September 1997. The members retire at age 65, respectively, in October 1986, June 1992 and November 1996. Members are required to have extensive experience of crofting and agriculture and preferably have some qualification in agriculture or related discipline and one must be a Gaelic speaker. Some knowledge of crofting and agricultural law as well as experience in valuation and arbitration are also regarded as desirable qualifications for any prospective members.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish his proposals on improvement grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I had hoped that it would be possible to publish the results of our review of private sector improvement policy, in the form of a Green Paper, before the summer recess. There are, however, a number of areas where the distinctive nature of the housing stock has required consideration which has taken rather longer than expected. I shall publish our proposals as soon as possible.

Gannets

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what applications he has received for a licence to take gannets or to sell gannets from the island of Sula Sgeir: and if he is prepared to approve this application.

Mr. Ancram: An application to take gannets from the island of Sula Sgeir has been received in the course of the last few days. Having considered all the relevant factors, including the advice of the Nature Conservancy Council, my right hon. Friend proposes to issue a licence to take 2,000 gannets on the same conditions as in previous years.

Health Initiatives

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether it is the policy of the Government to implement conclusion 43(1) of the 17th report from the Committee of Public Accounts on the National Health Service, general dental service, which stated that the Scottish Home and Health Department should consider whether further special initiatives are required in Scotland;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to consider conclusion 43(1) of the 17th report from the Committee of Public Accounts on the National Health Service, general dental service, before any decision is made on the future of the Edinburgh dental hospital and school.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government's response to the report is under consideration and will be given by Treasury minute in due course. The views expressed by the Committee will be borne in mind in any discussions about the Edinburgh dental hospital and school.

Hunterston A Power Station

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide information on the thermal output and fuel discharged from Hunterston A power station in the calendar years 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information sought is not readily available for calendar years.

The information for 1983-84 was given in my reply to the hon. Member on 22 February 1985, at column *617*. The information for 1984-85 is as follows:

	1984-85
Thermal output (GWh)	8,922
Fuel Discharged (tonnes u)	80·6

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the rules laid down by both the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development against which projects applying for aid and trade provision support are measured.

Mr. Rifkind: To conform with the requirements of the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the export credit arrangement, a tied aid credit, whether a mixed credit (a combination of aid and export credit) or a single integrated aid loan, must have a grant element of at least 25 per cent.

Additionally, under the guiding principles agreed between OECD members for the use of official development assistance in association with export credits and other market funds, the members of the development assistance committee of the OECD undertake to confine such transactions to priority projects and programmes which are carefully appraised against the developmental standards and criteria applicable to official development assistance programmes and which form part of the recipient country's development programme. These agreed guiding principles are set out in full on page 43 of the ODA's annual review "British Overseas Aid 1983", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

"Famine in Africa"

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in respect of his observations on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Session 1984-85, on "Famine in Africa," Cmnd. 9566, paragraph (xxxii), what are the relevant sums in respect of each of the following categories: allocations already agreed for food aid, disaster relief and for emergency actions under the European development fund, relief aid to famine-affected countries in the last 12 months derived from these funds, other sums devoted to these purposes together with the name of the funds from which they have been drawn and the sums allocated from all programmes, including the above, made available due to unavoidable slippage in expenditure, together with the respective reasons for such slippage for each sum and fund concerned.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is as follows. The figures remain provisional pending finalisation of the Appropriation Account.

	Provision	*Expenditure on African Famine-Related Activities—1984-85*			*£m*
	Opening Provision in Main Estimate 1984-85 (all activities and recipients)	*Expenditure against opening provision*	*Additional Expenditure financed by allocations from the Contingency Reserve*	*Additional Expenditure financed from allocations made possible by slippage elsewhere in aid programme**	*Total*
VOTED					
European Development Fund	85	12	—	—	12
National actions food aid	19	15	4	2	21
Bilateral Disaster relief	Token or working provision only	—	8	4	12
Refugee and other relief assistance	Token or working token provision only	—	5	4	9
NON-VOTED					
UK share of European Community budgetised aid	110	35	—	—	35
		62	17	10	89
SOURCES OTHER THAN AID PROGRAMME					
Cost of Ministry of Defence of RAF Hercules operation in Ethiopia					6
					95

* Allocations arising from slippage are made when forecasts of aid programme spending in aggregate permit; they cannot meaningfully be related to reduced forecasts for individual programme items.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) in respect of his observations on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Session 1984-85, "Famine in Africa", Cmnd. 9566, paragraph (xxxiv), if he will give a breakdown of the 1,200,000 tonnes of cereals committed

at the Dublin Council derived physically from: intervention stocks within the European Economic Community and cereals purchased from the world market, together with the overall cost and cost per tonne cif at port of delivery for each category in European currency units and pound sterling at a given exchange rate;

(2) in respect of his observations on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Session 1984-85, on "Famine in Africa", Cmnd. 9566, paragraph (xxxiv), if he will set out a comparative table in respect of an approximate or actual breakdown of cost per tonne in respect of cereals allocated at the Dublin Council drawn from intervention stocks and world markets, respectively, for each of the following, or similar, categories of expenditure: purchase cost, export subsidy or state assistance where applicable, shipping cost, insurance and agency costs.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not available in the form requested, either in respect of the Community's commitments under the Dublin plan, or in respect of member states' commitments. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will send the hon. Member what information he can on these points as soon as possible.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in respect of his observations on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Session 1984-85, on "Famine in Africa", Cmnd. 9566, paragraph (xxxiv), what specific representations were made by Her Majesty's Government to the appropriate authorities of the European Economic Community to activate existing emergency procedures to speed up delivery of aid under the normal food aid programme; what reply he has received; and if he will make a statement concerning the further intentions of Her Majesty's Government on this matter.

Mr. Rifkind: Her Majesty's Government urged that emergency procedures should be used for food aid for famine affected countries at meetings in Brussels on 30 January, 15 February, 5 March and 14 May. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development emphasised the need to speed up food aid deliveries in discussion with Commissioner Natali on 4 March, and raised the question of emergency procedures at the Development Council on 23 May. Ministers and officials have also discussed it in informal contacts with the Commission, which are now reviewing the procedures for allocating emergency aid. We intend to press for rapid conclusions from this review.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects have been undertaken, or what direct assistance has been rendered, by the Tropical Development and Research Institute or its predecessors in respect of areas now subject to famine in Africa in the course of the last five years; and in respect of each project or programme, what was the name of the commissioning body and the source of the funds for the payment of the work, together with particulars of any requests or proposals received from any quarter which have been declined over the same period, together with the dates concerned and reasons for the refusal of any request.

Mr. Rifkind: A list of current activities by the Tropical Development and Research Institute in East and West Africa is set out in the table. For the past five years the proportion of effort devoted to Africa has increased from 19 to 25 per cent., reflecting increased regional technical co-operation demand. All such technical co-operation requests have been met. Twenty-four contract opportunities were declined over the five-year period because suitable staff were unavailable. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member with details of projects carried out earlier in the five-year period when the information has been compiled.

Specific contracts, projects and programmes now being undertaken by TORI: East and West Africa affected by drought.

Prostephanus Truncatus Control Programme, Tanzania.
This is a jointly funded FAO-ODA programme, £300,000 (of which £200,000 from FAO). Likely completion date 1987-88.

East African Armyworm Programme, Tanzania and Kenya.
Multi-funded, EDF £100,000; ODA £240,000; DG XII-EC £70,000. 1987-88. Partly supported by on-going financed United Kingdom based R and D programme valued at £334,500.

Tsetse and Trypanosomiaisis Programme, Somalia, Rwanda.
Multi-funded, FAO £5,500; ODA £90,000 (including a long-term TC element). 1987-88.
Partly supported by an on-going ODA funded United Kingdom and Overseas based R and D programme valued at £483,000.

Ecology and Control of Crop Damaging Termites Programme, Sudan
ODA funded TC project £55,000. 1986-87.

Schistosomiasis Control Programme, Sudan.
ODA funded TC-TCO project £70,000. 1986-87.

Vector Control, Refugee Camps, Sudan.
Funded by Save the Children Fund, £3,150 on-going.

Impovement of Pest Control in Stored Cereal Grains, Mali.
ODA financed TC-TCO programme £250,000. 1987-88.
Partly supported by on-going ODA funded United Kingdom and Overseas based R and D programmes valued at £100,000.

Improved Utilisation of Sorghum, Kenya.
Including a multi-funded Sorghum New Foods joint TDRI-KIRDI project having DGXII-EC £146,000; ODA TCO £70,000 elements and supported by a three-year, £233,000 home and overseas research and development programme funded by the ODA.

Support to the Livestock and Meat Marketing Commission, Sudan.
ODA funded TC programme £60,000. 1986-87.

Training in the Post Harvest Technology of Fruits, Kenya.
ODA funded TC project £20,000. 1985-86.

Study of Post Harvest Crop Losses, Tanzania.
EC funded project £12,600. 1985-86.

Control of Insects on Dried Fish, Gambia.
ODA funded TC project £20,000. 1985-86.
Partly supported by two-year ODA financed, United Kingdom R and D programme valued at £22,000.

Use of Bactericides in the Suspension Drying of Hides, Gambia.
ODA funded TC project £10,000. 1985-86.
Partly supported by two-year ODA financed, United Kingdom based R and D programme valued at £13,750.

Temperate Management of Horticultural Export Crops, Kenya.
ODA financed project £50,000. 1985-86.

Pulping Trials on Cupressus SPP., Sudan.
ODA funded TC Project £55,000. 1985-86.

Post Harvest Training, Warda, Ivory Coast.
ODA funded TC project £7,750/year on-going.

Training Courses in Post Harvest Crop Technology, Cameron.
ODA funded TC project £19,500. 1985-86.

Mideviv Potato Project, Cameron.
ODA funded TC Project £5,000. 1985-86.

Abattoir Rehabilitation Study, Ghana.
ODA funded TC project £20,000. 1986-87.

Note:

This list does not include United Kingdom based research and development projects on semi-arid and arid land crops which have a wider geographical application or training programmes (individual or group) for Central African trainees which are undertaken in the United Kingdom. Similarly, it does not include short projects, perhaps of an innovative nature, which might be

undertaken at the TDRI as a result of requests for technical information of short "fire-brigading" visits of up to one month arising from specific requests for technical assistance.

The total level of TDRI effort in the form of contracts, long and short-term technical co-operation and allied R and D programmes in the Sub-Sahel Africa is likely to reach 47 man years in 1985-86, representing 16 per cent. of the institute's total effort.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in respect of his observations on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Session 1984-85, on "Famine in Africa," Cmnd. 9566, paragraph (xxviii), what are the specific contracts, projects or programmes now being undertaken by the Tropical Development and Research Institute, listing for each respective piece of work now in hand, the name of the commissioning body, the approximate cost in pound sterling, the expected date for the completion of each item, and the main locations of the work being undertaken.

Mr. Rifkind: Paragraph 28 of the observations drew attention in particular to European Community research contracts obtained by the Tropical Development and Research Institute. Details of these are given in the table. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member when the details of the full current work programme have been compiled.

DG. XII Contracts—TDRI

	Termination Date	*Main Research Centre*	*Principle overseas collaborations*	*EC Contribution to TDRI over lifetime of projects £*
1. New Foods from Sorghum	December 31, 1986	TDRI, Culham	Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute.	143,000
2. Mechanisms of Resistance in Rice to the Brown Plant-hopper *Nilaparvata Lugens* Stal.	June 30, 1987	TDRI, College House	South East Asia Regional Centre for Graduate studies in Agriculture (Philippines).	108,400
3. Investigation of the femal sex pheromone of major insect pests of some important food crops.	June 30, 1987	TDRI, Grays Inn Road.	*(a)* West Africa Rice Development Association (Sierra Leone) *(b)* Permanent committee for Drought control in the Sahal (Senegal). *(c)* Coconut Research Institute (Sri Lanka).	70,000
4. Optimization of pheromone traps used in the control of the East African Armyworm	June 30, 1987	TDRI, College House	*(a)* Maloka Research Station (Malawi) *(b)* Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (Kenya).	70,000
5. Virus control of *Spodoptera Littoralis* in Egypt	December 31, 1986	TDRI, Porton Down	Plant Protection Research Institute Min. of Agriculture (Egypt).	138,811
6. Current priorities in taxonomy research.	December 31, 1985	TDRI, College House	—	15,000

Tropical Development and Research Institute

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in tabular form the number of personnel currently employed by the Tropical Development and Research Institute in each of its constituent parts for categories of personnel as set out in the memorandum submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee in a previous Session, together with the respective numbers of personnel employed by its predecessor bodies in 1980.

Mr. Rifkind: The table is as follows:

	Staff in post
1 April 1980	
Tropical Products Institute and Centre for Overseas Pest Research combined	436
1 June 1985	
Tropical Development and Research Institute	371

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in respect of the Tropical Development and Research Institute, he will tabulate for each of the scientific disciplines the numbers of personnel employed who possess graduate or broadly equivalent professional qualifications, together with the number of vacancies in each discipline for which funded posts exist and the number of additional posts which will need to be filled for any future approved scheme of expansion.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Discipline	*Posts filled (graduates or equivalent)*	*Graduate-level Posts Vacant and under recruitment*
Biology/Chemistry	70	10
Engineering	20	1
Economics	15	—
Others	92	10
Total	197	21

There are no plans for expansion.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Local Government (Cash Limits)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give revised cash limits for 1985-86 resulting from the carry forward of capital underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility schemes for central Government and for local authority expenditure.

Mr. Peter Rees: A list of revised cash limits is shown in the following table. The changes for voted expenditure are subject to parliamentary approval of Supplementary Estimates. The total increase in cash limits in respect of end-year flexibility is £221 million (the corresponding figure last year was £282 million). This increase will be met from the reserve and will therefore not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Revisions to 1985-86 cash limits resulting from the carry forward of capital underspend in 1984-85

Cash limits on voted expenditure

Class	Vote	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit £000	Increase £000	Revised cash limit £000
I	2	Ministry of Defence*	Procurement	8,591,066	131,936	8,723,002
II	1	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Overseas representation: diplomatic, consular and other FCO services	383,526	1,751	385,277
III	4	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Other agricultural and food services and support for the fishing industry	144,773	903	145,676
IV	2	Department of Trade and Industry	Miscellaneous support services	80,293	384	80,677
IV	6	Department of Trade and Industry	Scientific and technological assistance	378,983	466	379,449
IV	15	Department of Employment	Manpower Services Commission	1,343,914	994	1,344,908
IV	16	Department of Employment	Administration	248,687	273	248,960
VI	1	Department of Transport	Roads etc., England	823,674	1,335	825,009
VI	4	Department of Transport	Driver and vehicle licensing	108,945	284	109,229
VIII	2	Department of Environment	Central environmental services etc.	143,275	1,300	144,575
VIII	5	Department of Environment	Central administration and environmental research	148,365	167	148,532
IX	8	Home Office	Prisons, England and Wales	590,121	1,323	591,444
X	3	Department of Education and Science	Universities etc.	1,512,521	1,911	1,514,432
X	4	Department of Education and Science	Central administration	52,062	97	52,159
X	7	Department of Education and Science	Natural Environment Research Council	67,330	550	67,880
XI	1	Department of Health and Social Security	Hospital, community health and other services, England	8,988,144	951	8,989,095
XI	3	Department of Health and Social Security	Miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England	369,250	1,307	370,557
XII	5	Department of Health and Social Security	Administration and miscellaneous services	761,878	515	762,393
XIII	5	Customs and Excise	Economic and financial administration	354,925	157	355,082
XIII	9	Department for National Savings	Economic and financial administration	153,100	162	153,262
XIII	12	Her Majesty's Treasury	Central management of the Civil Service: computers and telecommunications	16,957	180	17,137
XIII	15	Land Registry	Records, registrations and surveys	79,143	100	79,243
XV	3	Industry Department for Scotland	Regional and general industrial support, Scotland	131,602	6,845	138,447
XV	6	Scottish Development Department	Roads, transport and environmental services, Scotland	147,467	4,648	152,115
XV	14	Scottish Home and Health Department	Prisons, hospitals and community health services etc., Scotland	1,516,717	6,961	1,523,678
XV	15	Scottish Education Department	Education, arts, libraries and social work, Scotland	148,332	302	148,634
XV	24	Scottish Office	Administration	101,123	128	101,251
XVI	1	Welsh Office	Civil defence, tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services, education and science, arts and libraries, and centrally funded health and personal social services, Wales	186,459	4,793	191,252
XVI	5	Welsh Office	Agricultural services, support for the fishing industry, regional and industrial development, Wales	47,099	71	47,170
XVI	9	Welsh Office	Hospital and community health services etc., Wales	600,538	3,000	603,538
XVII	1	Northern Ireland Office	Law, order, protective and miscellaneous services, Northern Ireland	425,348	254	425,602

Non-voted cash limits

Cash block	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit £ million	Increase £ million	Revised cash limit £ million
NID 1	Northern Ireland Departments	Services analogous to Great Britain services covered by cash limits	2,189·0	1·5	2,190·5
SOLA1	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland by local authorities on roads and transport, water and sewerage, police, education, social work, general services, urban programme river purification and civil defence	409·6	6·1	415·7

Cash block	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit £ million	Increase £ million	Revised cash limit £ million
SO/LA2	Scottish Office	Capital expenditure in Scotland on housing by local authorities, new towns, the Scottish Special Housing Association and on schemes financed by the Housing Corporation and industrial and commercial investment by new towns	416·9	11·4	428·3
HO/LA1	Home Office	Capital expenditure by local authorities on police, courts and probation	123·5	6·0	129·5
DOE/UA1	Department of the Environment	External financing requirements of Urban Development Corporations, capital expenditure on the urban programme and derelict land reclamation	363·4	14·2	377·6
DOE/HC1	Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England on housing financed through the Housing Corporation	691·8	6·6	698·4
DOE/NT1	Department of the Environment	Capital expenditure in England by new towns on housing, roads, commercial and industrial investment and certain water services	−101·2	1·6	−99·6

* The four cash-limited defence votes are each separate cash limits, but by agreement with the Treasury, are managed as a global cash limit. Underspend on expenditure eligible for the scheme in these cash limits has been carried forward to Class I Vote 2.

Stationery Office Appointments

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what agreements with trade unions preclude staff employed by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in provincial regions from applying for posts in London; which unions are involved; and what is the nature of such agreements.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following agreements are relevant:
i. One with the bookselling grades committee (SOGAT) under which supervisory posts at the HMSO Publications Centre are normally filled by staff there;
ii. another with the same body under which supervisory posts at the bookshop in Holborn are open only to staff employed there;
iii. one with SOGAT's London central branch under which industrial vacancies at the London bookshop are open only to industrials at the Publications Centre.
Conversely, supervisory vacancies in any one of the HMSO bookshops outside London are open only to staff employed in that bookshop or in one of the other provincial bookshops.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether opportunities for promotion throughout Her Majesty's Stationery Office nationwide are open to members of staff presently employed outside London.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are no geographical restrictions on eligibility for promotion within Her Majesty's Stationery Office except that:
i. Only people in the locality are normally considered for vacancies in non-mobile grades, although there is usually provision for staff in other localities to apply for consideration;
ii. by agreement with bookselling grades committee (SOGAT) only staff in London are considered for appropriate supervisory vacancies there.
Geographical restrictions may also be agreed as occasion arises with the union concerned in order to deal with particular circumstances e.g. a local staff surplus.

Pension Funds (Taxation)

Mr. Stern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he now plans to bring forward a Green Paper on the future taxation of pension funds.

Mr. Moore: No.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish the Government's Green Paper on personal taxation.

Mr. Moore: Later this year.

Small Businesses

Mr. John Browne asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what specific measures he plans to undertake to implement the proposals, on matters within his responsibility, contained in the recent report on the scrutiny of administrative and legislative requirements in small businesses.

Mr. Moore: The White Paper published on 16 July entitled "Lifting the Burden" set out the action being taken by the Government following the recent scrutiny report on administrative and legislative requirements on small businesses. The White Paper has been widely welcomed.

Departmental Promotion Campaigns

Mr. Squire asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the Central Office of Information guidelines for promotional campaigns by Government Departments.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Central Office of Information works within the conventions applied by successive Governments to their publicity and advertising. A note on these conventions has been sent to the Widdicombe committee and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reply his Department sent to the letter dated 17 April 1982 from the Trustee Savings Bank central board which referred to the question of ownership of the Trustee Savings Bank and, in particular, to the legal opinion obtained by the board from John Murray, QC; and if he will publish the reply in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Neither the Treasury nor the central board has any record of a letter meeting the description

which the hon. Member gives. However, I would not in any case be prepared to publish documents relating to confidential discussions between the Treasury and other bodies.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the estimate in the public expenditure White Paper that the United Kingdom would be required to make a net contribution to the European Economic Community of £960 million in 1987 is still valid in the light of the decisions on spending made by the European Economic Community since the time of publication of the White Paper.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The figure in the public expenditure White Paper to which my hon. Friend refers relates to the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget for the financial year 1987-88, inclusive of non-allocated expenditure, and is £970 million rather than £960 million. An updated projection of our net payments to the Community, taking account of recent developments, will be published in the autumn statement. Further information will be contained in the next White Paper.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether (1) he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United States of America and the United Kingdom the change in the incidence of *(a)* direct and *(b)* indirect taxation since 1979 for a person on average earnings so far as this can be calculated;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1973-74, 1978-79 and the current financial year, at a full year rate, the percentage of gross income taken in *(a)* direct taxes, including national insurance contributions less child benefit and *(b)* indirect taxation, in the case of a married man with two children, one earner and no other allowances where the earnings of the married man are (i) 45 per cent., (ii) 60 per cent., (iii) 100 per cent., (iv) 200 per cent. and (v) 300 per cent. of average earnings; and if he will provide comparable figures for single persons;

(3) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the yield from the abolition of age allowances for *(a)* married couples and *(b)* single persons; and if he will include in each case the cost of abolishing the income limit by abolishing the claw-back;

(4) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated taxable values in the current financial year of benefits to taxation under special taxation rules under the different headings together with the real values in each case;

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* single persons, *(b)* married persons with one earner and *(c)* married persons with two earners each aged (i) under 65 years and (ii) 65 years and over, the estimated number of incomes in each income range starting at a lower limit of £2,000, and the total tax, as a proportion of total income, excluding family income supplement.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will bring up to date the figures in his written reply dated 27 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns 105-6, concerning the mortgage advances and the price of dwellings together with the estimated average cost of mortgage interest tax relief per mortgagee in the current financial year and the assumed average rate of interest;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by range of income and for *(a)* single persons, *(b)* married couples without wives' earned income and *(c)* other married couples, the estimated annual value of claims for mortgage relief and the cost to the Exchequer, assuming the present level of interest rates prevails throughout the year;

(3) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of taxpayers in each taxation group receiving relief on mortgage interest and the average relief per mortgagor, together with the assumed rate of interest in the same manner as of his answer of 7 March 1983, *Official Report*, column 284;

(4) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table on the same lines as given in his answer of 6 March 1984, *Official Report*, column *501*, of the estimated percentage of each income band benefitting from mortgage interest relief *(a)* with investment income and *(b)* without.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital Gains

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the estimated annual yield of the treatment under income tax of all realised capital gains as investment income;

(2) what is the estimated yield of the treatment under income tax of all capital gains as they accrue as investment income;

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his replies*, 15 July 1985, c. 42]: I regret that the information on which to base estimates is not available.

Value Added Tax (EC Budget)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the percentage level of value added tax take-up for the United Kingdom for each EEC budget since 1975.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. 84]: Value added tax was included in the revenue of the budgets of the European Community for the first time in 1979. Prior to that date member states made financial contributions to the Community. From 1975, and until a uniform VAT rate could be applied in 1979 these contributions were calculated on the basis of the gross national product (GNP) share of member states.

The United Kingdom received refunds from the Community to offset its contribution to the budgets for the years 1980 to 1983. To offset our contribution to the 1984

budget the United Kingdom's VAT contributions to the 1985 budget are to be abated by 1,000 mecu, leading to an effective VAT rate considerably less than 1 per cent.

The gross VAT rates (ie prior to refund or abatement) at which the United Kingdom contributed for the years 1979 to the latest adopted budget for 1985 are as follows:

VAT percentage rate (prior to refund/abatement)

	Percentage
1979	0·789
1980	0·732
1981	0·787
1982	0·925
1983	0·998
1984	1·000
1985	1·000

Notes:

(i) Source: Adopted General Budgets, or final Supplementary and amending budget for the year in question.

(ii) Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg paid GDP based financial contributions in 1979.

(iii) With the exception of Greece, which joined in 1981 and until 1984 paid a GNP based contribution all member states have paid VAT contributions from 1980.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Emergency Alarms

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants are available from his Department for the buying, installation and running of emergency alarms for the elderly and disabled; and what information he has as to grants available from local authorities for similar purposes.

Mr. Chris Patten: Housing Association grant is available to registered housing associations for the purchase and installation of emergency alarm systems in sheltered housing schemes and for the linking of these to a centralised warden call system. The running costs of this service are borne by the tenants through a charge included in their rent.

In addition under the house renovation grant scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the cost of provision and installation of emergency alarms in the homes of disabled people may be grant-aided. However, this assistance cannot be extended to include maintenance or running costs.

Under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1978 health and social services boards may also make arrangements for the provision of facilities such as telephones or alarms in the homes of disabled persons at risk.

RUC (Complaints and Discipline Branch)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, by rank, the number of police officers presently working in the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline branch.

Mr. Scott: There are at present 61 police officers attached to the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline department:

1 Assistant Chief Constable
2 Chief Superintendents
11 Superintendents
20 Chief Inspectors
10 Inspectors
10 Sergeants
7 Constables

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of civilians, with equivalent Civil Service grades, presently working with the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline branch.

Mr. Scott: There are at present 35 civilians attached to the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline department:

1 Executive Officer Grade I
6 Clerks
9 Clerical Assistants
19 Typists and Ancillary Staff

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list, by rank, the number of police officers who will be required in the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline branch if the recommendations in the consultative paper on police complaints and discipline are accepted;

(2) if he will list the number of civilians, with equivalent Civil Service grades, who will be required in the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline branch if the recommendations in the consultative paper on police complaints and discipline are accepted;

(3) what estimate has been provided to him as to the likely total cost of implementing the recommendations contained in the consultative paper on police complaints and discipline during the first year of operation.

Mr. Scott: The future civilian staffing and police manpower requirements of the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline department are matters for the Chief Constable and the police authority to determine. It would be premature for an assessment to be made of the cost of any reforms in advance of substantive legislative proposals, but I do not expect that there would be substantial resource implications for the RUC in the implementation of the proposals in the consultative paper.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the total police hours worked in the complaints and discipline branch of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for each year since 1980;

(2) if he will list the total police hours worked by officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, other than members of the complaints and discipline branch but working at the direction of that branch, for each year since 1980;

(3) if he will list the total cost of employing officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, other than members of the complaints and discipline branch, for work involved in investigating complaints for each year since 1980;

(4) if he will list the total cost of investigating complaints against the Royal Ulster Constabulary subsequently found to be malicious, frivolous or otherwise unjustified for each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total cost of employing those police officers employed in the complaints and discipline branch of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the estimated cost of the police officers employed in the Royal Ulster constabulary Complaints and discipline department for 1985-86 is £1·7 million.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total cost of employing those civilians employed in the complaints and discipline branch of the Royal Ulster Constabulary for each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the estimated cost of the civilians employed in the RUC complaints and discipline department for 1985-86 is £250,000.

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total of all costs, by category, involved in running the Royal Ulster Constabulary complaints and discipline branch for each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available in the form requested, as the police authority for Northern Ireland does not record police expenditure on a departmental basis.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what number of complaints against the Royal Ulster Constabulary made in each year since 1980 were subsequently found to be *(a)* malicious, *(b)* frivolous, and *(c)* unjustified for other reasons.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the Royal Ulster Constabulary maintains records of complaints which cannot be investigated for various reasons. Figures for the years in question are as follows:

	Number
1980	86
1981	192
1982	205
1983	462
1984	552

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the total number of people who have been charged with wasting police time in relation to complaints against the Royal Ulster Constabulary which were subsequently found to be malicious, frivolous or otherwise unjustified for each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: There has been none.

Nuclear Shelters

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what considerations governed the choice of the sites for the three proposed new nuclear shelters.

Mr. Scott: The three purpose-designed civil defence control centres are planned to accommodate six civil defence teams. Five teams would be responsible for regional government in the province and the administration of four areas conterminous with those of the health and social services boards, and one would constitute a small reserve. It is proposed to house two teams in each building.

In selecting the sites, consideration was given to centricity to the areas covered (the Belfast area being avoided as it already contains the normal peacetime administration of the Province) and to the availability of Government-owned land.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the role and purpose of the three proposed new nuclear shelters in the event of a nuclear attack affecting Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The purpose of the three proposed buildings is to provide protected accommodation from which to carry on government at provincial and area levels, and to permit the administration of vital functions for the welfare of the community, after a nuclear attack.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what officials or representatives will use the three nuclear shelters; and how they have been, or will be, selected.

Mr. Scott: The three centres are intended to provide accommodation, in the event of nuclear attack, for the regional Headquarters for Northern Ireland headed by a Government Minister, and for four area teams led by senior civil servants. Each will comprise representatives from all the essential services, from Northern Ireland Departments, and from industry. They would have the necessary expertise to restore day-to-day services to the whole community in the Province.

Nominations are made on the basis of the experience of the individual, who is often a key postholder, but regard is also paid to health and other factors which might inhibit performance under extreme conditions.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that those people in the three proposed new nuclear shelters, in the event of a nuclear attack, will be a broadly representative cross-section of the Northern Ireland community.

Mr. Scott: Civil defence concerns all members of the community. The selection of civil defence personnel both for the three buildings in question and all other civil defence functions must be solely on the basis of their expertise and usefulness to the community in an emergency situation.

So far as volunteers are concerned, for example scientific advisers, every effort will be made to ensure that these come from all sections of the community.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost of the three proposed new nuclear shelters; and from what vote the necessary funds will come.

Mr. Scott: The cost of the three proposed civil defence control centres is expected to be in the region of £7 million spread over several years. The project will be funded from the Northern Ireland law, order, protective and miscellaneous services Vote.

Mentally Handicapped Adults

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement detailing the number of mentally handicapped adults in the districts of Moyle, Ballymoney and Coleraine and current provision

for them in adult training centres or social education centres detailing the levels of funding and staffing involved;

(2) what proposals there are to alter current provision for mentally handicapped adults in the districts of Moyle, Ballymoney and Coleraine; and what are their projected effects.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the Moyle, Ballymoney and Coleraine unit of management there are 349 registered mentally handicapped adults. Currently there are 45 adult training centre places available and in addition 90 places have been allocated to these adults in multi-client day centres.

There are 7½ whole time equivalent care staff employed in the adult training centre and expenditure for the facility amounted to £135,253 in the year ended 31 March, 1985. It is not possible to isolate either staffing numbers or expenditure directly attributable to the mentally handicapped adults in multi-client day centres.

So far as further provision is concerned in this unit of management an additional 10 adult training centre places will be available in the autumn for profoundly mentally handicapped people.

Great Seal

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which dignitaries are entitled to dispose of the Great Seal of Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement about its custody and possession.

Mr. Hurd: The Keeper of the Great Seal of Northern Ireland is the Secretary of State, as Her Majesty's principal officer in Northern Ireland. The Governor of Northern Ireland formerly had this responsibility. The seal is retained in the custody of the Clerk of the Crown for Northern Ireland.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searches)

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a young offender suffered an epileptic fit while being stripped naked in Armagh prison on 31 December 1984.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1985]: No inmate suffered an epileptic fit while being strip-searched at Armagh prison on 31 December 1984. On 31 December 1984 a young offender, who was committed on 28 December 1984, fainted in the reception area during a routine fingerprinting session. The prison medical officer diagnosed the inmate as suffering from drug withdrawal symptoms, and appropriate medical treatment was provided.

Waiting Lists

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for each district of the Eastern health and social services board, the number of people on waiting lists for each specialty for the last three years for which figures are available, together with the average length of time a patient had to wait.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1985]: Information in respect of the numbers of people is given in the following tables. Since the average length of time spent on a waiting list does not give a true picture of the distribution of waiting time, the tables give a breakdown of the total waiting list by time spent on the list.

Figures for 1982 are incomplete due to industrial action in the health service.

District: Down
Length of time on waiting list

Speciality	*0-3 months*	*Over 3 months up to 6 months*	*Over 6 months up to 1 year*	*Over 1 year up to 2 years*	*Over 2 years up to 3 years*	*Over 3 years*	*Total*
General surgery							
1983	52	10	7	—	—	—	69
1982	74	18	—	—	—	—	92
1981	76	34	57	53	—	—	220
Ear							
1983	37	34	58	38	16	—	183
1982	214	141	151	8	35	—	549
1981	63	29	48	49	27	—	216
Gynaecology							
1983	36	12	4	—	—	—	52
1982	34	8	3	—	—	—	45
1981	44	15	9	—	—	—	68

District: East Belfast and Castlereagh
Length of time on waiting list

Speciality	*0-3 months*	*Over 3 months up to 6 months*	*Over 6 months up to 1 year*	*Over 1 year up to 2 years*	*Over 2 years up to 3 years*	*Over 3 years*	*Total*
General surgery							
1983	123	42	11	1	—	—	177
1982	197	7	5	1	—	—	210

Speciality	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
1981	113	58	32	29	37	70	339
Plastic surgery							
1983	159	181	348	505	280	172	1,645
1982	236	210	418	417	189	148	1,618
1981	215	153	340	337	139	219	1,403
Trau + orth surgery							
1983	6	2	1	—	—	—	9
1982	6	1	—	1	2	—	10
1981	12	2	6	8	8	7	43
Ent							
1983	82	19	25	17	17	25	185
1982	135	38	21	34	28	29	285
1981	149	40	56	39	32	19	335
Cardiology							
1983	84	—	—	—	—	—	84
1982	38	—	—	—	—	—	38
1981	586	—	—	—	—	—	586
Gynaecology							
1983	168	—	—	—	—	—	168
1982	77	—	—	—	—	—	77
1981	135	—	—	—	—	—	135
Geriatric medicine							
1983	21	12	47	41	38	1	160
1982	28	13	44	67	20	35	207
1981	43	14	36	27	25	32	177

District: Lisburn
Length of time on waiting list

Speciality	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
General surgery							
1983	83	65	35	—	—	—	183
1982	135	31	11	4	—	—	181
1981	91	34	60	23	—	6	214
Ent							
1983	47	1	3	—	—	—	51
1982	50	11	8	4	—	—	73
1981	62	7	7	10	7	17	110
Dentistry							
1983	—	5	—	—	—	—	5
1982	6	—	—	—	—	—	6
1981	4	—	—	—	—	—	4
Gynaecology							
1983	62	2	—	—	—	—	64
1982	62	4	—	—	—	—	66
1981	97	14	43	—	—	—	154

District: North Down and Ards
Length of time on waiting list

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
General surgery							
1983	290	25	9	—	—	—	324
1982	278	3	3	6	—	—	290
1981	307	37	43	8	—	—	395
Ear, Nose and Throat							
1983	130	63	11	5	2	—	211
1982	39	34	21	27	—	—	121
1981	128	15	36	32	9	—	220

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
Ophthalmology							
1983	23	—	—	—	—	—	23
1982	11	—	—	—	—	—	11
1981	21	4	—	—	—	—	25
Gynaecology							
1983	270	23	19	6	—	—	318
1982	93	51	61	13	—	—	218
1981	212	38	30	5	—	—	285
Geriatric medicine							
1983	48	34	38	45	20	12	197
1982	46	24	23	31	3	10	137
1981	35	21	40	13	12	6	127

District: North and West Belfast
Length of time on waiting list

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
General medicine							
1983	4	4	—	3	7	1	19
1982	9	—	4	8	2	—	23
1981	7	—	—	1	—	—	8
Neurology							
1983	29	—	—	—	—	—	29
1982	40	—	—	—	—	—	40
1981	34	—	—	—	—	—	34
Rheumatology							
1983	5	2	3	—	5	—	15
1982	—	—	—	5	—	—	5
1981	1	2	2	—	—	—	5
Dermatology							
1983	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981	7	—	—	—	—	—	7
Cardiology							
1983	26	16	46	40	30	93	251
1982	37	19	36	46	45	60	243
1981	19	36	17	51	21	43	187
General Surgery							
1983	479	188	209	292	149	263	1,580
1982	273	215	236	198	101	93	1,116
1981	490	211	199	240	78	159	1,377
Plastic Surgery							
1983	105	120	124	146	34	35	564
1982	131	68	162	103	34	41	539
1981	135	74	97	94	46	43	489
Thoracic surgery							
1983	1	7	12	32	8	17	77
1982	1	13	28	11	5	13	71
1981	8	3	6	5	11	5	38

District: North and West Belfast
Length of time on waiting list

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
Cardiac surgery							
1983	39	26	67	101	56	155	444
1982	23	36	72	61	51	112	355
1981	26	38	36	57	39	80	276

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
Neurosurgery							
1983	4	1	2	3	6	32	48
1982	3	4	8	5	5	28	53
1981	1	—	6	4	4	24	39
ENT							
1983	400	88	55	43	24	37	647
1982	215	44	73	81	21	46	480
1981	338	46	71	55	29	65	604
Ophthalmology							
1983	409	215	234	77	12	28	975
1982	331	207	139	29	15	18	739
1981	323	78	60	29	13	33	536
Dentistry							
1983	207	149	305	393	221	—	1,275
1982	251	178	353	399	162	—	1,343
1981	322	147	214	214	45	—	942
Gynaecology							
1983	116	6	1	—	—	—	123
1982*	142	4	2	—	—	—	148
1981	137	15	5	2	—	—	159
Paediatric medicine							
1983	9	—	—	—	—	—	9
1982	9	—	—	—	—	—	9
1981	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other specialist units							
1983	3	1	2	4	11	—	21
1982	1	—	2	16	—	—	19
1981	1	7	9	—	—	—	17

*Figures do not include those on waiting list for Mater Hospital.

District: South Belfast
Length of time on waiting list

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
Rheumatology							
1983	32	—	—	—	—	—	32
1982	29	23	—	—	—	—	52
1981	3	—	—	—	—	—	3
Dermatology							
1983	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
1982	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1981	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Cardiology							
1983	72	6	4	3	1	—	86
1982	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1981	38	2	3	1	—	—	44
Nephrology							
1983	5	—	—	1	—	—	6
1982	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1981	10	—	—	—	—	—	10
General surgery							
1983	325	188	150	165	71	87	986
1982*	67	25	43	21	6	11	173
1981	320	110	73	59	57	40	659
Trau + orth surgery							
1983	828	585	1,026	1,220	664	1,556	5,879
1982*†	624	523	799	831	603	1,616	4,996
1981	718	496	817	726	706	1,348	4,811
ENT							
1983	150	20	15	7	—	—	192

Specialty	0-3 months	Over 3 months up to 6 months	Over 6 months up to 1 year	Over 1 year up to 2 years	Over 2 years up to 3 years	Over 3 years	Total
1982	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1981	353	168	124	30	—	—	675
Ophthalmology							
1983	42	—	—	—	—	—	42
1982	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1981	39	—	—	—	—	—	39
Gynaecology							
1983‡	239	27	19	44	25	—	354
1982	127	9	5	1	—	—	142
1981	252	21	9	—	—	—	282
Geriatric medicine							
1983	26	11	19	16	7	4	83
1982	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1981	19	17	27	6	4	4	77

* Figures do not include those on waiting list for Belfast City Hospital.
† No breakdown of the waiting list for Musgrave Park Hospital.
‡ Figures do not include those on waiting list for Belfast City and Musgrave Park Hospitals.
.. Figures not available due to industrial action.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

7. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made in devising a scheme to meet the problems of the dairy quota tribunal hard cases which have been referred to him.

Mr. Jopling: In consultation with the industry organisations I have been looking at how best to use the limited amount of quota remaining available to help hard cases and I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Common Agricultural Policy

8. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conclusions he has reached about the operation of the common agricultural policy following this month's meeting of the Agriculture Council.

Mr. Jopling: I hope that the Commission's new paper "Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy" will lead to agreement on a more realistic and cost-effective policy.

13. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet his European Economic Community counterparts to discuss further reform of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The Council of Ministers expects to have a first discussion of the Commission's recently published consultation paper in September.

25. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the proposals on strict budgetary discipline of the common agricultural policy spending is planned to reduce in future years the current annual provision for the storage, dumping and distribution of food surpluses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The financial guideline for agriculture, which was adopted as part of the Council's conclusions on budget discipline, is designed to ensure that market support expenditure as a whole, including the cost of storing and disposing of surpluses, will grow more slowly than the Community's own resources base.

Young Farmers

12. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further proposals he has to assist young farmers.

Mrs. Fenner: On Monday 8 July my right hon. Friend laid before Parliament the draft Agriculture Improvement Regulations 1985. If approved these will provide a special increase of a quarter in the rate of grant payable to suitably qualified young farmers who carry out a farm improvement plan.

Salmon and Wild Trout

17. **Mr. Steel** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the state of salmon and wild trout fishing.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department is in regular contact with the water authorities, which are responsible for the regulation and management of the salmon and wild trout fisheries in England and Wales, and I understand that the 1985 season has got off to a relatively good start. Because of high river flows in many areas migratory fish have penetrated much further upstream than is usual at this time of year and rod catches are generally higher than at this time last year.

Royal Research Ship Charles Darwin

18. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of contribution to the work of the royal research ship Charles Darwin, on fishing and marine biological research in 1984-85.

Mrs. Fenner: None.

Farming Industry

19. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many full-time farmers have left the industry in the last six years.

Mr. Jopling: This information is not available, but the net loss in the United Kingdom of full-time farmers, partners and directors between 1979 and 1984 is about 13,000. Definitional changes in the agricultural census since 1979 and an element of estimation in the annual figures make it impossible to give a more precise number.

Pelagic Fisheries

20. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to complete the review of the restrictive licensing arrangements in respect of the pelagic fisheries.

Mr. Jopling: I hope that it will be possible for the necessary preparatory work and consultations with the industry to be completed in time for decisions to be reached before the end of the year.

Research, Development and Advisory Service

21. **Mr. Strang** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received about the effects of the planned cut in the funding of agricultural research and advice.

Mr. Jopling: Following the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) on 24 May, my officials are now consulting all sectors of the industry on the future funding of agricultural research and development.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the proposals to reduce funding available for research, development and advisory services to the agriculture industry.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) earlier today.

Agricultural Land

22. **Mr. Adley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to protect agricultural land in Dorset; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government remain committed to their policy for the protection of agricultural land. My Ministry will continue to ensure through its involvement in the planning process that proper account is taken of this policy in planning decisions in Dorset and elsewhere.

Livestock Markets

23. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to announce his conclusions on the report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council on the conditions of animals at livestock markets; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The council is still engaged on its review of all the welfare aspects of livestock markets and I am unable to say when it will be ready to send its report to Agriculture Ministers.

Industrial Fishing Vessels

24. **Dr. Godman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received concerning the issue of industrial fishing vessels carrying both a 16 mm net and an 80 mm net.

Mr. Jopling: The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has recently suggested the introduction into the Community regulation on technical conservation measures of a requirement to ensure that fishing vessels carrying small mesh nets to fish for industrial purposes should not be allowed at the same time to carry larger mesh nets to fish for human consumption. The Community regulation already provides that all catches taken by a vessel with small and large mesh nets on board shall be regarded as having been taken with the small mesh nets unless the logbook records show otherwise. We shall bear the SFF suggestion in mind in any Community discussion of the rules on industrial fishing.

Fish Farms

26. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the level of professional veterinary care and monitoring of fish farms producing food for human consumption with specific reference to the use of antibiotics under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 and the Medicines Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Medicinal products containing antibiotics as an active ingredient for use on fish are subject to the same requirements of the Medicines Act 1968 as are other animal medicines. Ministers responsible for licensing medicinal products must satisfy themselves as to the products' safety, quality and efficacy. Safety for the consumer is also taken into consideration where there is a possibility of residues in animals including fish produced for food. My Department is conducting a survey to assess levels of antimicrobial agents in the edible tissues of trout.

Cereals

27. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is taking any steps to encourage farmers to reduce their acreage of winter cereals for 1985-86.

Mr. Jopling: Measures of this kind would be a matter for the Community as a whole. There are no proposals currently in discussion in the Community designed specifically to reduce the area of any type of cereals.

31. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the cereal price for 1985-86 has been finally settled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory).

Mr. Hunter asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further consideration he has given in conjunction with his European Community counterparts to the reduction of European Community cereal production.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave yesterday in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean).

Outgoers Scheme

28. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress made on the outgoers scheme for dairy farmers.

Mr. Jopling: Since we re-opened the outgoers scheme on 10 June, 102 producers have expressed an interest in participating. Not all of these will necessarily decide in the end to go out of milk production, but 30, with 9 million litres of quota, have applied to become outgoers. Of these, two have already ceased production and the remainder are being invited to join the scheme. This is in addition to some 265 million litres of quota which have already been committed under the scheme in England and Wales. Additional participants will be accepted into the scheme on a first come-first served basis until the target of 289 million litres has been reached.

Pesticide 2,4,5-T

29. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had as to the use of 2,4,5-T.

Mrs. Fenner: We have correspondence relating to the case of Anna Noon, to which we will be replying when the investigations referred to by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her reply of 1 July are completed.

Salmon Drift Netting

30. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the incidence of salmon drift netting off the English coast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Salmon drift netting is and has for a long time been permitted in certain areas of English coastal waters, principally those off the north-east coast. The regulation of these fisheries is the responsibility of the relevant water authorities and the number of licensed nets permitted in each area in limited by orders made by these authorities. In 1984 the numbers of salmon drift net licences issued by each of the English water authorities concerned were as follows:

Northumbrian Water Authority	— 121 (for coastal waters)
Yorkshire Water Authority	— 29 (for coastal waters)
North West Water Authority	— 4 (for coastal waters off Cumbria)
	6 (for the Ribble estuary)
	10 (for the Lune estuary)
South West Water Authority	— 7 (for the Camel estuary).

Hops

Mr. Rowe asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms in England and Wales were in hop production in 1975, 1980 and 1985, respectively.

Mrs. Fenner: The data available are as follows:

	Holdings
1975	484
1980	415
1984	380

A figure for 1985 is not yet available.

Sugar

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the current different support and other prices for sugar in the United Kingdom under the common agricultural policy and the corresponding prices in the world market.

Mr. MacGregor: The effective support price for white sugar in the United Kingdom is currently 59·64 ECU/100 kg (£368·97/tonne). The world sugar market is a residual and highly volatile one but the London daily price for white sugar, which may be regarded as representative of the world price, was 130·5 US dollars (£94·16) per tonne on 15 July 1985.

New Potatoes

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the tonnage of new potatoes imported into the United Kingdom so far in 1985, and from which countries.

Mr. MacGregor: Imports of new potatoes between 1 January and 31 May 1985, the latest period for which official Her Majesty's Customs and Excise statistics are available, are as follows:

	Tonnes
Total	137,393
of which from:	
Egypt	58,289
Spain	40,059
Cyprus	25,854
Canary Islands	6,495
France	2,598
Italy	1,870
Israel	1,010
Greece	490
Others	728

Agricultural Expenditure (EC)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any expenditure on income support, as opposed to price support, for EEC farmers under the common agricultural policy will be subject to the limits on agricultural expenditure under the new procedure for financial discipline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: In its consultation paper "Perspectives for the CAP", the Commission has expressed the view that some form of direct income support in agriculture might be introduced as a complement to the continuation of a restrictive CAP prices policy. The Commission has not yet made any specific proposals for income support. If it did so any resulting expenditure would be covered by the Council of Ministers' conclusions on budgetary discipline.

Food Labelling

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had from the sugar industry in regard to nutritional food labelling.

Mrs. Fenner: Draft guidelines for nutritional labelling were circulated to all interested parties on 27 March. I have received many written comments, including those of the sugar bureau and British Sugar plc.

Meat Consumption

Sir David Price asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the trend in red meat and white meat consumption, respectively in the United Kingdom over the last 10 years.

Mrs. Fenner: Consumption of red meat (beef and veal, sheepmeat and pigmeat) in the United Kingdom is provisionally estimated at 2·9 million tonnes in 1984 compared with 3·2 million tonnes in 1974, a decline of slightly less than 1 per cent. per annum. Consumption of poultrymeat has increased from 0·7 million tonnes in 1974 to an estimated 0·9 million tonnes in 1984, a rise of nearly 3 per cent. per annum.

Smallholdings

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each year since 1966 *(a)* the total area held by local authorities for smallholdings purposes, *(b)* the area let as smallholdings, *(c)* the total number of smallholdings provided and *(d)* the average size of local authority smallholdings.

Mrs. Fenner: The information is available in this form only from 1969-70. Details of the position in England are as follows:

Year	*Total area held by Local Authorities for Smallholding purposes (Ha)*	*Area let as Smallholdings (Ha)*	*Total no. of Smallholdings Provided*	*Average size of Local Authority Smallholdings (Ha)*
1969-70	153,617	148,045	10,971	14
1970-71	153,621	148,032	10,540	14·6
1971-72	153,165	147,763	10,054	15·2
1972-73	152,302	147,303	9,577	15·9
1973-74	151,877	147,159	9,212	16·5
1974-75	151,706	146,849	8,936	17
1975-76	151,549	146,738	8,645	17·5
1976-77	151,724	146,900	8,418	18·0
1977-78	151,238	146,378	8,201	18·4
1978-79	149,615	144,540	7,910	18·9
1979-80	148,293	143,362	7,655	19·4
1980-81	146,191	141,370	7,388	19·8
1981-82	144,499	140,023	7,153	20·2
1982-83	143,549	138,647	6,959	20·6
1983-84	142,871	137,664	6,785	21·1

Import Levies

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current levels of import levies, expressed in pence per pound, on butter, beef, flour, sugar and cheese, respectively.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Import levy applicable in the United Kingdom on 16 July 1985

p/lb

Commodity	*Levy applicable in United Kingdom*
Butter (82 per cent. fat)*	66·9
Cheese (Cheddar)*	53·6
Beef and veal†	69·0
Wheatflour	5·4
Sugar (white)‡	14·1

Notes

* In practice, special quota arrangements apply to most imports of butter and cheese from third countries, allowing entry at reduced rates of levy. Under these schemes a levy of 24·6p/lb would apply in the case of 80 per cent. fat butter imported from New Zealand and a levy of 4·2p/lb would apply to Cheddar cheese imported from New Zealand and Australia under the quota arrangements.

† The rates vary according to tariff heading and country of origin. The rate of carcase meat (tariff heading 02.01AIIa1) from third countries other than Austria, Switzerland or Sweden is quoted. In practice, most beef imports from third countries are subject to special arrangements allowing entry at reduced rates of levy.

‡ In practice, the United Kingdom's imports from third countries are generally covered by the Lome Convention and enter the Community levy free.

Departmental Legislation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of regulations, aids to industry, or industrial practices, within his Department's responsibilities, which have had to be cleared with or which have been challenged by the European Economic Community Commission since May 1979 under the European Economic Community treaties, together with the outcome;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of legislative or other provisions within his Department's responsibility which have had to be cleared with, or which have been challenged by, the European Economic Community Commission under the European Economic Community treaties, together with the outcome.

Mr. Jopling: State aids are notified to the Commission under article 93(3) of the EC treaty. The Commission sometimes asks for additional information but the only aids within my Department's responsibility that have been formally challenged under article 93(2) procedure since May 1979 are:

Fish Producers' Organisations Subsidy Scheme.

Fishing Vessels Temporary Support Scheme 1980.

Fishing Vessels Temporary Support Scheme 1981.

Fishing Vessels (Temporary Financial Assistance) Scheme 1982.

Sea Fish Industry Development Programme.

United Kingdom legislation implementing Community measures is notified to the Commission (and is open to its scrutiny). A detailed list of every measure so notified could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 19 July 1985

TRANSPORT

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of former British Rail Engineering Ltd. employees at Shildon who were placed in employment by the British Rail Engineering Ltd. holding company set up for this purpose.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that British Rail Engineering's three-year programme with the Shildon and Sedgefield development agency has already created 365 new jobs since it started at the end of last year. About 145 of these have been taken up by former BREL employees. The firms already assisted by BREL offer a potential for a total of 870 jobs over the next three years. I welcome this achievement by BREL and the local agencies involved.

Freight Trains (Timekeeping)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the timekeeping of freight trains on the British Rail network, and as to the causes of delays in each of the last three years.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter of management for British Rail.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he was consulted by the British Railways Board before the decision was taken to close the British Railways Engineering Ltd. workshops at Swindon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The decision is a management matter for the British Railways Board and British Rail Engineering Limited, who informed me and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in advance, before putting a proposal for closure to their trades unions for consultation.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Lecturers

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the maximum of the university lecturer grade represents as a proportion of average earnings in this country; if he will list the salaries of the equivalent level in universities in the United States of America, Japan, West Germany, Canada, France, the Netherlands and Australia; and what these represent as a proportion of average earnings in those countries.

Sir Keith Joseph: The maximum of the lecturer grade in universities in Great Britain stands at £14,925 with effect from 1 April 1984 which represents 1·8 times the average annual earnings at that date. Information on university lecturers salaries in the other countries mentioned is not available.

Higher Education

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will lodge in the Library such submissions as have been made on the recent Green Paper on higher education; and if he will list all bodies and organisations which have made such submissions.

Mr. Brooke: No. Bodies and individuals submitting comments on the Green Paper on higher education must decide for themselves whether to publish them and if so how.

Science Budget

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the planned figures, in 1985 terms, for the next three years for the science budget for universities, polytechnics and the National Advisory Board institutions in the public sector.

Mr. Brooke: The Government's expenditure plans for higher education from 1985-86 to 1987-88 are set out in Cmnd. 9428: figures for the local authority sector for 1986-87 are provisional only and for 1987-88 cannot yet be disaggregated from overall totals for local authority spending on education. In no sector of higher education is it possible to allocate planned expenditure between science and other subject areas. Universities and public sector institutions will also receive funding from the research councils for specific projects: total planned expenditure is given in Cmnd. 9428 but it is not possible to say in advance what sums will be allocated to universities and public sector institutions.

"Geology and Wealth: the Future"

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he intends to make to the report entitled, "Geology and Wealth: the Future", prepared by a committee under the chairmanship of the president of the Institution of Geologists, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend is not yet in a position to respond. If any substantive response is made my hon. Friend will be sent a copy of it in due course.

British Geological Survey

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for the City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) has made to the letter to him dated 13 June from Professor D. M. Kürsten of the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Hanover, criticising the inclusion within the scope of the Natural Environment Research Council of the British geological survey.

Mr. Brooke: I have replied as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 13 June about the British Geological Survey (BGS).

I understand that it is generally true that in other countries the equivalent of the geological survey is organised differently than in this country. The present chain from central Government to BGS may seem long but it has parallels in other parts of publicly funded research and allied activities. It is only recently that the arrangement has been questioned and many believe that it has worked well over the years.

Much of the unease within BGS stems from the publication of NERC's corporate plan on 14 February 1985. All the research

councils have been encouraged to produce corporate plans by both this Department and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. I have given my full support to these moves as the production of a corporate plan is a valuable tool in the Government's financial management initiative and the development of greater efficiency and value for money in the public sector. The plan is essentially a document prepared by management explaining how a council intends to pursue its objectives with the resources available.

The NERC and the ABRC are well aware of the problems relating to the funding of the BGS and they are paying particular attention to them.

Your offer to evaluate and review the work of the BGS has been noted.

Thank you for your interest.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to the letter to him dated 24 June from Dr. V. S. Colter of Plascom Ltd. regarding the surveying work of the British geological survey.

Mr. Brooke: The Department's reply made the following points:

1. A few years ago some 80 per cent. of British Geological Survey (BGS) expenditure had been met by commissioned receipts. By the 1983-84 financial year this had fallen to 61 per cent. and is continuing to decline.

2. Over a similar period, following advice from the advisory Board for the Research Councils, the NERC share of the science budget had gone down slightly apart from a specific increase for Antarctic research. This decrease, though slight, had compounded the effects of the reduction in commissioned research income.

3. There was little potential for making good the shortfall in commissioned funds for geology by an increase in the science Vote contribution though this had been done by NERC in 1982-83 and 1983-84.

4. The reduction in commissioned funds had particularly affected those programmes of a strategic nature such as the systematic regional geological survey of the United Kingdom landmass, which had been funded by a consortium of customer departments until that consortium had been disbanded in 1981. Since then, regional geological surveying had been supported primarily from the science budget.

5. The letter repeated an assurance given by Mr. Hugh Fish, chairman of NERC, that a geological survey will remain an essential part of the council's programme.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will invite the chairmen of the Advisory Board for Research Councils and the Natural Environment Research Council to an early meeting with him to discuss the report by the Royal Society's working party on geophysics research, with a view to remedial action; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. I understand, however that the chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has agreed with the Chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council that the issues raised in the report of the Royal Society's working party on the support of geophysics in the United Kingdom should be discussed by the advisory board in October this year.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will invite the chairmen of the Advisory Board for Research Councils and the Natural Environment Research Council to an early meeting with him to discuss the independence of the proposed inquiry into geological surveying and its terms of reference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: While my right hon. Friend is aware that the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) are proposing to set up a study into geological surveying work, the composition of the study team is a matter for the ABRC and the NERC. This also applies to the terms of reference, though my right hon. Friend is broadly aware that the group will consider the need for, the resources required to provide for the appropriate responsibilities for paying for geological surveying in the United Kingdom.

Biology Students

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received recently about alternatives to dissection in courses for biology students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has not received any recent representations about alternatives to dissection for biology courses in schools. Decisions on the use of alternative material are for the schools themselves; the Government have no plans to seek to issue guidance on this matter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Telecommunications (Network Services)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if telex store and forward services will continue to be considered a value added network service under new licencing requirements.

Mr. Pattie: The Government's proposals for the future licensing of value added and data services are set out in their consultative document published on 6 June, copies of which are in the Library. Comments on these proposals have been invited by 31 July and the proposals will then be reviewed in the light of the comments received.

Libya

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about trade relations with Libya.

Mr. Channon: In the first five months of 1985, United Kingdom exports to Libya (fob) were valued at £105,778,000 and United Kingdom imports from Libya (cif) at £107,972,000.

Paper and Board Imports

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the quantity of imports of paper and board into the United Kingdom from the rest of the EEC in 1983 and 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The United Kingdom imported 770,000 tonnes of paper and paperboard from the rest of the European Community in 1983, and 852,000 tonnes in 1984.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what steps she is taking to persuade the European Economic Community to reduce expenditure; and if she will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage

increase in European Economic Community spending since 1980, the percentage increase in the United Kingdom gross contribution, and the percentage increase in spending under the United Kingdom budget.

The Prime Minister: In accordance with the Council's conclusions on budget discipline, the 9 June ECOFIN Council reached an agreement by qualified majority to fix the reference framework for Community expenditure in 1986 at 29·7 billion ecu (about £17 billion). Within the framework, agricultural expenditure is constrained by the financial guideline, which requires that agricultural guarantee spending should increase by less than the rate of growth of the own resources base.

The information requested is set out. The increase in the United Kingdom's gross contributions to the European Economic Community does not take account of the offsetting effect of the rebates it has received. These rebates effectively reduce the total gross payments during the period 1980 to 1984 by about 25 per cent. In addition, the United Kingdom will benefit from an abatement of its 1985 VAT payments of 1000 Mecu in respect of its excessive contribution to the 1984 Community budget. The calendar year is not an accounting period for the purposes of United Kingdom public expenditure. Information on the percentage increase in spending under the United Kingdom budget is available only for financial years.

(i) Percentage increase in European Community spending between 1980 and 1984—68·4 per cent.
(ii) Percentage increase in the United Kingdom's gross contribution between 1980 and 1984—74·1 per cent.
(iii) Percentage increase in United Kingdom General Government expenditure for the financial years 1980-81 to 1984-85—38 per cent.

Figures derived from the following sources

(i) and (ii) European Community Court of Auditors report (final budget figures and actual own resources) and the supplementary and amending budget No. 1 of 1984.
(iii) Public expenditure White Paper — Cmnd. 9428, and FSBR—HC 265.

Geological Survey

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister what response she has made to the letter to her dated 24 April from Sir Peter Kent, F.R.S., about the inclusion within the scope of the Natural Environment Research Council of the British geological survey.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science replied to Sir Peter Kent's letter on my behalf. He said that there is general agreement about the need for geological surveying, both to underpin basic research in the earth sciences and because of its practical relevance. He referred to the recent reductions in the funds received by the Natural Environment Research Council for commissioned research. He explained that it was primarily this reduction, and future prospects on the level of support from Departments, that had led the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC) to conclude that a study of geological surveying should be carried out.

I understand that the study will be jointly set up by the ABRC and the NERC and will look into the need for, the resources required to provide, and the appropriate responsibilities for paying for geological surveying in the United Kingdom. The group's report will be submitted to the chairmen of these bodies.

NATIONAL FINANCE

North Sea Oil

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much revenue from North Sea oil will be reduced in the current financial year compared with the estimate if the current £ sterling price is maintained for the rest of the financial year.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) on 27 June 1985 at column 489.

Married Women

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated number of earning wives and *(a)* the number of taxpaying wives ranged by the couples' joint taxable income and of wives ranged by wife's income, on the same basis as in his predecessor's written answer dated 28 March 1983, *Official Report*, column 59;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table on the lines of his predecessor's written answer dated 28 March 1983, *Official Report*, column 59, showing the number and cost of wife's earnings election at various levels of joint total income under the existing tax régime and under an alternative which provided for *(a)* an increase in married and single allowances to £4,500 and £2,250, respectively, *(b)* two reduced rate bands of £1,000 at 10 per cent. and 20 per cent., respectively, *(c)* a standard rate band of £5,000 at 30 per cent. followed by *(d)* three higher rate bands of £4,000 and four of £5,000 all in 5 percentage point steps, but making no provision for any other allowances.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Friendly Societies

Mr. Burt asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will be consulting the representative bodies of the various groups of societies for which the registry of friendly societies is responsible about the proposed fees to recover its full costs.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have already indicated in the Green Paper "Building Societies: A New Framework" that the registry's powers to charge fees should be extended so that it can recover its full costs from the groups of societies for which it is responsible. The necessary provision for charges to building societies will be included in the forthcoming building society legislation. The Government are considering whether to include provisions in respect of the other groups of societies in the same legislation or whether to provide for it when there is next legislation affecting other groups of societies. I can assure my hon. Friend that before the orders setting out the fee scales are drafted, there will be consultations on the structure of the scales required to achieve the objective of full recovery of costs in respect of each group.

EC (Own Resources)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the payment in July of June non-value added tax own resources to the European Communities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77, the Commission has invited member states to pay on 22 July instead of 20 August non-VAT own resources collected in June. These own resources consist of agricultural, sugar and isoglucose levies and customs duties. The Government are complying with this request.

An amount not exceeding £118·4 million will be paid on 22 July; the payment of levies and duties on 20 August 1985 which is made under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972 will be reduced by an appropriate amount. There will therefore be no net addition to public expenditure.

Banking Supervision

Mr. Cash asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how consultation is to be conducted on the report of the committee set up to consider the system of banking supervision, Cmnd. 9550.

Mr. Lawson: The Bank of England is publishing today two consultative papers, one entitled "Banking Act 1979: Proposals for Legislative Change" and the other "Large Exposures Undertaken by Institutions Authorised Under the Banking Act 1979." Copies of these papers have been sent to all institutions authorised under the Banking Act 1979, and to the main banking associations. The Bank of England has also invited representations from any interested individuals, institutions or representative bodies.

Copies of the two papers have been placed in the Library of the House. A third paper, on the proposed new arrangements between the Bank of England supervisors and the auditors of authorised institutions will be published by the bank shortly, and also placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Repairs

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many of the category C repairs, which have been reported in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Antrim district area, are subject to a planned maintenance scheme; and how many such schemes have been initiated in this area in the list three years;

(2) what criteria are used in assessing whether requests for repairs by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive should be categorised as *(a)* essential or *(b)* non-essential; and at what level of qualifications such decisions are taken within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive;

(3) how many of the category C repairs, which have been reported in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's number 2 Newtownabbey district area are subject to a planned maintenance scheme; and how many such schemes have been initiated in this area, in the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available. I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Clifford v. Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Attorney-General when, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South on 11 July about the cost to public funds of the case of Clifford v. Eastern Health and Social Services Board, he will be in a position to state what was the cost of legal aid in that case.

The Attorney-General: In about October of this year.

Legal Aid Certificates

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South on 11 July about legal aid certificates, what was the cost to public funds of the certificates issued in the five-year period 1980 to 1985 in cases alleging medical negligence.

The Attorney-General: The information requested by the hon. Gentleman is not readily available because the cases involved may not be concluded for a number of years. However, the cost to the legal aid fund of cases alleging medical negligence which were concluded, reported and paid in the past five years is as follows:

	Total cases concluded	*Cost to Legal Aid Fund*
1980-81	20	13,189·70
1981-82	22	4,870·33
1982-83	26	30,781·71
1983-84	34	30,200·85
1984-85	46	32,432·59

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Belfast, South on 11 July about legal aid certificates, in how many cases in which the outcome was a withdrawal the judge asked for or directed that the case should be withdrawn.

The Attorney-General: The statistics requested by the hon. Gentleman are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Crown Prosecutor System

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General how many Crown prosecutors the Director of Public Prosecutions proposes to appoint in Wales; where their offices will be situated; and if he will make a statement concerning the structure and establishment of the Crown prosecutor system in Wales.

The Attorney-General: Pursuant to section 1(4) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 the Director of Public Prosecutions proposes to divide Wales into two areas, one encompassing the South Wales and Gwent police districts and the other covering the North Wales and Dyfed-Powys police districts. The Director will shortly designate a person to be chief Crown prosecutor for each area as required by the subsection. Decisions on the location of

offices have not yet been taken, since these will be primarily the responsibility of persons designated as chief Crown prosecutors. The exact numbers of Crown prosecutors required in the two areas are not yet known.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Suicides)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of suicides of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in prisons in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners who died in Prison Department custody in England and Wales and upon whom a verdict of suicide was passed is as follows:

	Number
1980	21
1981	16
1982	*18
1983	†21
1984	†23

* Including one person who died while on bail not having recovered from an attempt to commit suicide while in prison custody.

† Including in each year one prisoner who died in an outside hospital following a suicide attempt made before his reception into prison custody.

All were males.

I regret that the figures given in a reply to a question from my hon. Friend, the Member for Leicester East (Mr. Bruinvels), on 18 June, at column *89*, were incorrect.

Prison Governors

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met prison governors; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend last met prison governors as a group when he addressed their annual conference on 5 November 1984. But my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State had a wide ranging discussion about current issues, including overcrowding and resource matters, when he met representatives of the governor's branch of the Society of Civil and Public Servants on 25 June 1985, and my right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting representatives of the branch shortly, quite apart from the numerous meetings he has had with individual Governors on a wide variety of occasions.

Pornography

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department keeps a record of cases in which a judge or court found that indulgence by the accused in pornographic material was a contributory factor in the commission by him or her of a sexual offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend would naturally take careful account of any suggestion made to him by a judge or magistrate that pornographic material had contributed to the commission of an offence. Courts are not, however, required to reach findings concerning the factors which have led to an offence, or to announce any conclusion that they may reach. There is therefore no basis for the maintenance of a complete or accurate record.

Prisoners' Letters (Censoring)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the censoring of letters to and from prisoners in prisons in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The policy concerning prisoners' correspondence is set out in standing order 5, which has been published and a copy of which is in the Library.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out figures for Twickenham to show in respect of the first quarter of 1984 and the first quarter of 1985 the total number of notifiable crimes recorded and the numbers of crimes cleared up and not cleared up in each of the following categories: *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* sexual offences, *(c)* robbery, *(d)* burglary, *(e)* theft and handling of stolen goods, *(f)* fraud and forgery, *(g)* criminal damage and *(h)* other notifiable offences.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 8 May 1985 at columns *410-411* about the statistics of notifiable offences recorded and cleared up in each borough or outer London district in the metropolitan police district which are being placed in the Library with effect from the first quarter of 1985. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the corresponding information for the first quarter of 1984 for the London borough of Richmond (which includes Twickenham) is as given in the following table. Quarterly statistics by offence group for areas smaller than boroughs are usually too small and variable to provide worthwhile comparison.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in the London Borough of Richmond in the first quarter of 1984

	First Quarter 1984
Violence against the person	78
Sexual offences	9
Robbery	13
Burglary	607
Theft and handling stolen goods	1,357
Fraud and forgery	197
Criminal damage	416
Other notifiable offences	9
Total	2,684

Crowd Safety and Control Report

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Mr. Justice Popplewell will be presenting his interim report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The interim report of the Committee of Inquiry into Crowd Safety and Control at Sportsgrounds has been received and will be published before the House rises.

Emergency Centres

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those local authorities which have since 1 December 1983 received approvals for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining an emergency centre pursuant to regulation 5(1)(c) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those local authorities which have since 1 December 1983 received approvals for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining an emergency centre pursuant to regulation 4(1)(b) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Addicts and Alcoholics

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the annual increase in the number of registered drug addicts and registered alcoholics since 1975.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of narcotic drug addicts notified to the Home Office in the years 1975 to 1983 is given in table 9 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs in the United Kingdom, 1983". (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/84). The only information currently available for 1984 was given in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 11 June 1985 at columns *394-95*. There is no requirement to register alcoholics.

Greater Manchester (Community Relations)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester on the use of special branch officers of the Greater Manchester police to take part in community relations activities, and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. *72*]: I am informed by the chief constable that the task of maintaining and developing good community relations is integrated into the work of all parts of his force, under the co-ordination of the force community relations branch. The position of special branch officers in this respect is no different from that of other members of the force. The chief constable further informs me that the work of his special branch is carried out within the terms of the Home Office guidelines on the work of a special branch, issued on 19 December 1984 and reproduced on pages (x) to (xiii) of the fourth report from the Home Affairs Select Committee (Session 1984-85).

Prisoners (Early Release)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoners who had received sentences ranging from 20 to 25 years, 15 to 20 years, 10 to 15 years, five to 10 years and two and a half to five years were granted early releases in each single year since 1979; and what effect this has had on the total of the prison population.

Mr. Mellor: [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 June 1985, c. *227*]: The readily available information is given in the following table. Information on the number of persons on parole supervised by the probation service for each year since 1979 is published in "Probation Statistics, England and Wales" (table 1·2 of the latest issue, for 1983).

*Persons recommended for parole as a proportion of all persons discharged * from prison department establishments by length of sentence*

Length of sentence	*Percentage* *Date of recommendation*				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1981-4
2 years or more, but less than 5	60	64	65	‡70	65
†5 years or more	72	77	75	70	74
†All sentence lengths of 2 years or more	62	66	67	70	66

* Persons recommended for parole are not necessarily discharged in the same year

† Excluding life

‡ Increased by the reduction in the minimum qualifying period for parole in July 1984

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Albania

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Albania.

Mr. Rifkind: We have no diplomatic relations with Albania. We formally notified the Albanian Government in 1980 that we were ready to re-establish diplomatic relations without preconditions. As we have made clear, this offer remains open, but regrettably the Albanian Government have not taken it up.

Afghanistan

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Afghanistan.

Mr. Renton: We do not have normal Government to Government dealings with the regime in Kabul which depends on an occupying army of over 115,000 Soviet troops.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column 336, if he will *(a)* explain the outcome of his meeting with non-governmental organisations on the non-proliferation treaty *(b)* state whether he plans any further meetings with non-governmental organisations on the non-proliferation treaty before the review conference and *(c)* state whether his Department intends to provide financial support to non-governmental organisations to attend the non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Luce: We have had several useful exchanges of view with non-governmental organisations. At all of them there has been general agreement that the non-proliferation treaty must be sustained and strengthened.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to keep in touch with non-governmental organisations during the approach to the review conference.

There are unfortunately no official funds available to assist non-governmental organisations to attend the review conference.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Foulkes asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will prosecute those involved in selling Skoal Bandits to children under 16 years of age under the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1983.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The sale of this product to a person under 16 years of age may constitute an offence under section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937. Whether or not criminal proceedings are appropriate will depend upon the facts and circumstances of individual cases.

SCOTLAND

Broadleaf Woodlands

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to make a statement on broadleaf woodlands policy before the management guidelines are agreed by all the parties concerned.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement on broadleaves policy to the House before the summer recess. Discussions on the details of the management guidelines for broadleaved woodlands may not be completed by the time that statement is made.

Scottish Office Centenary

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much it will cost to celebrate the Scottish Office's centenary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: To mark its centenary the Scottish Office is holding a public exhibition in Inverleith House, Edinburgh from 4 July to 31 August and has arranged for the publication of a history of the Office entitled "The Thistle and the Crown". In addition I have arranged receptions for previous Ministers in the Scottish Office, past and serving members of staff and others connected with the Office. The costs directly related to the exhibition will be about £30,000: and the total expenditure is likely to be rather less than £45,000, which I believe will be money well spent.

Education Schemes (Unemployed)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the schemes for educational provision for unemployed adults in Scotland; and what funds are made available for such schemes.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Such information is not held centrally. Education for the unemployed is a matter for local authorities and provision for this purpose is made as part of the normal arrangements under which resources are made available to the local authorities.

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding has been provided out of public sources for the establishment of a factory to manufacture Skoal Bandits in East Kilbride; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Having taken a decision on commercial grounds to manufacture Skoal Bandits in Europe, US Tobacco International is eligible for the normal range of regional support for its new facility at East Kilbride. In accordance with normal practice, details of any grant payment exceeding £25,000 will be published in "British Business" in the quarter following the payment of grant.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that Skoal Bandits are treated in the same way as other tobacco products in relation to their advertisement and promotion.

Mr. Allan Stewart: US Tobacco International Inc, the manufacturer of Skoal Bandits, has entered into a voluntary agreement with the Government covering the marketing and promotion of the product. In terms of this agreement, which runs until 31 December 1987, the company has undertaken to restrict the scope and content of the advertising, the media on which it is placed and the audience at which it is directed. In addition, the chief medical officer has written to all medical practitioners to advise of the dangers of snuff dipping in this country.

Lochaline Area

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the nature, extent and timescale of drilling operations near Lochaline on the sound of Mull; by whom they are being undertaken; whether planning permission had been granted prior to the commencement of operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Neither I nor Highland regional council, to whom applications for planning permission would be made, have any knowledge of drilling operations in the Lochaline area. If the hon. Member has any information about such operations, perhaps he would send it to me and I shall have further enquiries made.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total numbers of employees in employment at the most recent date for which figures are available and in 1974, 1978, 1981 and 1984, respectively, for *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment in (i) Scotland, (ii) each Scottish region and (iii) each district council area in Strathclyde region; and if he will give the figures in terms of the standard industrial classification used in censuses of employment in 1968 and 1980.

Mr. Younger: The available estimates of the total numbers of full and part time employees in employment, in thousands, are set out in the following tables. The estimates for areas within Scotland are based on figures for employment office areas; estimates for 1984 and 1985 are provisional.

	June 1974	June 1978	September 1981	June 1984	March 1985
Scotland					
Full time	1,748·3	1,694·5	1,593·0	1,484	1,463
Part time	335·7	372·0	397·7	445	456
Borders					
Full time	32·0	30·6	28·5		
Part time	6·3	7·8	7·7		
Central					
Full time	93·0	92·9	88·1		
Part time	15·9	18·5	19·4		
Dumfries and Galloway					
Full time	40·5	40·7	41·7		
Part time	8·0	9·3	11·0		
Fife					
Full time	107·9	103·2	96·5		
Part time	18·7	21·9	22·9		
Grampian					
Full time	133·9	142·1	155·7		
Part time	31·0	37·0	41·0		
Highland					
Full time	56·4	57·7	58·2		
Part time	10·9	13·5	14·4		
Lothian					
Full time	256·1	258·7	252·0		
Part time	61·0	65·2	67·2		
Strathclyde					
Full time	886·7	819·2	718·4		
Part time	149·6	161·9	168·0		
Tayside					
Full time	129·1	130·3	119·8		
Part time	31·1	31·7	33·1		

District Councils in Strathclyde Region	*September 1981*	
	Full time	*Part time*
Argyll and Bute	15·2	4·8
Bearsden and Milngavie	4·3	2·3
Clydebank	9·8	2·6
Clydesdale	12·1	3·5
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	10·7	2·7
Cumnock and Doon Valley	10·9	1·9
Cunninghame	29·9	6·3
Dumbarton	20·7	4·7
East Kilbride	21·0	4·6
Eastwood	5·3	2·5
Glasgow City	305·7	71·1
Hamilton	23·7	8·5
Inverclyde	30·0	6·0
Kilmarnock and Loudon	22·1	5·1
Kyle and Carrick	34·9	9·7
Monklands	22·5	5·6
Motherwell	47·7	7·2
Renfrew	72·4	14·3
Strathkelvin	19·2	4·5

Unemployment Schemes

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify schemes for the long-term unemployed in the west of Scotland which will replace the courses at present run at the re-establishment centre at Bishopbriggs.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A number of schemes run by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) will provide such opportunities. The community programme offers temporary employment for long-term unemployed adults on projects of benefit to the community. The voluntary projects programme provides unemployed people with constructive, voluntary activities. The enterprise allowance scheme helps unemployed people to start up their own businesses. Through its adult training programmes, MSC also provides work preparation training to improve employability. In addition MSC's employment rehabilitation centres at Bellshill and Hillington offer courses of assessment and rehabilitation, primarily for disabled people but with places available for the able-bodied also.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will extend the exemptions from the eligibility rules for the community programme so as to permit persons who have been in work during the preceding six months to take up unfilled vacancies in the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No, the eligibility conditions are intended to direct help to those most in need and we believe the present unemployment criteria for entry to the programme strikes broadly the right balance in achieving that intention. We believe the programme to be on target for its growth to 230,000 filled places by June 1986.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his most recent estimate of the proportion of B1 places on youth training schemes taken up in 1984-85; and what target figure the Government propose for similar courses in 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

British Rail Engineering Ltd. (Swindon)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Employment if Her Majesty's Government have prepared any estimate of the effects on local spending power of redundancies arising from the closure of the British Rail Engineering Ltd. workshops at Swindon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It would not be possible to produce reliable estimates as there are too many uncertain factors involved. Much will depend on the success of efforts to attract new business and employment to the area. British Rail Engineering Ltd. has already made £1¼ million available for this purpose in the form of grants and loan guarantees.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were out of work in the Batley and Spen parliamentary constituency at the most recent count; and what was the comparable figure for the same area in the same month in 1975.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is available in the Library. On 13 June 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the Batley and Spen constituency was 5,213. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system and are available from June 1983.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* in relation to counties in England and Wales *(a)* wholly or substantially to the north-west of a line drawn between the Wash and the Bristol channel and *(b)* wholly or substantially to the south-east a line the figures for current unemployment showing (i) county by county and in aggregate the total numbers unemployed (ii) such numbers expressed as a percentage of the potential work force, (iii) the numbers and proportion of such unemployed people classified as long-term unemployed, (iv) the numbers and proportion of such unemployed people as are under 25 years and (v) the numbers and proportion of such unemployed under the age of 25 years as have been out of work for six months and 12 months, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am sending a copy of a computer printout giving the requested information for April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis by age and duration is available. This information is also available from the Library.

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to provide additional equipment grants and help with staff salaries to enable information technology centres to continue to work.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Charitable Housing

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost to public funds of discounts to tenants of charitable housing associations in 1984-85; and what is the likely cost in 1985-86.

Sir George Young: The cost to public funds of the home-ownership scheme in 1984-85 was £3·45 million out of an allocation of £10 million. It is too early to give a precise estimate of the costs of the scheme in 1985-86. Provision for the year is £17 million, to which will be added the underspend on the scheme last year.

Gannets

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which article or annex of directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds authorises either the taking of gannets for human consumption or the sale of this species for human consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Member states may make a derogation under article 9 from the provisions of articles 5, 6, 7 and 8. Such a derogation was made in 1984 and a licence issued permitting up to 2,000 gannets to be killed for home consumption.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the size of the Nature Conservancy Council budgets to cover *(a)* land purchase by voluntary bodies, *(b)* land management, education and promotion by voluntary bodies and *(c)* the small grants programme; and what limits upon maximum or minimum levels of grant or support have been set by him or his Department for each of the above categories.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the representations he has received at his London office, his regional office and in Parliament regarding the dumping of radioactive waste at Lumns Lane tip at Agecroft; if he will arrange for an inquiry to be held into the problems at the site; if he will meet again with objectors and local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since my previous answer to the hon. Member for Eccles on 15 January 1985 (vol. 71, c. 98) the Department has received 10 representations, five to Parliament and five to its London office, expressing concern about the disposal at Lumns Lane of low-level radioactive waste arising in Greater Manchester. These representations have been considered, but my right hon.

Friend remains satisfied that the authorised disposals can be safely and appropriately made. No occasion is seen to hold a public inquiry at this stage, or to reopen consideration of the matter.

Conservation

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has made available to local planning authorities in regard to their responsibilities towards sites of special scientific interest; and whether such advice provides details of directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds and the Berne convention.

Mr. Waldegrave: DOE circulars 108/77 and 32/81 contain advice to local planning authorities in regard to their responsibilities towards sites of special scientific interest. They do not contain details of Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds or the Berne convention. We are currently reviewing the contents of these circulars.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will grant disregard from targets and rate-capping for local authority-funded victim support schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend will consider any representations to that effect which he receives.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities underspent on their capital allocations for the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Waldegrave: Out of 396 local authorities who have so far submitted capital payments returns for 1984-85, 39 have reported prescribed capital expenditure lower than their capital allocations.

Greater Manchester Council (Urban Programme)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain each decision in refusing the 10 applications submitted by Greater Manchester council for the urban programme 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Decisions were taken on the merits of the projects compared with those of others submitted by district councils.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring up to date the answer of 1 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *330-31*, concerning the Exchequer contribution to local government expenditure at settlement and outturn; and if he will estimate the cost in the current financial year if the outturn reaches 65 per cent.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will make additional financial support available to local authorities to assist them in housing those single homeless young people who are currently affected by the social security board and lodgings regulations.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is looking at a range of measures — including some with financial implications—which might help to relieve homelessness generally and from which young people among others would stand to benefit. Our conclusions will be announced shortly.

EC (Water Quality)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce before 26 July his decision on applications to the European Community for derogations or time limits in respect of the European Economic Community directive on water quality; and if he will publish the derogations and time limits.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985]: I shall write to the hon. Member before 26 July and I shall make the information public.

DEFENCE

Submarine Repairs (Faslane-Coulport)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many submarines have docked in the current year at the Faslane Coulport complex on the Clyde for repairs to be undertaken following possible collisions with other vessels.

Mr. Stanley: None.

MFV Mhari L

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received expressing concern about the cause of the sinking of the vessel MFV Mhari L; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Ministry of Defence Ministers have received two telephone calls from hon. Members and seven letters (five of them from hon. Members) in connection with the MFV Mhari L. As well as expressing concern about the loss of the vessel, these representations have also included thanks for the assistance which the Royal Navy provided to the Department of Transport investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragedy.

RAF Upper Heyford (Noise Tests)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he anticipates the results of the noise tests at Royal Air Force Upper Heyford being published.

Mr. Butler: My noble Friend, the Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, will be writing to the hon. Member shortly about this matter.

Nuclear Arsenal

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the steps taken towards dismantling the British nuclear arsenal.

Mr. Stanley: No such steps have been taken. We remain firmly committed to the maintenance of effective deterrence forces, including nuclear forces, as the basis of

British defence policy. However, Her Majesty's Government have played a constructive part in the discussions which led to the NATO decision to withdraw 1,400 warheads over the next few years taken at Montebello in 1983, and in trying to achieve progress towards balanced, effective and verifiable arms control agreements.

Josef Mengele and Klaus Barbie

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence why Government files on Josef Mengele and Klaus Barbie have not yet been released.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Defence Establishments

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Fleet Air Arm establishments and state the number of civilian and service personnel at each on 1 April.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Home Service Force

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total strength of the home service force.

Mr. Stanley: The total strength of the home service force as at 31 May was 1,696.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many and which units of the home service force are so far at full strength; how many and which are not at full strength, and by how much in percentage and absolute terms;

(2) if he will list the location of current units of the home service force and their parent units;

(3) if he will list the units of the home service force which have been formed to date.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the planned locations of units of the home service force and their parent units which are yet to be formed.

Mr. Stanley: The planned locations of units of the home service force which are yet to be formed, and which are part of the plans to expand the home service force to a strength of almost 5,000 announced to Parliament in July last year, together with the names and locations of their respective sponsor units are as set out in the table. The companies to be formed in 1990 are being formed then because they are connected with units being formed as part of the TA phase 2 expansion.

Location of home service force unit	*Sponsor unit*	*Location of sponsor unit*	*Planned formation date*
Oxford	5th (Volunteer) Battalion The Royal Green Jackets	Oxford	1990
Lincoln's Inn	71 Signal Regiments (Volunteers)	Lincoln's Inn	1987
Mayfair	4th (Volunteer) Battalion The Royal Green Jackets	Mayfair	1990
Plymouth	3rd Battalion The Devon and Cornwall Rifle Volunteers	Plymouth	1990
Runcorn	3rd (Volunteer) Battalion The Cheshire Regiment	Northwich	1990

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many men of the home service force will be available for exercise Brave Defender in September.

Mr. Stanley: Our current estimate is that between 2,000 and 3,000 home service force personnel will be eligible to take part, but detailed figures will not be available significantly in advance of the exercise.

Territorial Army Ranges

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions have been given by his Department in respect of pistol and rifle clubs' use of Territorial Army ranges.

Mr. Butler: My Department has issued instructions to TAVR associations concerning the licence arrangements and the safety procedures under which approved civilian rifle and pistol clubs use Territorial Army ranges. Instructions have also been issued to TAVR associations about the charges to be recovered from the clubs for such use.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether exercise Brave Defender integrates United States and British plans for the ground defence of vital installations in Britain.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 17 July.

55. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether United States of America and British plans for the ground defence of vital installations in the United Kingdom have been integrated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Plans for the ground defence of United States vital installations in the United Kingdom are integrated into our overall home defence plans. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 21 March at columns *585-6* exercise Brave Defender will test our revised home defence plans and procedures and some United States forces will participate in the exercise.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (Portadown)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for defence whether any units of the Ulster Defence Regiment were deployed for use in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Portadown and the surrounding area on the weekend of 12 to 14 July.

Mr. Butler: No Ulster Defence Regiment units were deployed in the vicinity of the marchers in Portadown over the weekend of 12 to 14 July. Elements of the regiment

were, however, engaged on normal operational tasks in the surrounding area in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many full and part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment were arrested by the Royal Ulster Constabulary following incidents at Portadown over the weekend of 12 to 14 July.

Mr. Butler: Three Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers (two full time and one part time) were arrested by the Royal Ulster Constabulary following incidents at Portadown over the weekend of 12 to 14 July. They were arrested in connection with acts committed whilst off duty. All three have tendered their resignations.

Royal Army Medical Corps

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that in future Royal Army Medical Corps display teams do not put artificial wounds made of wax and dye on members of the general public and that such activities are confined in future to service men.

Mr. Butler: No. The application of simulated wounds to volunteer members of the general public is a major attraction of Royal Army Medical Corps displays and provides realistic practice for members of the corps.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is normal practice for Royal Army Medical Corps display teams visiting fairgrounds and open days to put realistic artificial bullet wounds on the arms of children under the age of 10 years.

Mr. Butler: Simulated wounds are only applied to children under the age of 10 years with the express and personal approval of an accompanying parent or adult.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether men of the Royal Army Medical Corps display team sought to obtain the permission of parents before placing realistic artificial bullet wounds on the arms of children at St. George's park, Wandsworth, on 13 and 14 July.

Mr. Butler: Royal Army Medical Corps recruiting and display teams are instructed to obtain the permission of an accompanying parent or adult before applying simulated wounds to children, and I am advised that these instructions were observed on the occasion referred to by the hon. Member.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has received any complaints about the Royal Army Medical Corps display teams.

Mr. Butler: No.

Royal Auxiliary Air Force

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his policy to restore a flying role to the Royal Auxiliary Air Force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The reintroduction of a flying role for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force is still under consideration, subject to the availability of resources. However, I am pleased to announce a trial scheme to assess the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of recruiting RAF volunteer reservists to serve as aircrew in regular RAF squadrons. The trial, which will start next April and last for two years, will offer voluntary reservists the opportunity to fill certain rear-crew positions in the Nimrod maritime reconnaissance force and to provide a complete VC10 transport crew. Eleven volunteer reservists will be recruited for the trial, including two pilots. The cost will amount to some £350,000 over the two year period.

W-82 Shell

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recommendations have been made to NATO Ministers by General Rogers concerning the W-82 shell.

Mr. Stanley: As I said to the hon. Member in my reply to him of 20 May, vol. 79, column *370*, the details of SACEUR's report are classified.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received to date concerning the W-82 shell.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has received no letters from members of the public relating exclusively to the issue of the W-82 shell, although several letters from Members of Parliament and members of the public have referred to the question of the modernisation of NATO's nuclear forces in Europe.

E-3A AWACS Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any consideration has yet been given to the possible leasing or buying of E-3A AWACS aircraft;

(2) what consideration he is giving to fitting the airborne early warning Nimrod mission system avionics into an alternative airframe.

Mr. Butler: I am not at present considering these options.

Nimrod (Airborne Early Warning)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will estimate the total cost required to get the mission system avionics for AEW Nimrod to an acceptable level of operation;

(2) if he will estimate the total cost of airborne early warning Nimrod by the time of its planned deployment;

(3) if he will make a statement on the future of the Nimrod early warning system.

Mr. Butler: I have little to add to the replies I gave the hon. Member on 24 May (Vol. 79, c. *601-602*). A technical study of various options has been completed and is now being evaluated.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the cost to date of the airborne early warning Nimrod programme.

Mr. Butler: By the end of June this year some £831 million (at current prices) had been spent or committed on the Nimrod AEW project.

Fraser Gunnery Range, Eastney

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress towards the release of land at the Fraser gun ranges at Eastney, Portsmouth.

Mr. Butler: The use of land at Fraser gunnery range is under review in the light of changing service requirements.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the next meeting of European Ministers is to be held to discuss the future of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Butler: No decision has yet been taken.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the amounts claimed and number of municipal tenant claimants for housing benefit for each local authority in England and Wales in each year since 1982.

Mr. Whitney: We do not collect information in precisely the form requested but separately for rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates. As the tables containing this information are rather lengthy I have sent them direct to my hon. Friend and placed a copy in the Library.

Distinction Awards

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider extending distinction awards to include nurses who have made an outstanding contribution to health care.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Distinction awards are made only to consultants and community physicians in the National Health Service. We have no plans to extend this to other groups in the National Health Service.

Whooping Cough Vaccine

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the new whooping cough vaccine produced at Porton Down to go on to the market; and what tests, and on whom, will be performed beforehand.

Mr. John Patten: The vaccine is currently undergoing laboratory tests at the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control. Clinical trials will then be carried out initially on adults and, if satisfactory, on children. It is not possible to say at this stage when the new vaccine will be marketed.

National Insurance

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the proposed new national insurance contributions in each of the following circumstances: *(a)* a single person earning £35 and £36, *(b)* a single person earning £54 and £56 and *(c)* a single person earning £89 and £91.

Mr. Whitney: Under the arrangements proposed to come into effect on 6 October 1985 the information requested is as follows:

Earnings £	*National Insurance Contributions** £
35	Nil
36	1·80
54	2·70
56	3·92
89	6·23
91	8·19

*Assumes a person is not in contracted-out employment.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the proposed new national insurance contributions in each of the following circumstances: *(a)* single wage married couple, husband earns £170, *(b)* a two wage married couple, when husband earns £85 and wife earns £85, *(c)* a two wage married couple, husband earns £100 and wife earns £70 and *(d)* a two wage married couple, husband earns £130 and wife earns £50.

Mr. Whitney: Under the arrangements proposed to come into effect on 6 October 1985 the information requested is as follows:

	National Insurance Contribution £
(a) single wage married couple	
husband earns £170	15·30
(b) two wage married couple	
husband earns £85	5·95
wife earns £85	5·95
	11·90
(c) two wage married couple	
husband earns £100	9·00
wife earns £70	4·90
	13·90
(d) two wage married couple	
husband earns £130	11·70
wife earns £50	2·50
	14·20

Note: Not contracted-out employment is assumed in each case. Liability for National Insurance contributions is not affected by sex or marital status except where a married woman has exercised the option to forgo certain benefits in return for reduced contributions. This option is no longer available to new applicants and has not been assumed in any of these examples.

EC (Social Insurance Contributions)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which other member states of the European Community operate the equivalent of the lower earnings limit for social insurance contributions; and which charge contributions on the first £ equivalent of earnings.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to the Department's publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the Member States of the European Communities, Portugal and Spain, (Position at 1 January 1984)", a copy of which is in the Library. That publication contains such information as is available on the financing of social insurance schemes in the member states of the Community, including the basis of employers' and employees' liability for contributions.

Repatriation Scheme

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of individuals aided by his Department's repatriation scheme in 1982, 1983 and 1984 and the expenditure incurred in each of those years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no departmental repatriation scheme as such, but I assume my hon. Friend is asking about patients repatriated to their country of origin at public expense. This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mentally Handicapped People (Treatment and Therapy)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average number of hours a year that residents of mental handicap hospitals receive treatment or therapy from *(a)* doctors, *(b)* physiotherapists, *(c)* occupational therapists and *(d)* psychologists; and how this compares with Government guidelines.

Mr. John Patten: These figures are not collected centrally. Residents of mental handicap hospitals should receive treatment or therapy according to their individual ranges of need, so generally applicable guidelines are not appropriate.

Student Nurses

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the drop-out rate for student nurses during each of the last five years; and what is being done to encourage and enable more student nurses to complete their courses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The number of trainee nurses discontinuing training in each of the past five years and their proportion to the average number in training during the year is given in the table:

England and Wales

Year ending 31 March	*Numbers discontinuing training**	*Percentage*
1980	6,871	8·8
1981	5,921	7·7
1982	5,344	6·8
1983	6,446	8·2
1984	4,770	6·7

* Total numbers of student and pupil nurses at the various stages of training discontinuing in the year. The figures are not strictly comparable due to a change in the method of collection and processing in 1983.

The overall reduction in the drop-out rate between 1980 and 1984 is thought to be due to a number of factors including the greater selectivity for entry to nurse training schools and our national publicity campaign whose prime object is to educate the public about the true nature of the nurse's role.

The statutory bodies responsible for nurse training are currently considering the future pattern of training. The English National Board has already published proposals for consultation. Improved training arrangements should help to reduce wastage rates.

We recently accepted the recommendation of the Review Body that the pay of recently qualified staff nurses should be specially enhanced. This should further encourage student nurses to complete their training and continue in National Health Service employment.

Home Responsibilities Protection

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to extend the home responsibilities protection to those who have worked less than 20 years on a pro-rata basis.

Mr. Whitney: Home responsibilities protection (HRP) reduces the number of qualifying years (years in which national insurance contributions are paid or credited) needed for a basic retirement pension at the full rate. HRP cannot reduce the number of qualifying years required to less than 20. With the maximum number of years of HRP a full basic pension could be earned from 20 qualifying years. With maximum HRP and contributions paid or credited for less than 20 years a reduced rate basic pension will be payable. For example, a woman requiring 39 qualifying years for a full rate pension who had 19 or more years of HRP would also need another 20 qualifying years for a full pension. Ten qualifying years (i.e. half the number required) plus 19 years HRP would give pension at 50 per cent. of the standard basic rate. Five qualifying years would give pension at 25 per cent. of the standard rate. No pension is payable where the qualifying years amount to less than 25 per cent. of the required number of years. We have no present plans to change these arrangements.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will ensure that no treatment to kidney patients on dialysis or for kidney transplants are denied medication on the grounds of cost; if he will indicate the steps he has taken to reduce the cost of proprietary drugs; if he will give the names of the drugs concerned; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is considering additional action, apart from the current campaign, to increase the number of kidney donors; if he will indicate the current supply of kidney organs and the possible expansion of the supply of such organs; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the number of kidney patients awaiting transplants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent developments have taken place concerning the treatment of kidney patients by continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis; if he will indicate the numbers now receiving such treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Improvements are being made all the time in the provision of continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) which make the procedure easier for patients to administer and which reduce the risk of complications. According to information supplied by the European Dialysis and Transplantation Association, 1,844 renal patients were receiving CAPD treatment in the United Kingdom on 31 December 1984 compared to 1,136 on 31 December 1982. CAPD represents a valuable addition to the range of treatment options available for patients suffering end stage renal failure.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the light of the campaign to increase the number of kidney donors, he has any plans to establish more renal units or to expand current units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is for health authorities to decide whether additional renal units should be established or existing ones expanded.

St. George's Hospital (Sale)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the former St. George's hospital, Hyde Park Corner, was put on the open market before sale to Grosvenor Estate and L.I.B.; and how many offers were considered before sale.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: When the hospital closed in 1980 the Grosvenor Estate exercised its right of pre-emption to acquire the southern part of the site. There is no right of pre-emption on the northern part of the site but when we came to consider its disposal it seemed sensible, because the listed Wilkins building straddles both parts of the site, to negotiate a sale with the Grosvenor Estate. The site has therefore never been put on the open market.

Second European Poverty Programme

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the organisations, their projects and the financial amounts involved whose applications his Department have submitted to the European Economic Community Commission under the provisions of the second European poverty programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom Government submitted 245 applications for financial assistance to the European Commission under the Second European Community Programme to Combat Poverty. The organisations are listed. The projects relate to the themes for the programme as follows:

	Number
Long term unemployed people	26
Young unemployed people	31
Elderly	25
Single parent families	19
Refugees	13
Second generation immigrants	42
Multiple client groups including rural projects	93

The funds sought from the Commission by each project vary between £25,000 and £200,000 in most cases. It would be disproportionately costly to extract and set out the title and exact amount sought for each project individually.

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

England:

Age Concern Cumbria
Age Concern Lancashire
Age Concern Manchester
Age Concern Newcastle
Age Concern Preston
Age Concern St. Helens
Anchor Housing Trust
Ankur Brent Asian Youth Service
Asha Neighbourhood Project
Asian Neighbourhood Project
Asian Womens Resource Centre
ATD Fourth World
Aubrey Lloyd Centre
Bangladesh Welfare Association
Bangladesh Youth Approach
Barnardo's
Barton Hill and Easton Youth Mothers Group
Battersea Citizens' Advice Bureau Money Advice Project
Battersea Neighbourhood Aid Centre
Belle Isle Unemployed Group
Birkenhead Resource Unit
Blackfriars Settlement
Bolton Carnival of Friendship
Bolton Metropolitan Borough
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Department of Education and Arts Project
Bolton Womens Aid
Borough Council of Calderdale Craigie Lea Family Centre
Borough Council of Calderdale Lifelines for the Elderly
Borough Council of Calderdale Neighbourhood Provision for the Unemployed
Bosnia Centre for the Unemployed
Brent Community Transport
Brent Irish Advisory Service
Bristol Association Neighbourhood Daycare
Bristol One-Parent Project
British Refugee Council
British Refugee Council (Vietnamese Programme)
Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association
Camborne School
Chare Centre Ltd
Childrens Scrap Project
Chinese Information and Advice Centre
Chinese Welfare Project—Tower Hamlets
Church of England Childrens Society Central London Teenage Project
Church of England Childrens Society Leeds Community Project
Church of England Childrens Society Prospect House Maltby
Church of England Childrens Society Southbank Family Centre
Church of England Childrens Society Toxteth Family Centre
City & Hackney—Association for Mental Health
City of Bradford—Young Mens Christian Association
City of Manchester
Clapham Community Project
Cleveland County Council—Social Services Department
Community Action for the Young Unemployed
Common Stock Youth Theatre Ltd
Community Education Development Centre In co-operation with 3 LEAS
Community Information Project
Community Service Volunteers, CSV — Homeless Project, CSV—Sound Advice Leicester
Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau
Coventry Community Relations Council
Coventry Legal and Income Rights
Coventry Resource and Information Service
Coventry Trades Council—Unemployed Workers Project
Coventry Women and Homelessness Steering Group
Cumbria Social Services Department
Derwentside Unemployed Group
Dr. Barnardo's
East London Black Womens Organisation
Eddie Brindley Project
Employment Action Group (Berinsfield) Ltd
Energy Conservation and Solar Centre
Family Service Units
Family Welfare Association

Federation of Bangladeshi Youth Organisations
First Base Centre for Unemployed Young People Ltd
Fowlers Yard Youth Project
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council Community Action Programme
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council Pathways
Gingerbread
Greater London Council—Ethnic Minorities Unit
Greenwich Action Group on Unemployment
Greenwich Development Company
Ground Floor Project
Hackney Asian Association
Hackney Cypriot Association
Hammersmith and Fulham Community Law Centre
Hammersmith Womens Aid
Handicapped Children in Hackney
Haringey Chinese Group and Islington Chinese Group
Harlesden Advice Centre
Hopscotch Under Fives
Housing Aid Trust
Hut—Mobile Homes Unit
Huddersfield Youth Association
Humberside County Council—Social Service Department
Hull Council for Voluntary Service
International Voluntary Services
Iranian Community Centre
Islington Voluntary Action Council
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
KITOS
Lambeth and Wandsworth Vietnamese Support
Latin American Community Project
Law Centres Federation and National Association of Cab
Leathermarket Gardens Community Centre
Leeds Road Project
Leeds Vietnamese Support Group
Liverpool Personal Service Society
London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Southwark—Homeworkers Training Workshops
London Employment Project for Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees
London Hazards Centre
Mansfield Gingerbread Day Care Fund Trust
Metropolitan Borough of South Tyneside
MBST—for The Disabled
MBST—Welfare Rights Service
Migrant Services Unit—London Voluntary Services Council
Montague Community Action Campus—Voluntary Management Committee
Mossbrow Community Arts Educational Workshops
Muslim Youth Organisation
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux Merseyside Area
National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders Neighbourhood Development Unit
National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
National Childrens Home
National Council for One Parent Families
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
National Council for YMCAs
National Right to Fuel Campaign
Neckess Community Development Project
New Grapevine
Newham Parents Centre
North Lambeth Day Centre Ltd
North Manchester Health Authority
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
NTMBC—an Integrated Programme to Counter Poverty in Killingworth
North Yorkshire County Council—Welfare Benefits Scheme
Nottinghamshire County Council
Nuneaton Centre for Recreational Activities
Ocean Estate Tenants Association
Oldham Resource and Information Centre
Open Door Project
Park Hill Project
Partington Youth and Community Project
Pensioners Link Ltd
Pilkington Charitable and Trust Funds
Pitt Street Settlement
Progressive Youth Organisation
Project Fullemploy
Providence Row Night Refuge
Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association
Rochdale, Youth and Community Service
Rochdale—Chance
Salford Urban Mission
Salford Council for Voluntary Service
Salford Womens Education and Resource Centre
Seaham Action Research Project
Sedgemoor Manor Junior Mixed Schools
Sefton Social Services Department
Services Workers Action and Advisory Project
Shelter
Soho Family Centre
Somali Womens Association Group
Southall Community Law Centre
Southall Rights Ltd
South Sheffield Inner City Community Project Ltd
South Tyneside Council for the Disabled
Southwark Mediation Scheme
Southwark Womens Action Group
Spitalfields Housing and Planning Rights Service
Staffordshire County Council Social Services Department
St. Giles Day Centre
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council—Action Research Project
St. HMBC—Community Jobs and Training Initiative
Stockport Council for Voluntary Service
SUBAH
Taunton Deane Single Parent Association
Thamreside Social Services Department
The Beth Johnson Foundation
The Birmingham Settlement
The Bolton Neighbourhood Economic Development Agency
The British Refugee Council Refugee Education and Training
Th Circle Trust—New Cross Branch
The Disablement Income Group
The Factory Community Project and Youth Centre
The Handsworth Play and Community Bus Association
The National Group on Homeworking
The Ten Twenty Project Advice Centre
Thorne Rural Development Area Strategy Committee
Tooting and Balham Law Centre
Tottenham Community Project
Tower Hamlets Afro Caribbean Association
Tower Hamlets Womens Aid
Toynbee Hall—Universities Settlement in East London
University Settlement Bristol Community Association
West Indian Concern Ltd.
WIC LTD—Action Research Project
West Indian Womens Association
Willowbrook Urban Studies Centre
Wolverhampton Borough Council (Graisley Action Project)
Wolverhampton Citizens Advice Bureaux
Wolverhampton Trades Council
Yesodey Hatorah Nursery
Youth Outreach Service

Wales
Mid Glamorgan County Council
Heads of the Valleys Anti-Poverty Action Committee/St. Johns PCC
Rhymney Valley District Council
Delyn Borough Council
Newport Borough Council
Gwent County Council
Swansea City Council
Afan Community Aid Council
Dyfed Association of Voluntary Services
West Glamorgan Community Services Council
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
South Glamorgan Care for the Elderly
Wrexham Maelor Community Agency
Church of England Childrens Society
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority
Rhondda Community Development
Age Concern—Clwyd
Wales Cooperative Development Agency

Rhyl Community Agency
Workers Educational Association
Newport Resource Centre
Gingerbread
South Riverside Community Development Centre
National Childrens Home
Welsh Housing Aid
Family Planning Association
Swansea Council for Voluntary Service

Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action/Voluntary Trust/Rural Association
Strabane and District Citizens' Advice Bureau
Belfast Unemployed Centre
Derry Unemployed Workers Group
Northern Ireland Association of Youth Clubs
North West Centre for Learning and Development Ltd.
Gingerbread—NI
Falls Community Council
Praxis Mental Health
Community Concern Programme of the Flax Trust
Age Concern (NI)/Child Poverty Action Group (NI)/Coleraine Women's Information Centre
Farset Youth and Community Development Ltd.
The Extern Organisation

Private Homes for the Elderly

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private homes for the elderly have *(a)* been refused registration and *(b)* had their registration cancelled; and how many of these homes have appealed to the registered homes appeal tribunal in the first six months of 1985.

Mr. John Patten: Information generally about registrations refused is not held centrally. Available information about cancellations and appeals to tribunals against cancellation is listed. The age of the residents in all these homes is not necessarily known.

	Residential care homes	*Nursing homes*
Cancellations that have taken effect	1	—
Appeals	*8	3

* Five are known to be mainly for elderly people

Titralac

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate will receive a detailed answer to his letter of 6 June to his noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on the question of a tablet called Titralac.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My noble Friend replied to my hon. Friend yesterday.

Small Grants Scheme

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage of applications to his Department's small grants scheme which are successful; what are, by broad categories, the reasons for refusal of these applications refused; and if he will give the percentage of the total budget which was taken up for 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. John Patten: The Department's small grants committee considered 383 applications during 1980-84, of these 50 (13 per cent.) were judged by the committee to be of adequate scientific merit and were funded. Details are published in the Department's annual handbook of research and development. Applications which do not meet appropriate scientific standards are rejected. Finance for the small grants scheme is subsumed within the health and personal social services research and development budget managed by the chief scientist. There is no separate cash limit for the scheme and all proposals, deemed by the committee to be acceptable on scientific grounds in the period referred to, have been funded.

Soho Road Office, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why his local office in Soho road, Birmingham, has placed restrictions on the suppliers of cookers to recipients of single payments.

Mr. Whitney: In order to ensure that second-hand cookers sold to claimants are properly reconditioned, the Birmingham local offices now ask suppliers to confirm that this is the case when they give claimants estimates for these appliances. No other restrictions apply.

Property and Works Functions

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the results of his examination of the operation of the property and works functions within his Department and within the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have today issued a health circular to all health authorities on the future management of property and works in the National Health Service. I have placed copies in the Library. We have decided that there have been too many tiers of management with overlapping responsibilities for these matters within the service. The NHS capital programme will be better managed and delays in hospital building reduced by the introduction of clear definitions of responsibility between our Department, regional health authorities and district health authorities. We will be giving district health authorities greater discretion and a wider choice of sources of advice and expertise in their management of their own capital projects. We also need to continue to strengthen the ability of authorities to improve their management of property and the NHS estate. Our Department's role will in future be restricted to that of determining strategic policies and setting key objectives for the National Health Service, monitoring compliance with these and supporting the National Health Service by the production of cost effective guidance in selected key areas. We will retain a number of high quality staff to carry out this role but the total number of staff employed on works and property within our Department will be sharply reduced.

Design and other consultancy services maintained by regional health authorities will be the subject of rigorous review and will be made more streamlined and efficient. Districts will be able to test the efficiency and responsiveness of any RHA services against those available from outside consultants. We will continue to insist that all Authorities should regard the rationalisation of the NHS estate and further improvement of the National Health Service's recent good record on building value for money major capital projects to cost and to time as high priorities.

Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received the views of the medical profession about the case for amending the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The chief medical officer has recently received a document on fetal viability and clinical practice which has been prepared by a working party set up by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and including representatives of other medical bodies and the Royal College of Midwives. We understand that the report represents the unanimous views of the professional bodies. I am grateful to them for letting us have their considered opinion that the reference to 28 weeks gestational age in the 1929 Act is now out of date in view of advances in medical techniques.

We will be financing the publication of the report and we will arrange for its distribution to nursing homes approved under the Abortion Act and within the National Health Service as soon as possible. I am now considering the report urgently with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I have also asked our officers to convene a meeting with the proprietors of approved nursing homes which at the moment undertake late abortions to discuss the report. I will make a further statement as soon as possible.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the average time taken by his Department to provide a substantive answer to letters from right hon. and hon. Members during the 12 months period to the latest available date.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1985, c. 56]: A figure is not available in the form requested. On the information that is available the average time taken was a little over a month. However, during the last 12 months there has been an exceptionally large volume of correspondence which means that Ministers are now replying to about 30,000 letters a year from right hon. and hon. Members.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Rail Wagons

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by volume, price and source the number of overseas contracts carried out in Britain for rail wagons for which his Department has given financial assistance.

Mr. Rifkind: The following railway projects have been supported by aid since 1980:

Country	*Project*	*Year of commitment*	*Allocation*
Pakistan	Railway development	1978	29,100,000
Bangladesh	Railways rehabilitation: wagons	1978	15,000,000
Bangladesh	Railway wagons and workshop equipment	1978	16,836,481
Malawi	Wagon weighbridges/goods hand	1978	32,955
Sri Lanka	Materials for railway	1978	6,065,000
Malawi	Malawi railways	1979	1,506,851
Kenya	Hopper wagons	1979	1,279,079
Tanzania	Tanzania railway development	1979	9,500,000
Sri Lanka	Locomotives	1980	2,867,172
Zimbabwe	Railway electrification Nos. 1-7	1981	8,239,515
Kenya	Railway coaches	1982	5,030,040
Kenya	Railways development	1983	3,000,000
India	Railway projects grant	1983	30,000,000
Malawi	Replacement of railway tracks	1983	1,630,000
Sudan	Gezira railways	1984	4,230,000
Swaziland	Swaziland railways	1984	575,000

The Overseas Development Administration does not maintain statistics relating to the volume, price and source of individual contracts let under aid financed projects.

Forestry

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the projects to encourage sustainable forestry in over 20 countries which are aided by the Commonwealth Development Corporation and Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Rifkind: The list is as follows:

Current projects to encourage sustainable forestry aided by Commonwealth Development Corporation and Overseas Development Administration

CDC

1. Fiji-Pine Commission — planting and assistance to utilisation of indigenous timber.
2. Ivory coast—Hardwood Forest plantations.
3. Jamaica—forest industries plantations.
4. Swaziland—Assistance to plantations.
5. Tanzania—Assistance to Tanganyikan Wattle Company.
6. Zambia — Zambia Forest and Forest Industries Corporation.

CDA

7. Bangladesh—Sundarbans Inventory Project.
8. Belize—Forest utilisation advice.
9. Costa Rica—Forest management and tree breeding.
10. Grenada—Forest inventory.
11. Ghana—Forest inventory.
12. Honduras—Forest management.
13. India — Karnataka Social Forestry Project and Mysore Papermill Forestry Project.
14. Jamaica—Research and training in forestry.
15. Kenya—Embu-Meru-Isiolo Reafforestation Project.
16. Lesotho—Forest Woodlots Project.
17. Liberia—Forestry training.
18. Nepal—Forestry research projects.
19. Solomon Islands—Reafforestation research.
20. Sudan—Northern Region irrigation rehabilitation project and community and village tree planting project.

22. Uganda — forest inventory for for better forest management.
23. Vanuatu—Reafforestation research.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Factory Farming

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to bring British factory farming legislation into line with the European convention.

Mrs. Fenner: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) on 27 June at column *464*.

Milk Quota

Mr. Alex Carlile: asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to enable tenants to acquire an interest in milk quota; and whether he has any plans to permit tenants to lease to others unused quota belonging to their holdings.

Mr. Jopling: I am conscious of the interests of both tenants and landlords in milk quotas. I am considering how these interests can best be recognised in the context of possible arrangements for allowing quota to be transferred separately from land.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 22 July 1985

WALES

Health Authorities

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those health authorities in Wales where the statutory National Health Service auditor has found systems weaknesses in relation to the payment of private patient charges in 1984; and if he will place the auditor's reports in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: During the audit investigation into private medical practice and other matters undertaken between April 1984 and February 1985, the National Health Service Statutory auditor for Wales identified systems weaknesses in relation to the payment of charges for private patient treatment in all 9 health authorities in Wales.

Several of the audit reports completed as part of this investigation have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Publication of these and other reports cannot be considered at present as it might be prejudicial to any subsequent investigations. Matters referred to in one of the audit reports are already the subject of police investigation. We would not in any event consider the question of publication of these audit reports until all the authorities' responses had been received and considered by the Department.

"Lifting the Burden"

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" and its potential impact upon Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The White Paper "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) is the Government's response to the report "Burdens on Business" published earlier this year. That report showed that Government requirements impose real costs on business which can inhibit development and growth. While the White Paper recognises the important role that statutory requirements and regulations have in the protection of workers, consumers and the general public unnecessary constraints act as a brake on enterprise and the creation of jobs and wealth. The removal of such constraints will allow firms, and especially small firms, to release scarce resources to help the development and expansion of their business with consequent benefits to the economies of both Wales and the United Kingdom.

Welsh Language (Expenditure)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of expenditure by his Department on the Welsh language in the financial year 1984-85; and what percentage increase this represents on the 1983-84 figure.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The level of expenditure by our Department on the Welsh language in 1984-85 was £2,535,231 which represents a reduction of 4·9 per cent. over expenditure in 1983-84 due to decreasing costs associated with the Welsh element in bilingual roadsigns on motorways and trunk roads.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown of his Department's expenditure on the Welsh language in 1984-85.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Grants under section 26, Development of Rural Wales Act 1976

	1984-85 £
Welsh Books Council—publicity	335,000
School Books Club (Exhibition officer)	5,000
Welsh National Centre for Children's Literature	14,000
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin	200,000
Royal National Eisteddfod	150,000
Bwrdd Ffilmiau Cymraeg	7,000
Papurau Bro (via RAA's)	21,350
Yr Academi Gymreig	30,000
Young Farmers Clubs	3,500
Place Names Advisory Committee (Honoraria)	600
Cwmni Theatr Cymru	25,000
Welsh National Opera	374
Merched y Wawr	10,000
Y Cymro	300
Sub Total Current	802,124
Urdd Gobaith Cymru—Glanllyn (Capital)	180,000
Sub Total Current and Capital	982,124
Grants for Welsh Language Education: Education Act 1980: Section 21	1,004,701
Headquarters Grants	
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin	114,350
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	60,296
Educational research related to the Welsh language	200,000
Welsh element in bilingual road signs on motorways and trunk roads	173,760
	2,535,231

Tan-Yr-Unts (Road Scheme)

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action has been taken since the recent nearly fatal accidents on the Tan-Yr-Unts bend to implement one of the two road schemes being examined after the last fatal accident in 1983.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I expect to reach a conclusion very soon on what might be the most appropriate long-term solution to the problem posed by the bend. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as I have done so.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available extra cash to the Wales area health authorities in order that they might fund the nurses' pay award; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. The additional costs of the pay award to nurses this year, and to other staff subject to review bodies recommendations over and above the cash

increases which we have made available to health authorities is less than £1 million or 0·1 per cent. of their revenue allocations. We have however recently provided them with additional capital funds which can be used for developing revenue saving schemes and which with further improvements in efficiency should help to relieve the pressures on their resources.

Inmos

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the employment prospects for the Inmos factory, Newport; what is the reason for not building stage II of the Inmos factory; how many current Inmos workers in Newport are on short-time; how many are drawing lower wages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The questions raised are essentially matters for the company which has issued a press release explaining that the 200 redundancies at Newport and the indefinite postponement of the new assembly operation planned to begin this year are part of a programme to cut costs in the currently depressed semi-conductor market. The company has also said that to exploit its design skills and advanced manufacturing facilities and to allow it to compete in world markets it will be giving priority to the introduction of new high value products, such as the transputer, and gradually phasing out the direct manufacture of its dynamic RAM products.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, for each of the years 1973 to 1984, he will provide such information as is available as to the number of hospital beds in each Welsh health authority region which were *(a)* closed as a result of complete hospital closure, *(b)* closed in hospitals which were not completely closed, *(c)* provided as a result of new hospital openings and *(d)* provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985, c. *550*]: The information requested is provided in the tables, together with the number of inpatients treated in each year. The tables demonstrate the Government's policy of transferring patients from long stay hospitals to more appropriate forms of care, and show its continuing commitment to providing more care in the acute sector, where bed numbers have increased by well over 1,000 since 1979 when the Government took office and where the number of patients treated has risen steadily.

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	*Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed*	*Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings*	*Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals*	*Number of in-patient cases*
CLWYD:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	13	—	—	29,362
1975	—	11	—	14	27,627
1976	—	—	—	4	29,916
1977	—	3	—	2	30,276
1978	—	—	—	33	31,377
1979	—	13	—	—	32,126
1980	—	81	369	—	39,212
1981	—	30	—	52	45,017
1982	—	19	—	48	44,853
1983	—	41	—	18	47,709
1984	—	55	—	23	49,971
Long stay hospitals:					
1974	—	95	—	25	2,396
1975	—	23	—	—	2,197
1976	—	10	—	3	2,153
1977	—	5	—	4	2,135
1978	—	—	—	—	2,085
1979	—	—	—	—	2,040
1980	—	149	—	—	1,884
1981	—	—	—	12	1,411
1982	—	—	—	—	1,058
1983	—	6	—	—	1,132
1984	—	1	—	—	1,137
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	13	2,302
1975	—	15	—	19	2,569
1976	—	2	—	—	2,679
1977	—	58	—	—	2,684
1978	—	8	—	—	2,436
1979	—	21	—	—	2,445
1980	—	—	—	—	2,650
1981	—	—	—	2	2,642
1982	—	3	—	—	2,868
1983	—	30	—	—	2,860
1984	—	10	—	—	2,820
Other hospitals:					
1974	—	1	—	21	10,358

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed	Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings	Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals	Number of in-patient cases
1975	—	—	—	—	10,060
1976	—	3	—	1	10,299
1977	—	2	—	—	10,128
1978	25	18	—	—	10,907
1979	—	—	—	—	11,130
1980	31	20	—	—	5,632
1981	201	—	—	—	2,694
1982	—	4	—	—	2,733
1983	—	—	—	—	2,947
1984	—	—	—	—	3,179
DYFED:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	—	28,949
1975	—	—	—	18	27,667
1976	—	—	—	1	29,973
1977	—	—	—	8	31,317
1978	—	58	174	2	33,651
1979	109	—	—	184	36,214
1980	—	—	—	—	38,081
1981	—	12	—	—	37,711
Long stay hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	—	556
1975	—	—	—	—	556
1976	—	8	—	—	547
1977	—	—	—	—	429
1978	68	—	—	—	407
1979	—	14	—	—	329
1980	—	12	—	—	389
1981	—	—	—	—	501
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	23	—	—	1,033
1975	—	—	—	—	1,086
1976	—	—	—	—	1,098
1977	—	—	—	—	1,128
1978	—	83	—	—	1,032
1979	—	30	—	—	963
1980	—	17	—	—	1,000
1981	—	2	—	—	959
Other hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	24	2,890
1975	12	—	—	8	2,203
1976	—	7	—	—	2,176
1977	—	12	—	6	2,469
1978	—	57	—	—	2,562
1979	45	—	—	—	1,104
1980	—	—	—	—	1,018
1981	—	—	—	—	949
EAST DYFED:					
Acute hospitals:					
1982	—	—	—	6	26,212
1983	—	14	—	—	26,174
1984	—	16	—	1	27,419
Long stay hospitals:					
1982	—	6	—	—	696
1983	—	2	—	1	893
1984	—	—	—	31	949
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1982	—	100	—	—	994
1983	—	19	—	—	869
1984	—	70	—	—	945
Other hospitals:					
1982	—	—	—	—	208
1983	—	—	—	—	181
1984	32	—	—	—	47

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed	Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings	Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals	Number of in-patient cases
PEMBROKESHIRE:					
Acute hospitals:					
1982	—	—	—	3	10,952
1983	—	—	—	—	10,863
1984	—	—	—	3	11,516
Long stay hospitals:					
1982	—	—	—	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—	—
1984	—	—	—	—	—
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1982	—	—	—	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—	—
1984	—	—	—	—	—
Other hospitals:					
1982	—	—	—	—	561
1983	—	—	—	—	579
1984	—	—	—	—	472
GWENT:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	8	—	42	31,197
1975	—	69	—	8	31,898
1976	53	4	—	123	33,797
1977	—	70	—	33	33,916
1978	—	—	—	30	34,242
1979	—	2	—	91	33,381
1980	—	6	—	114	39,759
1981	—	—	—	—	42,909
1982	—	29	—	—	42,654
1983	—	8	—	—	44,576
1984	—	21	—	9	47,729
Long stay hospitals:					
1974	—	1	—	—	1,333
1975	—	47	—	—	1,293
1976	—	1	—	27	1,559
1977	—	2	—	2	1,623
1978	—	—	—	—	1,291
1979	—	—	—	—	1,255
1980	25	76	—	—	1,405
1981	—	—	—	—	1,353
1982	—	—	—	—	1,184
1983	—	8	—	159	1,275
1984	—	—	—	—	1,256
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	136	—	—	2,836
1975	—	169	—	—	2,480
1976	—	55	—	—	2,637
1977	—	12	—	—	2,482
1978	—	8	—	—	2,416
1979	—	29	—	—	2,349
1980	—	5	—	—	2,492
1981	12	244	—	—	2,456
1982	—	38	—	—	2,425
1983	—	39	—	—	2,517
1984	—	24	—	—	2,601
Other hospitals:					
1974	—	16	—	—	14,154
1975	—	87	—	—	12,838
1976	20	41	—	—	12,899
1977	26	6	—	36	13,142
1978	—	—	—	24	13,236
1979	—	31	—	—	12,858
1980	—	72	—	—	8,992
1981	—	—	—	—	8,953
1982	—	4	—	20	8,836
1983	76	8	—	—	9,990
1984	—	—	—	7	10,521

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed	Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings	Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals	Number of in-patient cases
GWYNEDD:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	24	20,921
1975	—	—	—	38	19,895
1976	—	—	—	11	22,403
1977	—	—	—	10	23,736
1978	—	—	—	—	23,970
1979	—	—	—	—	23,068
1980	—	1	—	—	24,693
1981	—	3	—	—	25,703
1982	—	—	—	—	26,572
1983	—	3	—	—	26,576
1984	—	57	529	—	27,807
Long stay hospitals:					
1974	43	29	—	30	986
1975	—	2	—	—	1,136
1976	—	15	—	1	1,056
1977	—	—	—	—	878
1978	—	—	—	—	803
1979	—	—	—	—	881
1980	—	2	—	—	858
1981	—	—	—	—	882
1982	—	—	—	—	955
1983	—	—	—	—	1,122
1984	—	39	—	—	1,038
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	—	169
1975	—	—	—	—	199
1976	—	31	—	—	239
1977	—	—	—	—	201
1978	—	—	—	—	273
1979	—	—	—	—	224
1980	—	—	—	—	256
1981	—	—	—	—	236
1982	—	—	—	—	212
1983	—	—	—	—	215
1984	—	—	—	—	197
Other hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	32	4,004
1975	6	—	—	—	3,247
1976	—	10	—	—	3,417
1977	—	—	—	—	3,290
1978	—	—	—	—	3,303
1979	—	—	—	—	3,525
1980	17	—	—	—	3,427
1981	—	—	—	—	3,225
1982	—	—	—	—	3,488
1983	—	—	—	—	3,470
1984	—	25	—	—	2,454
MID GLAMORGAN:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	5	—	25	45,953
1975	13	38	—	—	44,539
1976	—	21	—	41	46,842
1977	—	5	—	33	47,928
1978	*138	3	362	—	53,915
1979	—	—	—	65	56,337
1980	—	2	—	5	59,875
1981	—	6	—	5	60,134
1982	—	18	—	—	56,772
1983	—	1	—	3	62,868
1984	—	—	—	31	67,515
Long stay hospitals:					
1974	—	26	—	2	1,027
1975	—	5	—	42	943
1976	—	—	—	—	1,208
1977	—	—	—	—	1,246
1978	25	—	—	—	1,351
1979	45	3	—	—	1,327

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed	Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings	Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals	Number of in-patient cases
1980	—	—	†98	—	2,208
1981	—	—	—	—	2,759
1982	—	—	—	—	2,379
1983	—	10	—	—	4,111
1984	—	1	—	10	4,815
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	86	—	—	2,600
1975	—	68	—	—	1,706
1976	47	15	—	—	1,741
1977	—	97	—	—	1,686
1978	—	72	—	—	2,147
1979	—	45	—	—	1,631
1980	—	58	—	—	1,846
1981	—	7	—	—	1,799
1982	—	89	—	—	1,641
1983	—	24	—	—	1,899
1984	—	—	—	—	1,939
Other hospitals:					
1974	30	5	—	—	9,930
1975	16	16	—	30	10,089
1976	—	13	—	7	9,567
1977	—	3	—	—	9,737
1978	—	166	—	32	6,121
1979	—	13	—	—	4,387
1980	90	9	—	—	3,629
1981	—	5	—	—	2,760
1982	—	8	—	—	2,697
1983	—	—	—	—	2,818
1984	—	—	—	1	3,035
POWYS:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	1	—	—	3,469
1975	—	—	—	—	3,478
1976	—	—	—	—	3,563
1977	—	—	—	—	3,589
1978	—	—	—	30	3,661
1979	—	—	—	—	3,527
1980	—	—	—	20	3,853
1981	—	—	—	—	3,993
1982	—	—	—	—	3,860
1983	—	—	—	—	4,202
1984	—	—	—	—	4,438
Long stay hospitals					
1974	—	—	—	—	326
1975	—	—	—	—	423
1976	—	—	—	—	322
1977	—	—	—	—	380
1978	—	—	—	—	316
1979	—	83	—	—	326
1980	—	1	—	—	374
1981	—	—	—	—	370
1982	—	—	—	—	400
1983	—	1	—	—	546
1984	—	—	—	—	534
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	—	319
1975	—	—	—	—	291
1976	—	—	—	—	277
1977	—	—	—	—	279
1978	—	—	—	—	307
1979	—	—	—	—	304
1980	—	16	—	—	331
1981	—	—	—	—	314
1982	—	25	—	—	350
1983	—	103	—	25	377
1984	—	—	—	30	378
Other hospitals:					
1974	—	15	—	3	1,332

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed	Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings	Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals	Number of in-patient cases
1975	—	—	—	—	1,194
1976	—	21	—	—	1,194
1977	—	—	—	—	1,167
1978	—	—	—	—	1,209
1979	—	—	—	—	1,254
1980	—	28	—	—	1,390
1981	—	12	—	—	1,266
1982	—	20	—	—	1,237
1983	—	—	—	—	1,222
1984	—	—	—	—	1,235
SOUTH GLAMORGAN:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	—	48,282
1975	—	10	—	19	48,235
1976	—	11	—	50	51,479
1977	—	31	—	—	51,321
1978	—	2	—	12	52,168
1979	—	—	—	6	52,931
1980	—	4	—	—	53,769
1981	—	1	—	86	57,080
1982	—	37	—	—	55,310
1983	—	4	—	—	60,688
1984	—	2	—	20	63,188
Long stay hospitals:					
1974	—	10	—	—	1,984
1975	—	155	—	—	2,045
1976	—	—	—	45	2,020
1977	—	—	—	—	2,193
1978	—	100	—	—	1,990
1979	—	12	—	—	1,326
1980	—	8	—	—	1,646
1981	—	—	—	22	2,096
1982	—	—	—	—	2,120
1983	—	—	—	—	2,291
1984	—	—	—	—	2,315
Psychiatric hospitals:					
1974	—	6	—	—	1,549
1975	45	191	—	—	1,529
1976	—	8	—	1	1,450
1977	—	75	—	—	1,354
1978	—	7	—	55	1,426
1979	—	2	—	—	1,526
1980	—	24	—	—	1,497
1981	—	2	—	22	1,413
1982	—	4	—	—	1,386
1983	—	—	—	—	1,573
1984	—	11	—	3	1,518
Other hospitals:					
1974	—	87	—	15	13,628
1975	137	38	—	—	12,753
1976	—	10	—	—	14,164
1977	—	—	—	1	12,453
1978	—	—	—	—	11,885
1979	—	29	—	—	11,743
1980	—	139	—	2	12,521
1981	—	148	—	—	11,440
1982	—	—	—	46	11,036
1983	—	26	—	26	11,583
1984	—	—	—	—	11,962
WEST GLAMORGAN:					
Acute hospitals:					
1974	—	103	—	4	39,839
1975	—	—	—	16	39,800
1976	—	—	—	32	42,075
1977	—	22	—	33	43,050
1978	—	9	—	5	42,449
1979	—	—	—	—	43,995
1980	—	—	—	5	45,891
1981	—	31	—	31	45,729

	Number of beds closed as result of complete hospital closure	Number of beds closed in hospitals not completely closed	Number of beds provided as a result of new hospital openings	Number of beds provided as a result of additions to existing hospitals	Number of in-patient cases
1982	—	—	—	—	46,366
1983	—	9	—	—	48,379
1984	—	—	—	—	50,718
Long stay Hospitals:					
1974	—	121	—	—	3,222
1975	—	—	—	—	3,320
1976	—	—	—	2	3,498
1977	—	5	—	—	3,398
1978	—	0	—	30	3,813
1979	—	—	—	—	3,988
1980	—	—	—	—	4,085
1981	—	3	—	—	4,186
1982	—	—	—	—	4,010
1983	—	—	—	—	4,216
1984	—	—	—	—	4,537
Psychiatric Hospitals:					
1974	—	—	—	—	850
1975	—	—	—	24	868
1976	—	—	—	0	942
1977	—	2	—	—	1,071
1978	—	280	—	41	1,232
1979	—	—	—	—	1,350
1980	—	—	—	—	1,409
1981	—	40	—	—	1,492
1982	—	—	—	—	1,491
1983	—	—	—	—	1,705
1984	—	—	—	16	1,769
Other Hospitals:					
1974	84	—	—	—	2,333
1975	—	13	—	—	1,957
1976	—	3	—	—	2,078
1977	—	7	—	—	2,011
1978	—	24	—	—	1,647
1979	21	—	—	—	1,351
1980	—	—	—	—	953
1981	—	42	—	—	821
1982	—	2	—	3	738
1983	—	—	—	2	846
1984	—	—	—	1	912

* 126 beds were in a hospital temporarily closed.
† Hospital re-opened.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Street Collections (Prosecutions)

59. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review the policy of prosecuting people for carrying out street collections in London during the period March 1984 to March 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. This is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Dr. Mark Patterson

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Dr. Mark Patterson, an inmate of Ford open prison, had a hernia operation in Chichester hospital.

Mr. Meller: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 16 July at column 74.

Remanded Persons

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of people held on remand in the period 1983 to the latest available date were not finally convicted of an offence;

(2) what proportion of people held on remand over six months in the period 1983 to the latest available date, were found not guilty of an alleged offence.

Mr. Meller: The latest readily available information is given in the following table:

Persons received into Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on initial remand in custody in 1983: by length of time between initial remand in custody and outcome of proceedings and outcome

Percentage

Outcome of proceedings	*Length of time between initial remand in custody and outcome of proceedings**			*Total*
	Up to six months	*Over six months*	*Not recorded*	
Found not guilty or not proceeded against	3	8	—	3
Sentenced	94	88	12	87
Not recorded	3	4	88	9
Total	100	100	100	100

* Including any time which may have been spent on bail after the initial remand in custody.

Repatriation Scheme

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the number of applications (families), *(b)* the number of persons assisted (individuals) and *(c)* the expenditure incurred under Her Majesty's Government's repatriation scheme based on section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971, for the years 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The information is as follows:

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Applications (families)	459	324	185	112
Persons assisted (individuals)	291	152	144	81
Expenditure	£169,206	£162,203	£169,259	*£118,982

* This is a provisional figure; the audited account is not yet available.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many miners are currently in prison after convictions for offences arising out of the recent strike; and how many are serving sentences of up to one year, one to three years and over three years, respectively.

Mr. Maller: The information requested is not available.

Terrorism

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Billericay on 12 July, if he will list in the *Official Report* those known terrorist groups about which information is made available to those who need to know it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: It would not be in the interests of security to publish such a list.

Detained Persons

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained overnight during 1984 in *(a)* Harmondsworth detention centre and *(b)* the Queen's building, Heathrow.

Mr. Waddington: At Harmondsworth, 3,114. The same information for Queen's building is not available but in 1984 a total of 4,879 persons were detained there for some period, not necessarily overnight.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained overnight under Immigration Act powers upon entry to the United Kingdom during 1984 by nationality.

Mr. Waddington: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a similar question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 29 April 1985 at columns *21-24*.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average daily population of those detained in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1984.

Mr. Maller: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 26 March at column *133*.

Refugees and Asylum

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government plan to publish their response to the Home Affairs Committee's report on refugees and asylum.

Mr. Waddington: Progress has been made in preparing a response to the Committee's report but some of its recommendations, which raise important issues, require further consideration, and I regret that I am not yet in a position to give a date for publication.

Ms. Boi Thi Minh

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make a decision on the application for family re-unification from Ms. Boi Thi Minh.

Mr. Waddington: The case will be further considered in the light of the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee's report on refugees and asylum, which recommended the relaxation of family reunion criteria in respect of Vietnamese refugees in camps in countries of temporary asylum.

Illegal Entrants

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people treated as illegal entrants during 1984 were granted temporary admission; and how many of these absconded.

Mr. Waddington: Figures relating to illegal entrants detected during 1984 and the way in which they were dealt with are given in table 19 of the "Control of Immigration: Statistics 1984" (Cmnd. 9544). Of the illegal entrants temporarily released during 1984 17 absconded.

Sexual Offences Act 1985

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to take steps to monitor the operation of the Sexual Offences Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maller: The Home Office is setting up arrangements to obtain the usual statistics of court proceedings (including the number of acquittals) in respect of offences under sections 1 and 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 1985. In addition, the Director of Public Prosecutions is making arrangements to record, in due course, the number of cases in which proceedings are instituted under section 1 of the Act but are not taken forward by the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to issue a departmental circular for the guidance of chief constables with regard to the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maller: Arrangements are in hand to issue an explanatory circular before the Act comes into force on 16 September.

Pucklechurch Remand Centre

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors contributed to the delay between the inspection of Pucklechurch remand centre by Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons in August 1982 and the publication of the inspectorate's report in June 1985.

Mr. Maller: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 8 July at column *316*. I regret that that answer gave the impression that only 5 reports were received in 1982 and 1983 together. In fact 5 reports were received in 1983 (14 having been received in 1982).

Prisoners (Wages)

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the level of wages paid to prisoners was last reviewed; and when the next review will take place.

Mr. Maller: The rates of earnings paid to prisoners are reviewed annually and revised rates are brought into operation with effect from the first Monday in October of each year. The revised rates following the review undertaken in 1984 came into effect on 1 October 1984 and the revised rates resulting from the review currently being undertaken are expected to be operative from 7 October 1985.

Stonehenge (Incident)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the chief constables concerned as to whether property confiscated from people taken to police stations during the operation at Stonehenge on 1 June and not required for evidence has been returned.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Chief Constable of Wiltshire informs me that all such property has been returned except that required in connection with criminal proceedings and certain items which have remained unclaimed.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the chief constables concerned as to whether the police have disposed of photographs and fingerprints of those arrested and subsequently released without charge following the incident at Stonehenge on 1 June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Chief Constable of Wiltshire has informed me that when police inquiries have been completed the fingerprints and photographs of any person in respect of whom no charges are to be brought will be destroyed.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers, and from which police forces, were deployed during the operation at Stonehenge on 1 June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Chief Constable of Wiltshire that the number of police officers available to him on 1 June at Chilcletton were as follows:

Police force	*Number of officers*
Hampshire	349
Avon and Somerset	234
Thames Valley	147
Wiltshire	81
Gloucestershire	49
Dorset	46
Total	780

An additional 250-300 Wiltshire officers were on duty elsewhere within the force area, including about 80 at Stonehenge monument itself and Ministry of Defence police were also on duty on Ministry of Defence land nearby.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the chief constables concerned about whether all police officers from all forces present during the operation at Stonehenge on 1 June were wearing visible identity numbers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Chief Constable of Wiltshire is aware of reports that some of the officers under his command on 1 June wearing flameproof overalls did not display identification numbers. Initial issues of this clothing did not provide for numbers to be shown but it is the chief constable's intention that officers in his force display numbers and to modify existing uniforms where necessary in line with the policy of the Association of Chief Police Officers, endorsed by the Department, to which I referred in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 30 October 1984 at column *890*.

Prisoners' Medical Treatment

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department concerning allowing prisoners in prisons in England and Wales to go to outside private hospitals for medicinal treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Meller: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Mabel Achinilbu

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will receive a small deputation headed by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside before he makes a decision on the proposed deportation of Mrs. Mabel Achinilbu;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the organisations and individuals who have made representations to him opposing the proposed deportation of Mrs. Mabel Achinilbu; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Representations on behalf of Mrs. Achinilbu have been received from 11 hon. Members and one Member of the European Parliament. A number of individuals and organisations have also made representations, and a petition with 4,000-5,000 signatures has been presented to the immigration service office in Liverpool.

Arrangements are being made for Mrs. Achinilbu to be re-interviewed by the immigration service in Liverpool. Her case will then be carefully reviewed in the light of what is learnt during that interview, and representations on her behalf from hon. Members and others.

I can assure the hon. Member that he will be given the opportunity of a meeting before any decision to remove Mrs. Achinilbu is taken.

West Midlands Police

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to how many police officers there are on the West Midlands police constabulary and how many of them are formally allocated to patrol duties.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 30 June 1985 there were 6,530 police officers in the West Midlands police; 3,281 were allocated to patrol duties on that day.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Midlands police as to how many policewomen have received a promotion in the West Midlands police constabulary in each year since 1979, and how many have been employed on administrative duties within the West Midlands police constabulary during the same period.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of policewomen who were promoted in the West Midlands police during the last six years is as follows:

	Number
1979	6
1980	1
1981	2
1982	5
1983	3
1984	9

Figures of the numbers of officers employed on administrative duties in the force during this period could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drug Trafficking

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide additional resources to enable the plan submitted by the Association of Chief Police Officers for tackling the problem of drug trafficking to be implemented.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 18 July. Police authority expenditure on recruiting the additional officers will attract police grant in the usual way; to mark the importance the Government attach to this initiative it is ready to disregard their share of this extra expenditure for grant penalty purposes.

Prison Population

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total prison population on 12 July.

Mr. Meller: Forty-eight thousand and thirty-seven (excluding 74 prisoners in police cells).

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the certified normal accommodation and what was the population on 12 July at *(a)* Her Majesty's prison, Birmingham, *(b)* Her Majesty's prison, Bristol, *(c)* Her Majesty's prison and remand centre, Cardiff, *(d)* Her Majesty's prison, Hull, *(e)* Her Majesty's prison, Leeds, *(f)* Her Majesty's prison, Lincoln, and *(g)* Her Majesty's prison, Liverpool.

(2) what is the certified normal accommodation and what was the population on 12 July at *(a)* Her Majesty's prison, Manchester, *(b)* Her Majesty's prison, Wandsworth, *(c)* Her Majesty's prison, Winchester, *(d)* Her Majesty's prison, Wormwood Scrubs and *(e)* Her Majesty's prison, Durham.

Mr. Meller: The information requested is as follows:

Establishment	*Certified normal accommodation*	*Population*
Birmingham	570	1,114
Bristol	561	648
Cardiff*	339	541
Hull	318	276
Leeds	624	1,337
Lincoln	359	633
Liverpool	838	1,468
Manchester*	1,034	1,711
Wandsworth	1,258	1,540
Winchester*	490	578
Wormwood Scrubs	1,011	1,300
Durham†	708	1,283

* Includes both prison and remand centre
† Includes both males and females

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps, in addition to the prison building programme, he is taking to relieve the current level of prison overcrowding and to reduce the prison population.

Mr. Mellor: We are keeping the situation under careful review and ensuring that every effort is being made to get the best use from available accommodation.

Prison Sentences

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether prison sentences are exclusive or inclusive of periods spent in private clinics.

Mr. Mellor: Where it is necessary for a prisoner to receive treatment in a clinic or hospital outside the prison, the period spent there counts towards his sentence.

Prisoners (Private Clinics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what conditions prisoners are permitted to undergo non-urgent operations in private clinics.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Immigration

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for each of the years 1970 to 1984 inclusive, the proportion of persons admitted for settlement in the United Kingdom who were so admitted as spouses, children or dependants of persons already settled in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The total numbers of spouses and children accepted for settlement on arrival, and on removal of time limit, together with totals for all persons so accepted in the years 1973-84 are given in "Control of Immigration: Statistics" (Tables 15 to 17 of the issues for 1983 (Cmnd. 9246) and 1984 (Cmnd. 9544)). The total number of children admitted for settlement in 1970-72 is given in table 12 of the issue for 1980 (Cmnd. 8199).

The other information requested is not readily available.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what authority he includes British citizens within the category of Commonwealth citizens for the purposes of section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Waddington: That of Parliament: I would refer the right hon. Member to section 1 of the British Nationality Act 1948 and section 37 of the British Nationality Act 1981.

Gloucester Place Fire

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take following representations he has received from the coroner who conducted the inquest into the deaths of Mrs. Karim and her two children at 46 Gloucester place, London W1.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a report from Her Majesty's coroner for Westminster following the inquest into the fire at 46 Gloucester place, Marylebone, in which a mother and two children died last November; what recommendations to him are contained in Her Majesty's coroner's report; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations, in the form of a letter from Her Majesty's coroner for inner West London, suggesting changes in the legislative arrangements for securing adequate fire precautions and means of escape in houses in multiple occupation. He is studying these in consultation with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has received similar representations.

Mr. Harold Roberts

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter of 21 March concerning Harold Roberts from the hon. Member for Stretford.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will be writing shortly.

Miss Hilda Murrell

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken on the letter from the hon. Member for Linlithgow to the Minister of State of last week, making suggestions as to individuals who ought to be interviewed in relation to the murder of Hilda Murrell.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information contained in the hon. Member's letter of 8 July was passed to West Mercia police on 15 July for such action as the chief constable considered appropriate in his continuing investigation into Miss Murrell's death. I understand that the individuals concerned have been interviewed but that no information has been forthcoming to assist West Mercia's inquiry.

Crime Statistics (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the estimates which have been made by the British crime survey during the past five years of offences in the west midlands region related to vandalism, theft from vehicles, burglaries in dwellings, theft of vehicles, bicycle thefts, thefts in dwellings, other housing thefts, assaults, theft from persons/robbery, sexual offences and other personal thefts.

Mr. Mellor: The samples used for the survey are not large enough to allow estimates to be made of the number of offences committed in particular police areas.

Strip Searches (Ports of Entry)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many strip searches there have been of men and women at ports of entry in each year since 1979.

Mr. Waddington: No strip searches have been carried out at ports of entry by Home Office officials in this period.

I am advised by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that HM Customs and Excise keeps no records centrally of strip searches.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police authorities and the number of officers involved in complaints in each authority; and whether any officer has been involved in more than one complaint in connection with the mining dispute.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The table records, by police area, the number of members of the police force against whom complaints arising from the miners' strike were recorded under s.49 of the Police Act 1964 between 13 March 1984 and 5 March 1985. In addition 273 complaints were made against officers who have not been identified.

The other information sought is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	Number
Cheshire	10
Derbyshire	28
Devon and Cornwall	1
Dorset	4
Durham	13
Dyfed Powys	1
Essex	2
Gloucestershire	4
Greater Manchester	11
Gwent	15
Hertfordshire	4
Humberside	4
Kent	16
Lancashire	3
Lincolnshire	4
Merseyside	17
Metropolitan	4
Northumbria	22
North Wales	2
North Yorkshire	1
Nottinghamshire	49
South Wales	26
South Yorkshire	40
Staffordshire	10
Sussex	1
Thames Valley	2
Warwickshire	19
West Midlands	8
West Yorkshire	6

Sumrie Clothes plc, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire as to the progress of police inquiries into allegations by Mr. Patrick Benson, former chief executive of Sumrie Clothes plc, Leeds, regarding the financial relationship between Sumrie Clothes and other companies in which Mr. Michael Hepker has a controlling or major financial interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police for the City of London, whose officers are handling this matter, that preliminary inquiries are continuing and that a report will be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions in due course.

Prisoners (Tranquillisers)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been prescribed powerful tranquillisers by prison doctors in each year since 1979; what proportion of such prescriptions were Largactil; in which prisons they were prescribed; and how many inmates suffered severe or irreversible illnesses as a result.

Mr. Meller: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be in a position to designate under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 the stadia of clubs in divisions 3 and 4 of the Football League and clubs in divisions I and II of the Rugby League.

Mr. Brittan: The necessary orders were laid before the House on Friday 19 July to designate 36 Football League stadia and 22 stadia used by Rugby League clubs with effect from 9 August. Their effect will be to require the clubs in all cases to apply for safety certificates from the appropriate local authorities. Until such time as certificates are issued the clubs will be free to use the grounds as they are. However, I imagine that the certificating authorities will wish on this occasion to move quickly to issue certificates, even if initially the certificates are of a provisional character, and to operate so as to limit spectator numbers where necessary in order to minimise the necessity for immediate or expensive building works.

Spain (Extradition Treaty)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects the United Kingdom and Spain will sign an extradition treaty.

Mr. Brittan: A new extradition treaty was signed in London earlier today. I and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs signed for the United Kingdom.

The treaty represents a significant achievement for both Spain and the United Kingdom, and I welcome the co-operation which the Spanish authorities have shown throughout the negotiations. It is clearly wrong that those accused or convicted of serious offences should be able to evade justice merely because of the absence of an extradition arrangement. My officials and the Director of Public Prosecutions (who will represent the Government of Spain in extradition proceedings) will give the Spanish authorities every assistance in making the new treaty work.

The treaty will be presented to Parliament in due course.

ENERGY

Petrol Price

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he had any discussions with the chairmen of oil companies about recent petrol price reductions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have had no such discussions.

Wave Power

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current projected figure for generating electricity from wave power as generated by the Salter Duck.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department considers that there is a low probability of any design for large scale wave power generation, including the Salter Duck, achieving a cost of energy below 9p/kWh (1984 money values).

Details of the cost assessment are given in ETSU R26, Wave Energy, which is deposited in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Ian MacGregor (Payments)

Mr. Leighton asked the Prime Minister what have been the total sums paid to Mr. Ian MacGregor since he took up appointments to manage publicly owned industries; and what is the Government's total financial obligation to him.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 30 November 1984 at col. 607.

The amount of the two performance-related payments to be made to Lazard Freres in compensation for the release of Mr. MacGregor to serve as chairman of BSC will be determined and announced in the near future.

Terrorism

Mr. Terlezki asked the Prime Minister if, following recent East-West co-operation on terrorism, she will remind the Soviet Government of the need to eradicate terrorism.

The Prime Minister: The Government have consistently made clear that widespread international co-operation is essential in combatting international terrorism. We believe the Soviet Union has a role to play in this and we will take every suitable opportunity to urge them to join with others in the common fight against terrorism.

Information Technology

Mr. Faulds asked the Prime Minister which Minister has been charged with responsibility for co-ordinating work on information technology policy matters throughout government; and whether there has been any recent change in this matter.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie) is designated as Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology.

Sir Robert Armstrong (Speech)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether she saw in advance the text of the speech by Sir Robert Armstrong to the centenary conference of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy on 18 June; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Sir Robert Armstrong showed me in advance the text of what he proposed to say on that occasion. I indicated he was free to speak as he wished. I made no comments or suggestions for alterations.

European Community (Food Aid)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the failure of the European Economic Community to deliver the pledged total of food aid to the drought stricken nations of North and East Africa; and if she will call for a report from the Commission on this issue.

The Prime Minister: The European Council will not meet again until 2 December. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will continue to monitor closely the rate of deliveries of Community food aid for the rest of the year. He saw for himself last week at Port Assab in Ethiopia that the great bulk of the grain being unloaded was from the European Community. Community food aid will continue to play a very important role in the months to come. However, the ports serving famine affected countries in the Sahel and East Africa are congested with food at present. The priority now is to improve internal distribution; we and other member states of the Community, together with other donors, are making every effort to overcome this problem.

European Community (Cereal Prices)

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister why Her Majesty's Government will not refer to the European Court the matter of the action of the European Economic Community Commission in overruling a national veto on cereal price reduction.

The Prime Minister: It would not be useful to add to the uncertainties over cereals prices.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

52. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a further statement on the famine situation in Ethiopia.

53. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current state of aid to Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: I refer my hon. Friends to my statement earlier today.

Nicaragua

54. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current value of United Kingdom aid to Nicaragua.

Mr. Raison: British bilateral aid to Nicaragua in 1984-85 amounted to about £36,000. We also contribute to humanitarian relief for the region from which Nicaragua benefits.

India

55. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has made for the provision of aid to India during the years 1986 and 1987, respectively.

Mr. Raison: British aid is planned on a financial year basis. In 1985-56 we plan to spend £115 million of bilateral aid, provided that agreement is reached on certain projects which we have approved in principle. In addition, we expect to spend £14 million from the aid and trade provision. Figures are not available for subsequent years.

UNESCO

56. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress to date in the reform of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Raison: Largely as a result of our pressure, advances have been made since early 1984 in planning better programmes, reducing politicisation, increasing financial control and finding ways of improving management and the working of the governing bodies. Progress has been quicker in some areas than others. By the end of the year, after the general conference, we should have a clearer picture of whether the organisation will really be healthy enough to reclaim our allegiance.

Caribbean

57. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for discussions about British aid policy in the Caribbean.

Mr. Raison: In response to a request from the member Governments of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, I have offered to meet the Ministers of these countries soon to discuss British bilateral aid to the region.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total figure for the United Kingdom overseas aid budget in 1984-85; and what were the respective disbursements in *(a)* the Asian sub-continent, *(b)* African Commonwealth countries and *(c)* the West Indies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The gross aid programme in 1984-85 was some £1,169 million, made up of the public expenditure allocation for overseas aid (£1,099 million) plus capital repayments (approximately £70 million).

Outturn figures, for bilateral country programmes in the regions named, which are provisional pending finalisation of the Appropriation Account, are as follows:

	£ million
(a) Asian sub-continent	190
(b) African Commonwealth countries	113
(c) Caribbean (including Dependencies)	14

These amounts exclude aid programme funds made available via multilateral aid organisations and European Community institutions.

Falkland Islands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the reasons for the appointment of each of the individual members of the board of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation; and what are the qualifications and business interests of these members.

Mr. Raison: Members of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation are appointed in accordance with section 6 of the ordinance establishing the corporation. The provisions, together with the names and background of current members, are as follows:

(a) a representative of Her Majesty's Government (Mr. M. Crosse, economist);

(b) an elected member of the Executive Council (Councillor R. Binnie);

(c) a person not being a member of the Executive Council who the Civil Commissioner in Council considers represents the interests of farmers in the Falkland Islands (Mr. N. Watson, owner-occupier of Long Island farm);

(d) two persons who the Civil Commissioner in Council considers have had experience in matters relating to trade or industry (Mr. S. Wallace, employee of Cable and Wireless, and Mr. T. Betts, chairman of the General Employees Union and employee of the Falkland Islands Company);

(e) two persons holding public office in the Falkland Islands (Mr. M. Geiger, Attorney-General and Mr. A. Cameron, Falkland Islands Government Representative in London).

The chief executive (Mr. D. Taylor), general manager (Mr. S. Armstrong) and financial secretary (Mr. H. Rowlands) are ex-officio members of the board. Members are required to disclose financial or business interests only if these affect matters being considered by the corporation, in which case they may not take part in any vote thereon at any meeting.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Foreign Language Report

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which schools in the west midlands region contributed to the compilation of information in the report, entitled Foreign Language Performance in Schools, issued recently by his Department.

Mr. Dunn: The report was prepared by the National Foundation for Educational Research as the result of a sample survey conducted for the assessment of performance unit. As with similar surveys in other areas of the curriculum, schools were invited to participate on the understanding that no information would be passed to the Department or the other funding Departments nor made available for general publication which would allow results to be identified as those of a particular school or pupil.

Support Grants

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will make a statement on the ninth project of the education support grants programme for 1986-87 support for parents of the under-fives with special needs, stating the number of tenders for the materials involved, the successful company, and what alternative proposals to supply the projects were considered and costed; and whether he is satisfied there is no British organisation which could have met the demands of the project;

(2) whether he will list in the *Official Report* those projects forming the second round of education support grant programmes which involve one specific set of learning materials; together with the country of origin of those learning materials; and whether he will give details of the process by which the materials were selected.

Mr. Dunn: None of the activities constituting the 1986-87 education support grant programme assumes the use of one specific set of learning materials. It is for LEAs, in formulating bids, due to be submitted on 30 September 1985 for expenditure to be supported under the programme, to decide, within the framework of guidelines given in the 1985 education support grant circular, what

materials to use. In the case of activity IX, the provision of services to support parents in the teaching of children under five with special educational needs, the multi-professional teams, whose establishment and development it is envisaged grant will support, may wish to design their own materials.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the schools which have ceased to participate in the assisted places scheme, stating the duration of participation in each case.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

	Duration
Eastbourne college	1 term
Hasmonean High school	2 years
Shrewsbury school	2 years

Mr. Freud: asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage fee increase in each school participating in the assisted places scheme in each year since its introduction; and what are the increases for the next academic year;

(2) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the maximum paid in respect of one school, and *(b)* the average paid in respect of one school under the assisted places scheme represented by incidental expenses of (i) travel, (ii) uniform, (iii) meals and (iv) all three;

(3) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the maximum paid in respect of one pupil, and *(b)* the average paid per pupil under the assisted places scheme for the incidental expenses of (i) travel, (ii) uniforms and (iii) school meals and of (i), (ii) and (iii) together;

(4) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available the percentage of the average assistance with fees for a pupil under the assisted places scheme represented by the assistance with incidental expenses for travel, meals and uniform;

(5) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available the percentage of the average fee income to participating schools in respect of *(a)* assisted places pupils and *(b)* all pupils represented by the assistance with incidental expenses for travel, meals and uniform;

(6) whether he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations who were consulted about the 60 per cent. requirement in relation to children entering the assisted places scheme from the maintained sector; and whether he will give details of the form of the consultative process;

(7) whether he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations who selection for an assisted place, were choir boys; what proportion of the relevant age group entering the scheme this represents; and what proportion of all assisted places pupils entering the scheme from the private sector this represents;

(8) whether he will list in the *Official Report* a breakdown by age group of the pupils entering the assisted places scheme who attended a private school at the time of their selection for the scheme; and how many and what proportion of each group attended the same school before and after their entry to the scheme.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Temporary Admission Students

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will arrange for students, permitted to enter the United Kingdom on temporary admission, not to be subject to fees charged to overseas students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1983 (SI 1983/973) as amended in 1984 (SI 1984/1201) already provide for refugees and those who have exceptionally been granted leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom to pay fees as home students. My right hon. Friend has no plans to extend this concession to those who have been given temporary admission to the United Kingdom.

EC (Scientific Studies)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the total number of scientific studies in British universities or polytechnics which have been funded by the European Economic Community in each academic year since 1979-80; if he will give a breakdown of the category of those studies; what proportion of them had previously requested grants from his Department; and what was the total contribution which the European Economic Community made towards the study being undertaken at the university of Birmingham on childhood cancers.

Mr. Brooke: Figures on the total number of scientific studies funded by the European Economic Community are not held by the Department: I understand that it is not the policy of the European Communities Commission to disclose this information.

The European Economic Community, through the radiation protection research programme, has contributed to £87,100 (£40,800 in 1983 and £46,300 in 1984) towards the continuing study of childhood cancers at the university of Birmingham.

Graham Report

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which specific recommendations in the Graham report on teacher training he intends to implement in the field of secondary school education.

Mr. Dunn: The report of the Suffolk education department on teacher appraisal reaches various conclusions which need to be addressed by all the partners in the education service. The authors express the hope that the next stage will be wider practical field trials and, in welcoming the report as an important contribution to the current debate and activity on teacher appraisal, my right hon. Friend reminded the partners that resources remain available for education support grant project to take forward the necessary fieldwork identified in the researchers' report. He said that he very much hoped that the employers and teachers will now see their way to agreeing to get this project, which he hoped would have begun in April, off the ground.

Micro-Electronics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what factors he is taking into account in his present consideration of proposals to centralise the micro-electronics education programme and to move its administrative headquarters from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to London; what financial support he intends to give the programme during the next two years; and how this compares with the financial backing which his Department has allocated to it during the past two years.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend will make an announcement shortly.

Unemployment Videos

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to compile a series of videos featuring school pupils and firms in regions of high unemployment similar to the one produced by his Department, relating to the north-east of England.

Mr. Dunn: No. Although the video programme "One Week in July" was made in the north-east of England, the principles of co-operation between education and industry which it illustrates apply nationally. The video, which will be widely available in the autumn, is part of the support which the Department is giving to Industry Year 1986.

Allowances

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the proportion of the average secondary school budget represented by average allowances to pupils in respect of travel, meals and uniform.

Mr. Dunn: In 1983-84 the net cost of providing secondary school pupils with transport between home and school represented 2·4 per cent. of the total net expenditure by local education authorities in England on secondary schools. Information on the cost of meals and uniforms for secondary pupils is not collected by the Department.

Further Education (Women)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the projected number of students entering further education for 1985-86 are women.

Mr. Brooke: No separate projections are produced of the numbers entering further education by sex. In November 1984, 50·2 per cent. of all further education enrolments in England were women; a rise from 48·2 per cent. in November 1981.

Incidental Expenses

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has for each local education authority as to *(a)* the total amount allocated for the incidental expenses of (i) school uniforms, (ii) school travel and (iii) free school meals, *(b)* the average amount per pupil receiving such help for each of the above categories and *(c)* the average amount per school in respect of each category; and if he will express the last figure as a percentage of the average capitation income for a school.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) on 14 May 1985 at columns *100-102* for the net cost to each local education authority of providing children with transport between home and school. Information on the other items is not collected by the Department.

Unemployed People

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail his proposals for providing education and training for the unemployed who do not qualify for the youth training scheme.

Sir Keith Joseph: Particulars of the REPLAN programme, through which the Department and the Welsh Office are seeking to encourage the development of educational opportunities for unemployed adults, were given on 16 July in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) at columns *93-94*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tropical Forests

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken following the statement by the United Nations conference on Trade and Industry in 1983 on the need to curb the demand for the goods and services that tropical forests supply.

Mr. Channon: The United Kingdom, together with the other members of the European Community, has joined the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) which entered into force on 1 April 1985 and intends to play an active part in its operations.

One of the objectives of the ITTA is to encourage the development of policies aimed at sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests.

Pharmaceuticals (Patent Law)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it is his intention to seek to bring United Kingdom patent law for pharmaceuticals into line with the provisions of the European Patent Convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: In the few areas where the European Patent Convention and United Kingdom patent law make special provision for pharmaceuticals, they are in line. I do not consider that any action is required.

Overseas Ministerial Visits

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria are adopted in inviting companies to participate in ministerial visits overseas; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of such opportunities.

Mr. Channon: Company representatives are invited to accompany Ministers on overseas visits whenever this will enhance United Kingdom export prospects. In issuing invitations we take into account such factors as the nature of the opportunities, the interest and capability of companies and, in certain instances, the stage of contract negotiations reached. There is usually a natural limit to the size of the team and we spread invitations as fairly as possible. Companies indicate that they find participation valuable.

Textile and Clothing (Imports)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list total United Kingdom textile and clothing imports from Taiwan in 1984 and compare it with Taiwan textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year;

(2) what was the total of United Kingdom textile and clothing imports from Brazil in 1984; and how this compares with Brazilian textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year;

(3) if he will list total United Kingdom textile and clothing imports from Korea in 1984, and total Korean textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year.

Mr. Channon: The information is as follows:

Value £ million

	United Kingdom imports (cif)	*United Kingdom exports (fob)*
Taiwan	68·3	3·5
Brazil	16·3	1·6
South Korea	152·5	6·2

Source:

Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Divisions 65 and 84 (less Group 848), Groups 266 and 267 and Sub-group 268·7 (part).

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from Brazil; and how this compares with the Brazilian tariff on garment imports from the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the total United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from Brazil; and how this compares with the Brazilian tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom;

(3) what is the United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from Taiwan; and how this compares with the Taiwan tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom;

(4) what is the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from Taiwan; and how this compares with the Taiwan tariff on garment imports from the United Kingdom;

(5) if he will list the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from Korea, and the current Korean tariff on garment imports from the United Kingdom;

(6) what is the current United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from Korea, and the similar Korean tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: The broad ranges of these tariffs are:

	United Kingdom per cent.	*Brazil per cent.*	*Taiwan, per cent.*	*Korea per cent.*
Fabrics	3·5 to 17·3	20 to 105	1·25* to 75	20 to 40
Garments	5·4 to 15·3	45 to 105	1·25* to 75	20 to 40

* Exceptional.

but these ranges conceal wide variations, and some United Kingdom tariffs on imports from Brazil and Korea are, within certain limits for sensitive products, waived under the European Communities' generalised scheme of preference.

Full information is available in Her Majesty's Customs and Excise tariff and extracts from the tariff schedules of Brazil, Taiwan and the Republic of Korea, all of which are in the Library.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry to what extent exports from the United Kingdom to Brazil of garments, fabrics, textile and clothing are limited by Government ban; and how this compares with the importation of these products from Brazil.

Mr. Channon: Brazil has suspended the issue of import licences for garments, fabrics, textiles and clothing, under the following CCCN chapter headings:

50 (Silk and silk waste)
53 (Wool and other animal hair)
55 (Cotton)
58 (Carpets, mats, matting and tapestries, pile and chenille fabrics, trimmings, tulle and other net fabrics, lace and embroidery)
60 (Knitted and crocheted goods)
61 (Articles of apparel or clothing, accessories of textile fabric other than knitted and crocheted goods)
62 (Other made up textile materials)
63 (Old clothing and other textile articles and rags)

The United Kingdom does not operate any ban on Brazilian textile and clothing imports of these products, but the European Community, in respect of the United Kingdom market, restricts imports in 13 MFA categories under the provisions of the bilateral agreement between the European Community and Brazil, negotiated under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent exports from the United Kingdom to Taiwan of garments, fabrics, textiles, and clothing, are limited by import restrictions.

Mr. Channon: United Kingdom exports of garments, fabrics, textiles and clothing to Taiwan are subject to no quantitative restrictions, although import licences are required. Such licences are in general readily available.

Aerosol Containers

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure that every aerosol container bears the words "Do not inhale" in relatively large letters.

Mr. Fletcher: No. I am afraid that although it would alert parents to the potential hazard, it would also serve to draw the attention of young people to the fact that the contents could be sniffed for intoxication.

Information Technology

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what part of his Department is currently charged with responsibility for work on co-ordination of information technology policy matters throughout Government; and whether there has been any recent change in arrangements for that work.

Mr. Pattie: I succeeded my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) last year as Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology.

Chrysoidine Dye

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has now received advice from the Minister

of Health relating to the link between chrysoidine dye and cancer in anglers; if he will now consider updating his warnings to all angling bodies on the dangers of the alleged carcinogenic qualities of chrysoidine dye; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I am still awaiting the advice of the Minister of Health, and I shall write to the right hon. Member when I have it.

Grants

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce a regionally preferential system of high tech grants to encourage the development of high tech-manufacturing firms in the assisted regions;

(2) what are the reasons for the difference in the level of grants under the support for innovation programme to the south-east region and the Yorkshire and Humberside region;

(3) why Yorkshire and Humberside region has not received any payment of grant under the micro electronics industry support programme, the fibre optics, and the flexible manufacturing support for innovation schemes;

(4) if he will substantially increase the level of assistance to Yorkshire and Humberside under the support for innovation schemes.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's programme of support for innovation operates nationwide. The Department responds to applications submitted to it and grants are offered to projects that meet the Department's criteria. Firms in Yorkshire and Humberside are as eligible as firms in other regions to apply for the assistance available.

Regional variations in the numbers of grants offered reflect variations in the numbers of suitable applications received. Between May 1982 and March 1985 the South East region accounted for 43 per cent. of the applications received and 43 per cent. of the offers made. The equivalent figures for Yorkshire and Humberside were 7 per cent. and 8 per cent. respectively.

As at 31 March 1985 no applications had been received from Yorkshire and Humberside under the first microelectronics support programme and only one under the second stage, subsequently withdrawn. £1·1 million had been offered to firms in Yorkshire and Humberside to support fibre optics projects and payments of £727,000 had been made. £4·4 million had been offered to support flexible manufacturing systems and robotics projects in Yorkshire and Humberside and payments of £955,000 had been made.

The long-term aim of the Department's support for innovation is that of wealth creation. To maximise this aspect it is important to support those projects which offer the best rate of return to the country. This can only be done on a national basis and accordingly I have no plans to introduce a regionally preferential system.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the outcome of the recent investigation into citizens band radio abuse in Southampton.

Mr. Butcher: My Department's radio investigation service has a routine and continuous programme of enforcement action against CB and other radio users who cause radio interference and evade licence requirements. However in May RIS staff carried out a concentrated campaign to counter CB licence evasion and abuse in the Southampton and Portsmouth areas. During the campaign they visited 307 households in these areas, some more than once. They issued warnings to 87 CB users in connection with licence evasion and licence abuse. Most of those warned took measures to correct their position. The RIS also interviewed 25 users and seized their CB equipment for the purpose of possible court proceedings. The full results of the campaign will emerge and be monitored over the next few months. This was one of a number of concentrated CB campaigns carried out by the RIS at this time.

EC (Trade Barriers)

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list by member country and sector of trade and commerce the barriers to trade between Great Britain and other countries in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Channon: There are in all member states a wide range of legal and administrative requirements which could be viewed as impeding free trade in goods and services. Individual firms' perceptions of which of these constitute barriers to trade vary considerably. Heads of Government at the European Council last month identified five categories where priority action should be taken to remove barriers to trade. These were:

—the removal of physical barriers to the free movement of goods within the Community.

—the removal of technical barriers to the free movement of goods within the Community (in particular the adoption of common or compatible standards for major new technologies in order to open up public purchasing and satisfy the needs of the economy).

—the creation of a free market in the financial services and transport sectors.

—the creation of full freedom of establishment for the professions.

—liberalisation of capital movement.

The European Commission also have identified some 300 measures where, in their view, action is necessary to remove barriers to trade. These are listed in the annex to their White Paper "Completing the Internal Market" published on 15 June, a copy of which is in the Library.

British Companies (Third World Income)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the income to British companies from the Third world over the last two years.

Mr. Channon: The available information relates to earnings on overseas direct investment by United Kingdom companies and their receipts from overseas Royalties and similar transactions from developing countries,* for 1982 and 1983, the latest two years available, and is as follows:

	£ million
1982	1,225·7
1983	1,340·7

The information is published in Business Monitor MA4.

* World excluding Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa and Eastern European centrally planned economies.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate how much in interest payments Britain and British companies received from the Third world from June to December 1984.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is not available.

Sumrie Clothes plc

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will institute an inquiry under the Companies Acts into the activities of Sumrie Clothes plc, Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Co-operatives

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will detail the provision being made for providing help and advice for co-operatives and for people wishing to set up co-operatives in 1986-87; and what provision is being made for the future funding of co-operative development agencies in the Greater London area presently funded by the Greater London council.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Tourism and Leisure (Report)

Mr. Howard asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects that the group set up under the chairmanship of the Minister without Portfolio to review obstacles to the development of tourism and leisure will report; and if the report will be published.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The group's report was published today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. The report outlines the major and increasing contribution which tourism and leisure are making to the economy and describes action which the Government are taking to remove impediments to the industry's further growth.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many European inspectors are at present operating in fishing; what is the establishment strength; what is the length of the annual holidays to which they are entitled; and what arrangements are made to cover such holidays absences.

Mr. MacGregor: The European Commission advise that:

(i) Ten inspectors are at present operating in the EC Fisheries Inspectorate following staff resignations. The Commission is taking steps to recruit replacements to bring the inspectorate up to its authorised establishment of 13; one of these is expected to take up his post in September 1985.

(ii) European inspectors receive the normal holiday entitlements of European civil servants, which depend upon several factors including grade and length of service;

(iii) Holiday absences are planned to ensure that an adequate team of inspectors is on duty to cope with the programme of visits and any emergencies which might arise.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to how many vessels have been taken out of fishing in *(a)* Grimsby, *(b)* Hull, *(c)* Fleetwood, *(d)* Aberdeen and *(e)* Peterhead since 1 January 1983.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is as follows:

Number of vessels taken out of fishing since 1 January 1983

	Number
Grimsby	24
Hull	25
Fleetwood	17
Aberdeen	30
Peterhead	14
Total	110

Whirling Disease

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fish farms are still affected by whirling disease, giving names and locations; what progress is being made towards eliminating this disease in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There are at present 44 fish farms in Great Britain on which there are grounds for believing that the causative agent of whirling disease *(Myxosoma cerebralis)* may be found. However, there may be other sites where *Myxosoma cerebralis* is also present at sub-clinical levels and has not been identified.

The known 44 sites are 40 of the 44 sites in Great Britain which I listed in my reply to the right hon. Member of 26 March 1984 at column *24*, excluding Mill Leat trout farm in Devon, Alderley trout farm in Gloucestershire, Test Valley Trout (Itchen Abbas) Ltd in Hampshire and Dalhounzie in Perthshire, and four additional sites:

Yorkshire water authority hatchery, Costa Beck, Pickering, North Yorkshire, Itchen Valley trout farm, Ladycroft, Near Alresford, Hampshire, Crystal Springs trout hatchery, Southend, Damerham, Fordingbridge, Hampshire, Chirk Fishery Co. Ltd, Chirk, Wrexham, Clwyd.

This occurrence of the disease has continued to be monitored in accordance with the policies announced in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on 27 February 1984 at column *2*.

Salmon

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many organisations have now been consulted regarding the introduction of a salmon tagging scheme to curb salmon poaching; what progress has been made; when he intends to introduce legislation on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: During the course of our examination of a possible salmon tagging scheme consultations have taken place with representatives of the water authorities, salmon farmers, processors, wholesalers, importers and retailers. Additionally I have met representatives of angling bodies, including the Salmon and Trout Association. As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 16 May, examination has revealed a number

of considerable difficulties and no decisions have yet been made. I shall make an announcement as soon as we have been able to reach a conclusion.

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received, and from which organisations, to ban drift netting for salmon off the Northumberland and North Yorkshire coastline; what message he has conveyed to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Following the issue in 1981 of our consultation paper on the Review of Inland and Coastal Fisheries in England and Wales, in which we discussed the future of the English North East coast salmon fishery, representations were received from the Association of Scottish District Salmon Fishery Boards, the Salmon and Trout Association and the Scottish Salmon Angling Federation calling for the drift net fishery to be banned or phased out. Subsequently I have received further representations from some of these organisations and also from the Atlantic Salmon Trust Ltd., the River Tweed Commissioners and the Esk District Salmon Fishery Board.

In the 1981 consultation paper we said that this fishery should neither be closed nor phased out and the organisations concerned have been told that no evidence has since been produced to cause us to modify that view. However, the management arrangements for the fishery are under review and I will announce our conclusions when the review is completed.

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will now consider banning the use of drift nets and the use of nylon mono-filament gill nets in salmon fishing within the estuaries of British salmon rivers and the eastern coastline; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The use of drift nets and nylon monofilament gill nets for salmon fishing in English estuaries and coastal waters is strictly regulated by the water authorities. The management arrangements for the North East English drift net fishery are under review, as I have explained in reply to the right hon. Gentleman's question on that subject today. In addition the Ministry's directorate of fisheries research is keeping the effect of monofilament nets under review, but there has been no evidence so far that they cause more damage to fish escaping from them than multi-filament nets and I have no intention at present of introducing a general ban.

Pigs

Mr. Latham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from pig farmers regarding financial assistance to the pig disease eradication fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Representations continue to be received about the cost of the Aujeszky's disease control and eradication scheme. I gave a full reply last month to the points made by the Agriculture Committee. Subsequently, I confirmed at a meeting with representatives of PDEF that the Government could not agree to making a subvention from central funds towards the cost of the scheme.

EMPLOYMENT

Skillcentre Instructors

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many skillcentre instructors are being made redundant or having to take early retirement because of skillcentre closures; and what financial arrangements are being made for such instructors.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No compulsory redundancies are expected amongst skillcentre instructors. Some instructors over the age of 60 will however be compulsorily retired. The number is not yet known and will depend upon how many instructors leave voluntarily.

The financial arrangements which will apply to staff retiring at 60 or over are embodied in the principal civil service pension scheme (PCSPS) and a shortened version of this document is held in the Library.

Preferred Suppliers Schemes

Mr. Neale asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the development by public sector bodies of preferred suppliers schemes comparable with the priority suppliers scheme contained in Treasury guidelines to Exchequer Departments.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to encourage local authorities and other public bodies to support and implement arrangements for giving preference towards purchasing goods and services from sheltered workshops and other priority suppliers along lines similar to those contained in the Treasury guidelines "Placing of Government Contracts with Non Profit Making Bodies" HQR 10.79.

The elements of such arrangements are contained in the priority suppliers directory, published by the Manpower Services Commission. A copy is in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons in Norfolk are currently included in the unemployment statistics published on 4 July; and how many of these persons are currently registered for work at *(a)* jobcentres and *(b)* careers offices.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 13 June 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in Norfolk was 33,238. On the same date 755 unemployed non claimant school leavers under 18 were counted at careers offices in Norfolk. On 7 June there were 8,980 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the county. However this total is likely to represent only a small proportion of all unemployed jobseekers in the area who are actively looking for work. Jobseekers over 18 are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit nor is it necessary to register for unemployment to use the jobcentre. Many unemployed jobseekers find work, without registering, through the jobcentre's self-service vacancy display.

Jobseekers under 18 years of age are required to register at either a jobcentre or a careers office. According to administrative returns rendered by careers offices in Norfolk there were 2,611 unemployed young people registered at careers offices, on 13 June 1985.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the persons who are currently registered for work at jobcentres are *(a)* unemployed persons and *(b)* persons already in employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether any analysis is now available as a result of the limited analysis made from the 1983 labour force survey providing figures for unemployed construction workers.

Mr. Alan Clark: Results from the labour force surveys for 1983 and 1984 are now available. These indicate that in the spring of 1983 there were about 257,000 persons in Great Britain who had had a job within the last three years and whose previous job had been in the construction industry who were without a paid job and seeking work. The corresponding estimate from the 1984 survey was 233,000.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created in each of the last five years; how this compares with other European Economic Community countries; and if he will make a statement as to the trend.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about numbers of new jobs created is not available from official statistics, but information on net changes in civilian employment is available. The following table gives these changes for the United Kingdom and other European Community countries for each of the last five years. It shows that the rise in employment in the Community between 1983 and 1984 was the first since 1980. This rise was more than accounted for by employment growth in the United Kingdom.

Changes in civilian employment

Thousand

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84**
United Kingdom	−78	−994	−419	+296	+380
Germany (FR)	+264	−205	−466	−431	−54
France	+9	−158	+15	−117	−219
Italy	+285	+72	−81	+15	+104
Netherlands	+152	+32	−21	−85	+3
Belgium	−1	−79	−49	−36	+11
Luxembourg	+2	—	—	—	+1
Ireland	+12	−10	+2	−22	−15
Denmark	−41	−22	−1	+21	+39
Greece	+45	+173	†−38	†−17	†−8
EC Total	+648	−1,191	−1,057	−404	+261

Notes:
* Figures relate to total employment (ie including Armed Forces).
† Estimated by the Statistical Office of the European Communities.
Source: "Employment Gazette" for UK; SOEC "Employment and Unemployment" for other EC countries.

Public Statutory Bodies (Worker Representatives)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will permit worker representatives on public statutory bodies to be nominated by independent trade unions and others as well as the Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Workers' representatives are already nominated to some of those public bodies to which this Department makes appointments by workers' organisations not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, where this is justified by the number of appointments to be made.

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend section 28 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 relating to restrictions on disclosure of information.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have asked the Health and Safety Commission to advise whether the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 present any obstacles to the disclosure of information the public may reasonably need. In March the Commission published a discussion document "Access to health and safety information by members of the public" and will be giving its advice when it has studied the responses to the document. On the basis of that advice we shall consider the need for the Act to be amended.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is *(a)* the total of redundancy payments made to employees by their employers, or direct from the redundancy fund, under the terms of the Employment Protection Act and *(b)* the amounts paid from the redundancy fund in rebates to employers and direct payments to employees, in 1981 and the current year, to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information for the past four years and the first quarter of 1985 is as follows:

	No. of statutory redundancy payments	*Amount paid from Redundancy Fund £000*
1981	809,639	415,671
1982	634,818	370,195

	No. of statutory redundancy payments	Amount paid from Redundancy Fund £000
1983	608,440	397,620
1984	425,178	300,059
*1985	103,161	77,548

* First quarter.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will ask the Chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to issue a public statement as to the precise circumstances in which the enterprise allowance scheme can be offered to persons seeking to engage in franchises; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The eligibility criteria for the enterprise allowance scheme are set out in "Guide to the Enterprise Allowance Scheme" and further advice on any points of interpretation can be obtained from jobcentres, which administer the scheme. The scheme is designed to help unemployed people set up their own businesses and not to support the extension of an existing enterprise. Accordingly, amongst eligibility conditions are requirements that the businesses established under the scheme should be new and independent. In many franchise arrangements under which the franchisor retains control of important aspects of the business such as sources of supplies, prices, market area, these conditions are not fully satisfied, although arrangements described as franchises are not by definition excluded.

Youth Training Schemes

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the extra funds which he promised to make available for encouraging extended periods of training to school leavers under the youth training scheme will be used to promote further schemes in the west midlands region.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment on what criteria the Manpower Services Commission judge training centres and facilities and training officers provided by companies and organisations as being suitable for running youth training schemes; and if he will list the number of companies and organisations which the Manpower Services Commission have adjudged as inadequate for meeting the requirements of running these programmes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: All organisations intending to operate youth training scheme programmes are required to submit detailed proposals to the Manpower Services Commission showing how they will meet the requirements of the scheme. These proposals are then considered for approval by the Manpower Services Commission and the area manpower boards. Information on the number of schemes not approved is not available centrally.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment on what factors he based the sum of £1 billion as being a suitable figure for providing resources to extend the youth training scheme from one to two years; and what proportion of that figure he expects to be made up from receipts from the European Social Fund and from non-payment of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In addition to the £800 million a year which it is spending on the present scheme, the Government is making an extra £900 million gross available for the two-year youth training scheme in 1987-88. Savings on benefit payments from the introduction of the new scheme are estimated at £150 million for that year. Receipts from the European Social Fund vary and cannot be predicted accurately.

Mr. Hamerck asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his most recent estimate of the proportion of B1 places on youth training schemes taken up in 1984-85; and what target figure the Government proposes for similar courses in 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985, c. 297]: It is estimated that at the end of the 1984-85 year, in March 1985, over 70 per cent. of approved mode B1 places were occupied nationally and we expect a similar level to be reached in 1985-86.

Wages Councils

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now list the advantages and disadvantages he took into account when reaching his decision to retain in existence the wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not possible to list comprehensively all the considerations taken into account. The decision was influenced by the weight of opinion in favour of reform expressed in employers' responses to the consultative paper on wages councils.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those organisations which responded to the consultative paper on the future of wages councils, indicating for each whether they favoured (i) retention, (ii) reform, or (iii) abolition of the councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by wages council (i) the minimum wage rates at each age under 21 years old, giving hourly and weekly figures and (ii) the minimum annual holiday for under 21-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is given in the orders made by wages councils. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs he estimates will be created by the proposal to reform the wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect these reforms to create employment opportunities but there are obvious difficulties in forecasting the number which will eventually be created.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the costs to businesses of compliance with the provisions of wages councils for each area covered.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not possible to make such an estimate.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by wages council, the number of young workers to be affected by the changes proposed by him on 16 July.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, for each year since 1979, at current and 1985 prices, the cost of administering the wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 27 November 1984 at column 442. I shall write to the hon. Member concerning the other information requested and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, for each year since 1974, the number of wages inspectors, and for each year the average length of time between inspections for establishments covered by wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The wages inspectorate's statistics are expressed in terms of the percentage of establishments checked each year. On that basis the following is the information requested.

	Number of wage inspectors in post	*Per cent. of register checked*
1974	130	10·0
1975	128	9·6
1976	125	8·8
1977	132	8·8
1978	143	10·1
1979	158	13·5
1980	155	12·7
1981	117·5	9·3
1982	116·0	10·1
1983	114·0	10·9
1984	113·0	10·8
July 1985	120·0	*

* NA

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will specify those existing functions and duties of wages councils which it is his policy to abolish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement on 17 July about the Government's intentions on the future of wages councils.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the evidence upon which he based his statement of 17 July, *Official Report*, column 327, regarding the alleged burdens placed upon business by the powers of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The evidence lies in the size and complexity of wages council orders and the comments of employers on the problems these present.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the cases referred to him in the House, *Official Report*, 17 July, column 330, of dismissal of young people, that have been reported to his Department in each of the last 12 months, as a result of the operation of minimum wage levels determined by wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of such cases have been referred to in responses to the consultative paper, letters to Ministers and reports from wages inspectors.

Unemployed People

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he has any proposals for providing unemployed people with advice and information through centres for the unemployed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many centres for the unemployed are currently funded by the Manpower Services Commission; and if he will make a statement on his proposals to provide further help and assistance to unemployed people.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission currently funds 79 community programme projects providing advice and information through centres for the unemployed. The additional help to be provided for unemployed people was detailed by my right hon. Friend in the debate on the Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation on 21 March at columns 1024-1026 and in his statement on youth training on 1 July at column 24.

ILO Convention No. 26

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment on what precise date Her Majesty's Government intends to denatify International Labour Organisation convention no. 26.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Her Majesty's Government intends to communicate the instrument of denunciation to the Director General of the International Labour Office for registration on 25 July 1985. The denunciation will become effective one year after it is registered.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those countries which are presently signatories to the International Labour Organisation convention no. 26; and if he will indicate which, other than the United Kingdom, is considering denatification.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member with a list of the 97 countries out of a total of 151 member states of the International Labour Organisation who have ratified convention no. 26 and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Since no advance notice of denunciation of international labour conventions has to be given it is not possible to say whether other member states are considering denatification of convention no. 26.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the minimum wage rates of those Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries who are also signatories to the International Labour Organisation convention no. 26.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details on the level of minimum wage rates in the European countries are given in an article in *European Industrial Relations Review*, No. 119, December 1983, pages 16 to 21. The International Labour

Office report "Minimum Wage Fixing" by Gerald Starr, provides details for all countries in appendix 1, and more recent information for some countries is given in "Policies against low pay, an international perspective", published by the Policy Studies Institute (1984). These publications are available in the Library.

Young People's Wages

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the evidence on which he bases his conclusion that a reduction in young people's wages, relative to adult wages, would create additional new jobs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 21 February 1985 at column *516*.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment by what percentage young people's wages, for boys and for girls, have fallen relative to adult rates since May 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 11 June 1985 at column *405*, for the position to April 1984. Information for April 1985 will be available later this year.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has, by region, as to the average level of wages for 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20-year-olds; and what is the level of unemployment for these age groups, by region.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information covering both average earnings and the number of unemployed claimants by region for the individual ages requested is not available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Mason asked the Lord Privy Seal how many reports of Select Committees, excluding the Public Accounts Committee, have been issued since 1979; how many have been debated, naming the titles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The number of reports, other than special reports, of Select Committees, excluding the Public Accounts Committee, the Committee and Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Committee on European Legislation etc., published since 1979 is 359. In addition the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments has made 115 reports, the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments 194, and the Select Committee on European Legislation, and its predecessor, the Select Committee on European Secondary Legislation, 189.

Select Committee reports debated on motion in the House and referred to on the Order Paper as being relevant to debate in the House from October 1979 to April 1985 are listed in the appendix to the first report of the Liaison Committee on The Select Committee System, HC No. 363.

In addition, the following Select Committee reports, excluding those from the Public Accounts Committee, have been debated in the House or referred to on the Order Paper as being relevant to debate since April:

Debated on Motion:

Fifth Report from the Employment Committee on Wages Councils.

Referred to on the Order Paper as relevant to debate:

First Report from the Defence Committee on The Use of Merchant Shipping for Defence Purposes.

Third Report from the Defence Committee on Defence Commitments and Resources and the Defence Estimates 1985-86.

Third Report from the Environment Committee on the Department of Environment's Main Estimates 1985-86.

Fourth Report from the Environment Committee on the Property Services Agency Main Estimates, 1985-86.

First Report from the House of Commons (Services) Committee on Information Technology: Members' Requirements.

Second Report from the House of Commons (Services) Committee on Members' staff: Pressure on Accommodation and Facilities.

Second Report from the Social Services Committee on Community Care.

Third Report from Trade and Industry Committee on Trade with China.

Mr. Mason asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the Select Committee reports, excepting those of the Public Accounts Committee, whose recommendations have been accepted in full by Her Majesty's Government since 1979.

Mr. Biffen: Select Committee reports usually contain a number of recommendations, though that is not their only purpose. Many such recommendations have been accepted in full, but to analyse all reports, the Government replies to them and subsequent actions in the way requested would occasion undue expense.

Mr. Mason asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will give the annual figures of staff, full-time and part-time, serving the Select Committees since 1979 and the annual cost of manning these committees.

Mr. Biffen: The number of staff serving each Select Committee since 1979 is as follows, but in many cases Committee work comprises less than half the duties of the staff concerned:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Agriculture	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Defence	4·0	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5
Education, Science and Arts	4·0	4·0	4·0	5·0	5·0	4·0
Employment	2·5	2·5	2·5	2·5	2·5	2·5
Energy	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	4·0	4·0
Environment	3·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	5·0	5·0
European Legislation	8·0	8·0	8·0	8·0	8·0	8·0
Foreign Affairs	4·0	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5
Home Affairs	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0
House of Commons (Services)	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0
Members' Interests*	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Privileges	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Procedure	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Public Accounts	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Scottish Affairs	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Social Services	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0
Sound Broadcasting	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0
Trade and Industry	5·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0
Transport	3·0	3·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	4·0
Treasury and Civil Service	5·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	7·0	6·0
Welsh Affairs	3·0	3·0	4·0	4·0	4·0	3·0

* Of whom 2 are part-time.

In addition, in each of these years, there have been 10 members of staff (of whom one was part-time) the greater part of whose duties was to service Select Committees generally.

For the reason given in the answer to the right hon. Gentleman of 23 January 1985 (*Hansard*, column 456), the cost attributable to manning these Committees in each of these years could not be estimated without undue expense.

Mr. Boyes asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the places visited,

the number of hon. Members travelling, and the cost of the air fare for each hon. Member for the latest visit by each Select Committee.

Mr. Biffen: The information is as follows:

Committee	*Places visited*	*Number of Members travelling*	*Cost per Member of air fare* £*
Agriculture	Paris and Bonn	5	148
Defence	Norway and Sweden	8	432
Employment	New Zealand (Auckland and Wellington) and Australia (Sydney and Melbourne)	7	1,805
Energy	Hague	7	121
Environment	Canada and United States (Toronto, Winnipeg, Richland, Seattle, Washington DC, Buffalo NY, Niagara)	7	1,611
European Legislation	Athens	10	420
Foreign Affairs	Moscow, Suzdal Vladimir	11	522
Home Affairs	United States of America	8	930
House of Commons (Services)	Washington, Ottawa, Montreal	5	1,153
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration	Wellington, Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne	5	1,874
Public Accounts	Washington	10	916
Scottish Affairs	Norway	7	450
Social Services	Washington, Boston, Chicago, Nebraska, and California	6	1,778
Trade and Industry	China	10	993
Transport	Esbjerg (Denmark) and Hamburg	7	102
Treasury and Civil Service Sub-Committee	Washington and New York	9	508
	Brussels	4	129
Welsh Affairs	Republic of Ireland	7	146

*Estimated where necessary.

Statutory Instruments (Procedure)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Lord Privy Seal how often and when the second part of Standing Order 3(1)(*b*) relating to the putting of the question on motions on statutory instruments has been applied since 1960.

Mr. Biffen: Twice: on 20 December 1972 and 16 February 1983.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Aid

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the total resources available under the urban aid programme for 1984-85 and 1983-84; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In each of the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 the cash resources made available for the urban programme in England were £348 million. The Government remain committed to tackling the special problems of the inner cities, and will continue to seek to apply the resources available for this purpose in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

Thamesmead

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects consultations to begin on the future control of Thamesmead.

Sir George Young: In the late summer.

River Mersey

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the projects that are part of the campaign to clean up the Mersey river and estuary and land alongside the water courses of the Mersey basin, indicating their scale, when they are to be completed, and the organisation responsible and their cost.

Mr. Waldegrave: The River Mersey Initiative, to which the hon. Member's question refers, is a long-term campaign which could take as much as 25 years because of the severe problems that have to be tackled. For the whole campaign, therefore, only broad estimates are possible. The North West water authority has estimated the total costs of the water quality side of the task at up to £2·5 billion. The work on the landward side will be carried out by the public, private and voluntary sectors between them; and its total value is estimated at around £1·5 billion. The detailed scheduling of projects, by the water authority and the local authorities, will be a continuous process related to successive stages of the campaign.

Housing Condition Survey

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the next housing condition survey for England and Wales to be published.

Mr. Gow: The next housing condition surveys, to be carried out separately for England and Wales, will be undertaken in 1986 and we intend to publish the results as soon as possible.

Green Belt

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the preservation of the green belt in Hertfordshire and the other home counties in the light of motorway developments such as the M25 London orbital route.

Mr. Macfarlane: The guidance in March 1984 to local authorities in the south-east on the M25 and land-use

planning in the south-east made clear that the general presumption against development in the green belt is not affected by the M25 and that there should continue to be the strongest restraint on development there.

Gloucester Place Fire (Inquest Report)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take following representations he has received from the coroner who conducted the inquest into the deaths of Mrs. Karim and her two children at 46 Gloucester Place, London W1.

Sir George Young: When the results of the Department's research on houses in multiple occupation are available, my right hon. Friend will consider whether further measures are necessary, including any for means of escape from fire. In doing so, my right hon. Friend will have the coroner's representations very much in mind. Following consolidation of the Housing Acts, my right hon. Friend proposes to issue guidance to local authorities on their wide-ranging powers for houses in multiple occupation. My right hon. Friend will consider whether, in the light of the tragic fire at 46 Gloucester Place, it is necessary to re-emphasise the advice in DOE circular 25/82 about the need for consultations between authorities.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has received a report from Her Majesty's coroner for Westminister following the inquest into the fire at Gloucester Place, Marylebone, in which a mother and two children died last November; what recommendations to him are contained in Her Majesty's coroner's report; whether he will place a copy in the Library; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he is taking in response to the representations he has received from the city of Westminister concerning the need for legislation to require fire safety precautions in houses in multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I have given to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) today. I have received representations in the form of a letter from the coroner, which I am studying. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with the agreement of the coroner, will place a copy of the coroner's representations in the Library. As to the representations made by the city of Westminister, I refer my hon. Friend to the letters dated 23 April and 17 June which he has received from my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction.

Onshore Oil Exploration

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the places throughout the United Kingdom in relation to onshore oil exploration within the last two years where planning permission *(a)* has been sought, *(b)* has been obtained and *(c)* has been refused in instances where planning permission has been granted (1) work has commenced, (2) work has not commenced and (3) work has been completed; and if he will list those locations where oil has been found (i) in commercial quantities and (ii) in non-commercial quantities.

Mr. Macfarlane: Details of planning applications relating to onshore oil exploration submitted to and determined by local planning authorities are not collected centrally. Within the last two years one planning appeal has been determined following refusal of permission on an application to drill an exploratory well. On 26 June 1985, Conoco (UK) Limited was given planning permission for this well at Normandy, Surrey. One condition of the permission is that work on this shall begin within five years. Details of company work programmes and results of exploration activity are not required by my Department.

Salford

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider making a special grant in 1985-86 to Salford district council from the surplus of £400 million which will accrue from the penalties imposed by his Department on local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Secretary of State has no power to redistribute grant holdback due to the overspending of targets.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the effect of the change in the multiplier factor in the current year on payment by his Department to Salford city council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Had the multiplier remained at the 1984-85 level, Salford would have received £4,481,000 more grant.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* his conclusions following his discussions with elected representatives and officers of Salford city council regarding the current rate support grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, who met a delegation from Salford on 14 March, concluded that no change should be made in the city council's multiplier.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the findings and recommendations of the report on, A Case for a Special Grant of £6 million, for Salford district council, a copy of which has been sent to him by Mr. Keith Hirst; if he will publish in the *Official Report* his reply; if there is any action he will now be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall send the hon. Member a copy of my Department's reply in due course.

Block Grant

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider the working of the multiplier factor as used in calculating the block grant for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are not persuaded there is a case for reworking the multiplier.

"Local Authority Housing Repairs and Maintenance Needs"

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the

conclusions of the Royal Institute of British Architects' publication "Local Authority Housing Repair and Maintenance Needs", a copy of which he has received, which relates to matters within his responsibility.

Sir George Young: I read this report with great interest.

My Department is now processing local authorities' responses to our own recent inquiry into the repair and improvement needs of local authority housing stock; we hope that first results will be available by the end of this month. It will be useful to compare RIBA's findings with our own.

Baby Seal Products

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the expiry on 30 September of the European ban on the import of baby seal products.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) on 9 July, at column *395*. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had previously made clear our support for an extension of the ban on conservation grounds in her reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 21 June, at column *230*.

I hope that agreement will be reached soon in the European Council on an extension of the ban.

Planning Permission

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to make potential damage to neighbouring property a reason for refusing planning permission.

Mr. Macfarlane: I assume that my hon. Friend has in mind physical damage resulting from building operations or other activities on neighbouring land. Any landowner whose property is damaged by another's actions has means of redress through the courts and it is unnecessary to make the matter one for planning control. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind I would be glad to look at it.

System-built Housing

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department *(a)* has conducted and *(b)* is conducting, into the defects of post-war system-built housing.

Mr. Gow: The Building Research Establishment has a continuing role in identifying lessons to be learnt from problems found in housing, and other types of buildings.

The BRE has carried out a major investigation of prefabricated reinforced concrete houses designed before 1960 and has published several reports. It has also reported on the Smith system.

The BRE is now engaged in a programme of research into large panel systems of construction and has published a report on Ronan Point and other Taylor Woodrow/Anglian buildings. BRE has begun work aimed at producing advice on the inspection, maintenance and, where necessary, repair of steel framed houses.

Anglian Water Authority

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the external financing limits of the Anglian water authority are adequate to enable the water and sewage infrastructure necessary to support the projected growth in housing and commercial developments to be provided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: Yes. Anglian Water's 1985-86 external financing limit was set taking into account the authority's 1984 plan estimates of the investment needed to meet new demand, and later estimates are lower. The 1986-87 external financing limit will not be settled before late this autumn.

Water Authorities

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which water authorities have applied for derogations in respect of organochlorines under the European Commission directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/778/EEC); in respect of each authority, what were the sources of the organochlorines which give rise to the application for these derogations; and whether he intends to permit these derogations.

Mr. Macfarlane: I have received five applications from Anglian water authority, two from Thames water authority and one each from the Mid Kent and the Sunderland and South Shields water companies for derogations under the directive in respect of chlorine containing trihalomethanes, a group of organochlorine compounds covered by parameter 32 of the directive. These organochlorine compounds arise as a result of reaction between organic compounds naturally present in the source water and chlorine which is added to ensure that the water supplied is free from harmful bacteria. After taking medical advice, I have granted these derogation applications and I shall review them in three years.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the membership of the Nature Conservancy Council's advisory committees for England, Wales and Scotland; and if he will indicate the profession or occupation of the members and the date of their retirement from the committee.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

Name	*Profession/Occupation*	*Appointment Expires*
Advisory Committee for England		
Mr. P. G. Brackley	Industry	31 May 1986
Mr. P. Conder	Ornithologist	29 November 1986
Dr. B. Green	Ecologist	29 November 1986

Name	Profession/Occupation	Appointment Expires
Mr. E. D. Le Cren	Freshwater biologist	31 May 1986
Mr. W. E. Lane	Lawyer	31 March 1986
Professor T. O'Riordan	Professor of Environmental Studies	31 May 1987
Mr. K. Steele	Farmer	29 November 1986
Mr. J. M. Stratton	Farmer	31 May 1987
Mr. L. C. Troup	Forester	31 May 1987
Advisory Committee for Wales		
Professor G. Owen	Marine scientist; Principal, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth	31 March 1988
Professor D. Q. Bowen	Geographer	31 May 1987
Mrs. E. M. Colwyn-Fuchs	Architect	28 February 1987
Mr. J. Elias	Director, Operational Planning, Welsh Development Agency	31 May 1986
Mr. J. M. Harrop	Farmer	31 May 1987
Dr. W. R. Howells	Director of Scientific Studies, Welsh Water Authority	31 May 1986
Advisory Committee for Scotland		
Mr. R. Allison	Farmer	31 May 1986
Dr. J. Burnett	Botanist	31 May 1987
Mr. R. W. G. Cameron	Architect/planner	31 May 1989
Mr. W. J. Christie	Forester/hill farmer	31 May 1986
Mr. J. C. Compton	Landowner/farmer	31 May 1987
Professor R. I. Currie	Marine biologist	31 May 1989
Professor W. W. Fletcher	Biologist	31 May 1986
Mr. D. J. Mackay	Industry and crofting	31 May 1986
Professor A. W. G. Manning	Zoologist	31 May 1989
Professor I. Parsons	Geologist	31 May 1989
Professor W. Ritchie	Geographer	31 May 1986
Mr. J. Scott	Landowner/farmer	31 May 1987
Professor T. C. Smout	Historian	31 May 1989
Miss V. M. Thom	Author/ornithologist	31 May 1989

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the size of the Nature Conservancy Council budgets to cover *(a)* land purchase by voluntary bodies, *(b)* land management, education and promotion by voluntary bodies and *(c)* the small grants programme; and what limits upon maximum or minimum levels of grant or support have been set by him or his Department for each of the above categories.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985]: The figures are:

(a) £900,000
(b) £650,000
(c) £180,000

Neither I nor the Department have set maximum or minimum levels of grant, though in certain cases the Department's prior approval is required.

Housing (Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the housing investment programme allocation made to the city of Manchester for 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 at constant prices.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

LECA Houses

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now ready to publish the results of the LECA plan prefrabricated houses investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The LECA plan system is one of a number under investigation by the Building Research Establishment as part of its programme of research into large panel systems of construction. Reports on different aspects of this research will be published in due course, but there will not necessarily be a separate report on the LECA plan.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those who have submitted views on competition in the provision of local authority services; and if he will indicate in each case whether they are in favour or against such a proposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall arrange for the list of respondents to be published in the *Official Report* as soon as possible. The proposals do not, however, lend themselves to a simplistic response analysis of the sort requested. I shall consider how best to make the results of consultation available to the House.

Houses (Improvement for Sale Schemes)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the grant levels for improvement for sale schemes being undertaken by local authorities.

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding grant levels for local authority improvement for sale schemes.

Sir George Young: Two local authorities have requested an increase in the limit for Exchequer contributions towards local authority improvement for sale schemes. This issue was also raised by the Association of District Councils at the meeting of the Housing Consultative Council on 10 June.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether Interaction or any of its subsidiaries is receiving either capital or revenue funding from the London Docklands Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps the London Docklands Development Corporation has taken to ensure that the design of houses on London Docklands Development-owned land contains provisions for the disabled;

(3) what percentage of houses on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land *(a)* represent transfers to households who were previously on other London Docklands Development Corporation-owned sites and *(b)* are owned by the second or subsequent purchasers of the house;

(4) what steps the London Docklands Development Corporation intends to take to ensure that the composition of private housing estates on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land reflects the multicultural nature of London;

(5) what training programmes are used within the London Docklands Development Corporation to create awareness of racism and sexism;

(6) whether the London Docklands Development Corporation requires clauses in its contracts of employment to specify that racial and sexual harassment at work is a disciplinary issue;

(7) what arrangements exist for advertising posts in the London Docklands Development Corporation; and which newspapers, including black and ethnic minority newspapers, are used to place advertisements;

(8) how many advisers the London Docklands Development Corporation employs with a specific knowledge of relevant employment and equal opportunity legislation;

(9) how many people with disabilities are employed by the London Docklands Development Corporation; and at what grades;

(10) how many women are employed by the London Docklands Development Corporation; and at what grades.

Sir George Young: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of permanent staff directly employed by the London Docklands Development Corporation as at 31 March 1982, 31 March 1983, 31 March 1984 and 31 March 1985.

Sir George Young: The total number of permanent staff employed by the LDDC were:

	Number
At 31 March 1982	69
At 31 March 1983	74
At 31 March 1984	92
At 31 March 1985	90

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land have been transferred to households from the black or ethnic minority communities.

Sir George Young: This information is not collected.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there is provision for both maternity and paternity leave within the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir George Young: It is the corporation's policy to provide maternity leave. Paternity leave is not generally available, but is considered under the broader definition of compassionate leave.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether personnel in the London Docklands Development Corporation are specifically employed to shortlist and appoint staff.

Sir George Young: Yes.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for providing additional moneys under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the London borough councils in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future funding of organisations funded under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 by the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties which have received his approval for funding in 1985-86 under his powers in section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Section 137 expenditure by the GLC is discretionary expenditure, and it is for borough councils, and other successor bodies where appropriate, to decide whether to give support to organisations which the GLC has grant-aided under this power. Where such bodies are voluntary organisations, the Government have provided powers for boroughs to support them under a collective scheme. In addition, there is a programme of central Government grant-aid for individual boroughs taking over grants to voluntary organisations.

Approval of GLC section 137 expenditure in 1985-86 by the Secretary of State under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 carries with it no implied view about the desirability or otherwise of such expenditure in that or subsequent years.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the future of those organisations presently funded partly by the Greater London council and partly by the Government's urban programme;

(2) whether the Government plan to provide the additional resources to those organisations which are currently funded under the urban programme and who receive part funding from the Greater London council.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Where an organisation receives urban programme funding through the GLC, and this funding is due to continue beyond 31 March 1986, the Secretary of State will make the urban programme grant available to the successor borough. The urban programme grant will then continue until its expiry date, after which it will, if necessary, be considered for possible renewal.

Where, in addition to urban programme funding, either through the GLC or a borough, an organisation is receiving

support from the GLC's main programmes, it will look to the appropriate borough council to replace that element of its funding. Inherited expenditure of this type which is not eligible for UP support will be eligible for support under the transitional grant arrangements.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for the funding of recording studios providing training for young black people in the inner city area, presently funded by the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: Responsibility for funding voluntary organisations currently funded by the GLC will pass to the London boroughs, individually and collectively. The Government have taken a number of steps, including transitional grant support to boroughs, to help the boroughs take on this role. To the extent that recording studios providing training are voluntary organisations, they will fall within this arrangement. Commercial organisations providing training may also be able to obtain support from a borough council, or may be eligible for MSC support.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many permanent local residents were employed in the construction of the Falkland Islands airport; and what was the total number employed in the construction of the airport.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring up to date the answer of 1 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *330-31*, concerning the Exchequer contribution to local government expenditure at settlement and outturn and if he will estimate the cost in the current financial year if the outturn reaches 65 per cent.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985]: Following is the available information:

Aggregate Exchequer Grant as a Percentage of Relevant Expenditure (England)

	At Settlement	*At Outturn/ Budget*
1981-82	59·1	54·9
1982-83	56·1	51·7
1983-84	52·8	49·8
1984-85	51·9	48·3
1985-86	48·7	45·9

Source: Latest Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report for each year.
Note: Outturn/Budget percentages are affected by Holdback of block grant.

Because block grant is cash limited, for AEG to reach 65 per cent. of outturn, local authority outturn relevant expenditure would have to be reduced by a massive amount. The effect of this upon grants paid by central Government would depend upon the resulting specific grants and holdback.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Foreign Policy Statements

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all joint EC foreign policy statements since June 1979; and whether copies of all such statements are placed in the Library.

Mr. Rifkind: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend on 26 June to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) and my reply on 15 July to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). Copies of statements made in recent years were placed in the Library when they were issued.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH

North Korea

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with North Korea.

Mr. Luce: We do not recognise North Korea as a state and have no diplomatic relations with the authorities there.

Ugandan Asians

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the state of progress in the various compensation and repossession claims outstanding since the expulsion of Ugandan Asians from Uganda in the early 1970s; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 22 May.

Antarctic (Conservation Areas)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the proposals for 26 new conservation areas in the Antarctic by the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Renton: We are aware of this initiative but have not yet received the Scientific Committee's detailed proposals. While we accept the general principle behind them, we shall need to study the proposed management plans for each conservation site before deciding whether to support them. Eight of the sites proposed by the committee lie outside the Antarctic treaty area and are the concern of the French authorities.

GCHQ, Cheltenham

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to take disciplinary action against staff at Government Communications Headquarters, Cheltenham, who have rejoined their unions until the conclusion of discussions on the subject between union leaders and the Cabinet Secretary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: On 9 May the general secretaries of the Civil Service trade unions made representations to the Secretary of the Cabinet about members of staff at

Government communications headquarters who notified management that they had joined or rejoined a union contrary to the undertaking they had previously given. The Secretary of the Cabinet agreed to consider their representations and that in the meantime no action would be taken against those concerned.

PLO (Jordan)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's ambassador in Amman has reported to him on the address in Jordan on 9 July by Khalil Al-Wazir to the armed men of the Palestine Liberation Organisation expelled to Jordan from Lebanon by Syria calling for armed confrontation with Israel; and whether any message has been conveyed to King Hussein about armed guerrillas being permitted to be based in Jordan.

Mr. Luce: No.

Chile

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have invited, or intend to invite, further Chilean Government officials to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: We have normal diplomatic relations with Chile. It follows that we should have regular contacts with Chilean officials.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government intend to take regarding the case of Pedro Fernandez Lembach now that the Chilean authorities have said that they will not consider an application for his sentence to be commuted to one of exile.

Mr. Renton: As he is a Chilean national we have no formal standing to intervene on Sr. Lembach's behalf with the Chilean authorities, but Her Majesty's ambassador will continue to remind them of our willingness to grant Sr. Fernandez Lembach a visa to enter the United Kingdom in the event that they should decide to commute his sentence to one of exile.

Baby Seal Products

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Danish Government about the renewal of the European ban on the import of baby seal products.

Mr. Rifkind: The Community is currently considering proposals put forward by the Commission for an indefinite extension of the European Community ban on imports of baby seal products which expires on 30 September. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear our support for an extension of the ban on conservation grounds in her reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 21 June. This position was placed on record by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Bristol West (Mr. Waldegrave) at the 28 June Environment Council, at which Denmark was of course represented.

SCOTLAND

Legal Services

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the recommendations for change made by the last Royal Commission on legal services in Scotland have been implemented to date.

Mr. Ancram: The report of the Royal Commission contained over 200 recommendations, many of which did not call for Government action. The Government have already taken and announced decisions on many of the recommendations addressed to them and will make any further announcement on matters covered by the report in due course.

Glasgow Housing

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received from Glasgow district council a registration scheme under section 100 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966; and when he hopes to announce his decision.

Mr. Ancram: No formal registration has been received. However, as I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member on 1 July 1985, at column *24*, my officials are currently considering proposals for a registration scheme submitted informally by Glasgow district council. It is hoped to send a response in the near future.

Salmon

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now completed all his consultations in Scotland on a salmon tagging scheme to curb salmon poaching; what organisations have offered resistance; whether he is able to report progress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The consultations have been completed. Several difficulties have been identified in connection with the tagging of imports and farmed salmon, and the control and security of tags. The main opposition to tagging in Scotland has come from fish farmers who are concerned about the disruptive effect of tagging on their activities, and from organisations representative of anglers who regard tagging as an unnecessary imposition. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State is still considering this issue, along with other Fisheries Ministers.

Home Improvement Grants

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the precise sums made available for house improvement grants by the Government for each of the last 20 years to date in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Lothian region, giving separate figures for each category and year.

Mr. Ancram: Housing authorities are not given specific allocations for capital expenditure on house improvement grants. Since 1978-79, when the system of block capital allocations for housing was introduced, expenditure on house improvement grants has formed a major share of the non-HRA block, which also covers lending for house purchase (other than to council tenants), repairs grants, slum clearance and various minor items.

Individual authorities are free to determine their own spending priorities within the total non-HRA block allocations made available to them.

The following table gives total consent to incur capital expenditure on the non-HRA block for each year in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the districts of Lothian region. Comparable information is not available for the years prior to 1978-79.

	Scotland £ *million*	*Lothian districts* £ *million*
1978-79	50·0	13·5
1979-80	48·6	8·6
1980-81	59·4	12·3
1981-82	77·0	17·1
1982-83	106·6	21·5
1983-84*	98·1	16·3
1984-85	171·4	20·6
1985-86†	109·7	17·5

* Expenditure on improvement grants in 1983-84, subject to certain conditions, was not limited to consent.

† As issued at 29 March 1985.

Note: Figures for the years to 1984-85 include abatement, enhancement and any transfers to or from the HRA block.

Housing Associations

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the most up-to-date figures for all sales of housing association houses in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Lothian region to sitting tenants; what percentage this represents of housing association stock in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many housing association houses of general needs housing have been sold with a discount in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Lothian region; what percentage this represents of housing association stock in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The total numbers of housing association houses sold to sitting tenants in Scotland and in Lothian region up to 30 June 1985 were, respectively, 76 and 21; all sales were of general needs houses. Fifty-three of the Scottish sales and 16 of those in Lothian region were made at a discount. Each of these totals represents less than 1 per cent. of the housing association stock in Scotland.

I have been concerned for some time that the voluntary code governing sales to housing association tenants in Scotland has not been operating with sufficient effect. At my request the Housing Corporation wrote some months ago to all associations which had not already instituted a sales scheme with discounts, requesting them to reconsider their policies. Its letter was accompanied by an open letter from me in which I restated the Government's position on voluntary sales and stressed the importance of discounts to the success of any sales policy. I subsequently received a report from the Housing Corporation on the outcome of the exercise. I had hoped for a substantial movement in associations' policies but this has proved not to be the case. Although there has been some movement, a considerable number of associations have reaffirmed their opposition to sales and others who permit sales will not provide discounts.

In view of this response, and the need to ensure that housing association tenants do not remain at a significant disadvantage in comparison with other public sector tenants, we propose to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to give housing association tenants the right to buy their homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many housing association houses of *(a)* general needs housing, *(b)* special needs housing and *(c)* co-ownership housing there are in Scotland and Lothian region today: giving separate figures for each category.

Mr. Ancram: Estimated figures provided by the Housing Corporation are given in the following table for 31 March 1984, the latest date for which estimates can be made.

Area	*Number of houses* *General needs*	*Special needs*	*Co-ownership*
Scotland	25,000	6,800	900
Lothian	4,100	2,400	100

National Health Service

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent on each person resident in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Lothian region in respect of National Health Service funding in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is given in the table to the latest available year. The figures are based on expenditure on hospital and community health services and on family practitioner services (net of charges retained by practitioners). Details of expenditure by the common services agency and on programmes managed centrally by the Department are not available for health board areas.

Expenditure per head of population

	Scotland £	*Lothian health board* £
1979-80	191	208
1980-81	242	260
1981-82	275	307
1982-83	298	332
1983-84	317	350

Nursery Schools

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of nursery school places in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the Lothian region for each year since 1973; and whether it is the policy of the Government to expand nursery education.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The following table shows the number of pupils receiving nursery education in education authority schools in Lothian region and in Scotland for the school years from 1973.

Pupils receiving nursery education

	Lothian	*Scotland*
1973	n/a	19,629
1974	4,293	20,462
1975	5,074	21,569
1976	5,778	25,927
1977	6,225	29,399
1978	6,749	31,326

	Lothian	Scotland
1979	6,569	31,770
1980	6,818	32,472
1981	6,843	33,178
1982	7,075	34,682
1983	7,517	36,650
1984*	8,004	37,869

* Provisional.

Education authorities are free to determine the priority to be accorded to nursery education in the light of other resource demands.

NHS

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* nurses and *(b)* doctors have been employed in Scotland by the National Health Service in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested by whole-time equivalent numbers is as follows:

	Nurses*	Doctors† (excluding general medical practitioners)	Doctors‡ (including general medical practitioners)
1975	52,540·0	5,213·1	8,219·1
1976	53,405·0	5,313·9	8,354·9
1977	53,229·0	5,412·0	8,501·0
1978	54,419·0	5,447·8	8,608·8
1979	56,037·2	5,613·3	8,803·3
1980	58,602·5	5,628·8	8,884·8
1981	61,125·5	5,672·7	9,019·7
1982	61,979·2	5,764·3	9,156·3
1983	62,395·5	5,810·1	9,270·1
1984	62,027·4	5,854·0	9,383·0

Notes:
*Includes unqualified auxiliaries, assistants, nursery nurses and nursing cadets.
†Excludes general medical practitioners who are independent contractors.
‡Includes general medical practitioners who are independent contractors.

Assisted Place Schemes

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been allocated to the assisted places scheme in Scotland each year for the last five years *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each educational authority.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Total expenditure on the scheme in the four years it has been operating is as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	0·512
1982-83	1·393
1983-84	2·225
1984-85	3·069

These figures, which relate to fiscal years, cannot readily be attributed to education authority areas. The grants are paid direct to the participating schools, and they submit their claims in relation to the academic year, not the financial year.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils have benefited from the assisted places scheme in Scotland each year for the last five years *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each educational authority.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Pupils at participating schools may come from outwith the area of the education authority in which the schools are located but the number of places taken up in schools in each local authority area since the scheme began is as follows:

Area	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	*1984-85
Borders	—	—	—	—
Central	22	30	35	41
Dumfries & Galloway	—	7	11	13
Fife	2	6	14	21
Grampian	23	38	68	97
Highland	9	14	27	33
Lothian	304	580	726	884
Orkney	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde	312	542	696	785
Tayside	118	233	323	386
Western Isles	—	—	—	—
Scotland	790	1,450	1,900	2,260

*Provisional.

Skoal Bandit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department was consulted by the Scottish Development Agency before money was put into the production of the Skoal Bandit.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In accordance with practice, this inward investment project was handled by Locate in Scotland, which is a joint operation of the Industry Department for Scotland and the Scottish Development Agency.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average pay rise for teachers in Scotland; and what was the annual inflation rate in each year since 1955.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Comparable figures for teachers' average salaries over so extended a period are not available.

Gaelic Language

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of direct expenditure by his Department on the Gaelic language in 1984-85; if he will provide a breakdown ; and what the percentage increase in spending has been compared to the 1983-84 level.

Mr. George Younger: The Scottish Education Department made the following direct payments to organisations and projects connected with the Gaelic language in 1984-85:

	£
An Comunn Gaidhealach	69,300
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	11,750
The Committee on Gaelic of the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum	3,320
Research grant for the Evaluation of the Western Isles Island Council Bilingual Project	30,803
	115,173

This is an increase of 25 per cent. over 1983-84. These figures exclude the amounts given to support the Gaelic language by the Scottish Arts Council and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the secondary schools in Scotland which teach subjects using Gaelic as the teaching medium.

Mr. Allan Stewart: For September 1983 the following table shows:

(a) The number of secondary schools where subjects other than Gaelic were taught using Gaelic as the teaching medium;

(b) The number of secondary schools in Gaelic speaking areas where the scheme of instruction provided for teaching the Gaelic language and literature to Gaelic speaking pupils.

	(a)	*(b)*
Central	0	1
Grampian	0	1
Highland	0	14
Strathclyde—Argyll & Bute	0	6
Glasgow	0	4
Tayside	0	2
Western Isles	10	16

Further details of the practices in individual schools can be obtained from the authorities concerned.

Standard Grade Examination

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a further statement on future arrangements for standard grade examinations in the light of the teachers associations' continuing boycott of curriculum development.

Mr. George Younger: I announced on 2 April, at columns *543-44*], that I had decided, following advice from the Scottish Examination Board and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities that ordinary grade examinations in English, mathematics and arithmetic should be available as an option in 1986 for pupils who started standard grade courses in August 1984 and whom it was no longer realistic to expect to be assessed on the basis of standard grade. I made it clear that standard grade phase 1 assessments would take place in 1986 as planned and I confirm that again now.

A number of parents and others have made representations to me about the importance of an early decision on examinations in 1987 to protect the interests of pupils entering S3 next month who will wish to know whether the target at the end of their two-year course is to be standard grade or ordinary grade. The Scottish Education Department has therefore written today to the Scottish Examination Board, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, to propose that the same arrangements should apply in 1987 as in 1986, that is, that ordinary grade examinations should be available as an alternative to standard grade phase 1 examinations in 1987.

I have asked the three bodies for their urgent comments on this proposal so that a final decision may be taken as early as possible in the new term to relieve the uncertainty which parents are experiencing about the courses which their children will follow. I recognise that the holding of both standard grade and ordinary grade examinations for a further year will have implications for higher grade and post-higher examinations in English and mathematics and I have asked the SEB to take account of the need to run these examinations in both unrevised and revised forms in 1988.

The Government remain in principle fully committed to the development and full implementation of standard grade courses, which will lead to more effective and relevant teaching for pupils of all abilities. The largest Scottish teachers union has however made clear its intention to continue the curricular boycott even after a satisfactory settlement of the current pay dispute is reached.

New Towns (Housing)

Dr. M. S. Miller asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what, in respect of each of the Scottish new town development corporations in each of the years 1978-79 to 1984-85, inclusive, and 1985-86 to date, were (i) the categories of applicants whose waiting time from acceptance of application to allocation of a dwelling was greatest and the average waiting time from such categories and the categories of applicants whose waiting time was shortest and the average waiting time for such categories and (ii) the numbers of and sizes of private sector houses and flats in each of the said years to 31 March which were *(a)* completed and *(b)* sold on a basis which included any element of subsidy or financial assistance by the development corporation and the total amount of such subsidy or financial assistance.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 July 1985, c. *156*]: The replies are

(i) such information as is available about average waiting time for categories of applicant on the housing waiting lists maintained by new town development corporations is not compiled on a uniform basis and does not enable me to give a meaningful reply.

(ii) *(a)* Private sector houses and flats completed in each financial year (breakdown by size not available).

	East Kilbride	Cumbernauld	Glenrothes	Livingston	Irvine
1978-79	70	257	82	72	235
1979-80	158	139	130	144	104
1980-81	175	69	85	143	83
1981-82	144	53	85	54	48
1982-83	48	112	74	163	106
1983-84	77	111	152	221	102
1984-85	192	9	156	160	79
1985-86*	30	31	23	49	15

* Position at 31 May 1985 for East Kilbride and 30 June for other towns.

(b) Twenty-nine private sector houses and flats were sold during this period on a basis which included an element of subsidy or financial assistance from the development corporation. All 29 were in Cumbernauld, nine sold in 1984-85 and 20 sold in 1985-86 to date. The aggregate notional amount of the assistance was £9,796 and £21,366 respectively. This was in the context of a joint venture with private builders where the development corporation sold the land at historic cost, rather than on the basis of current market value.

Dr. M. S. Miller asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what, in respect of each of the Scottish new town development corporations in each of the years 1978-79 to 1984-85, inclusive, and 1985-86 to date, were (i) the number of persons on waiting lists for houses to let at 1 April and 1 October and (ii) the numbers of and sizes of corporation houses at 31 March *(a)* completed and first let *(b)* vacated and re-let *(c)* sold to sitting tenants *(d)* sold with vacant possession and *(e)* sold on a shared equity basis.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 July 1985, c. *156*]: The replies are: (i) I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 19 June 1985, at column *133*.

(ii) This information is not readily available in the form requested. The available information is set out in the following tables:

(a) *Total numbers (cumulative) of houses completed at 31 March*

	1 APT	2 APT	3 APT	4 APT	5 APT	6+APT	Total
				1979			
East Kilbride*	64	3,121	7,702	8,980	1,767	86	21,720
Cumbernauld	137	872	3,626	6,329	1,630	531	13,125
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available				10,135
Livingston	0	751	2,432	5,538	1,069	477	10,267
Irvine	0	220	948	1,666	1,077	142	4,053
				1980			
East Kilbride	64	3,121	7,702	8,980	1,767	86	21,720
Cumbernauld	137	919	3,726	6,529	1,630	545	13,486
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				10,601
Livingston	0	850	2,677	5,981	1,115	515	11,138
Irvine	0	298	1,027	1,782	1,144	142	4,393
				1981			
East Kilbride	64	3,139	7,710	9,077	1,778	86	21,854
Cumbernauld	137	942	3,762	6,563	1,630	549	13,583
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				10,927
Livingston	0	891	2.769	6,264	1,115	570	11,609
Irvine	0	359	1,046	1,871	1,174	142	4,592
				1982			
East Kilbride	64	3,139	7,732	9,130	1,802	86	21,953
Cumbernauld	137	989	3,868	6,745	1,648	549	13,936
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				11,385
Livingston	0	919	2,807	6,373	1,115	580	11,794
Irvine	0	409	1,106	2,027	1,285	142	4,969
				1983			
East Kilbride	64	3,139	7,745	9,155	1,802	86	21,991
Cumbernauld	137	993	3,898	6,818	1,655	549	14,050
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				11,536
Livingston	0	967	2,866	6,525	1,125	602	12,085
Irvine	0	412	1,108	2,028	1,285	142	4,975
				1984			
East Kilbride	64	3,182	7,843	9,332	1,854	86	22,361
Cumbernauld	137	993	3,898	6,818	1,655	549	14,050
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				11,796

	1 APT	2 APT	3 APT	4 APT	5 APT	6+APT	Total
Livingston	0	973	2,875	6,555	1,125	608	12,136
Irvine	0	452	1,108	2,029	1,285	142	5,016
				1985			
East Kilbride	64	3,182	7,843	9,332	1,854	86	22,361
Cumbernauld	137	1,005	3,925	6,851	1,659	550	14,127
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				11,850
Livingston	0	973	2,878	6,557	1,125	615	12,148
Irvine	10	473	1,114	2,031	1,295	142	5,065
				1985-86 (to 30 June)			
East Kilbride†	64	3,182	7,843	9,332	1,854	86	22,361
Cumbernauld	137	1,005	3,939	6,869	1,659	550	14,159
Glenrothes			(breakdown not available)				11,850
Livingston	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,148
Irvine	10	473	1,114	2,031	1,303	142	5,073

* Inclusive of houses and flats
† Position at 31 May 1985 in the case of East Kilbride

Houses first let during financial year

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	*1985-86 to 30 June
East Kilbride	0	0	134	99	38	370	0	0
Cumbernauld	435	390	150	269	192	0	58	30
Glenrothes	306	466	326	458	151	260	54	0
Livingston	416	871	471	185	291	51	12	0
Irvine	266	438	160	392	52	41	28	13

Houses vacated during financial year

East Kilbride	645	567	487	504	604	448	404	73
Cumbernauld	479	526	543	494	493	444	405	99
Glenrothes	694	791	683	644	715	796	700	728
Livingston	1,005	1,007	1,055	1,085	1,160	1,115	928	317
Irvine	475	370	493	632	600	428	429	72

Houses relet during financial year

East Kilbride	614	604	435	501	606	432	433	77
Cumbernauld	983	888	1,014	1,032	1,059	787	782	200
Glenrothes	1,082	961	1,002	922	1,045	973	893	749
Livingston	1,147	740	1,176	904	1,004	925	1,469	426
Irvine	462	400	510	515	627	590	466	83

(d) Houses sold to sitting tenants during financial year

East Kilbride	78	589	647	767	598	765	627	92
Cumbernauld	311	707	367	528	353	388	429	101
Glenrothes	127	448	176	274	389	572	403	102
Livingston	45	63	154	170	185	336	260	46
Irvine	0	0	21	13	75	74	94	24

Houses sold with vacant possession during financial year

East Kilbride	44	23	9	16	21	16	9	2
Cumbernauld	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glenrothes	15	83	17	27	33	53	100	16
Livingston	11	4	8	0	30	54	0	0
Irvine	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0

Houses sold on a shared equity basis during financial year

Nil

* Position at 31 May 1985 in the case of East Kilbride

Electronics Industry

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the components of change such as openings, expansions, contractions and closures in terms of male and female employment and number of units in the electronic sector since 1979 *(a)* for Scotland as a whole and *(b)* for each of the Scottish regions.

Mr. George Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 July 1985, c. 256]: The only available source for components of change analysis is the regional data system (RDS) which relates to units with 11 or more employees and classifies

units according to their latest current activity. Estimates from RDS are set out in the table, for the electronics sector; they relate to the 1980 standard industrial classification. Details by sex are not available.

The reclassification of units under RDS into the electronics industry, as the balance of their production has moved in favour of electronics, has had the effect of boosting the 1979 figure shown in the table. By way of illustration estimated employment for the electronics sector from the 1978 census of employment was 37,000 whereas the corresponding RDS figure for 1978 is 47,000 — and the reclassification of units since 1978 is the major factor in the difference.

This means that I do not regard the movements in the overall employment figures in the table as at all representative of the trend in employment in the electronics sector for Scotland. Later this year I hope to have estimates based on units classified according to their activities at the relevant times.

Electronics in Scotland: Components of Change 1979-83

Region	*1979 stock*	*Openings*	*Expansions*	*Static*	*Contractions*	*Closures*	*Net change*	*1983 stock*
Units								
Border	11	—	4	2	4	1	−1	10
Central	2	1	1	—	—	1	—	2
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife	27	6	11	2	12	3	3	30
Grampian	9	5	4	1	3	1	4	13
Highland	9	—	1	5	3	—	—	9
Lothian	37	11	14	10	11	2	9	46
Strathclyde	82	13	32	16	28	7	6	88
Tayside	16	2	4	3	8	1	1	17
Islands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland	193	38	71	39	69	16	22	215
Employment								
Borders	1,610	—	*	—	−210	*	−160	1,450
Central	*	*	*	—	—	*	*	*
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife	8,430	*	1,050	—	−790	*	50	8,470
Grampian	300	120	140	—	*	*	180	480
Highland	*	—	*	—	*	—	*	*
Lothian	9,290	*	780	—	−790	*	470	9,760
Strathclyde	19,910	770	3,070	—	−2,180	−4,440	−2,790	17,120
Tayside	9,190	*	*	—	−4,640	*	−4,580	4,610
Islands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland	49,440	2,340	5,230	—	−8,680	−5,900	−7,020	42,420

* Figures cannot be released due to confidentiality constraints imposed under the Statistics of Trade Act.

Notes

(1) The electronics sector is defined to be Activity Headings 3302, 3433, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3453, 3454, 3710 and 3732 of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

(2) The industry classification of a unit may change over time. For the purpose of the tables above, a unit is classified on the bases of its latest known industry. This convention will tend to overstate electronics in 1979 in view of the tendency of units to be reclassified into the electronics sector.

(3) The above estimates are derived from the Regional Data System.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Westminster Hospital

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of Westminster hospital, London.

Mr. John Patten: Planning services at the Westminster hospital is in the first instance the responsibility of the new Riverside health authority. We are not aware of any proposals by the authority to change its current role.

National Insurance Contributions

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of people likely to be affected under the proposed new national insurance contribution arrangements, at £55 and £90, when overtime or bonus payments take their wages just over the new limits.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the form requested.

The latest figures for earnings on which national insurance contributions have been paid relate to the 1982-83 tax year. In that year 189,600 men and 271,900 women paid contributions on annual earnings in the range £2,700-£3,000 (weekly equivalent £51·92-£57·69) and 382,800 men and 279,500 women paid contributions on annual earnings in the range £4,500-£4,799 (weekly equivalent £86·54-£92·29). It is not known how many of these people received bonus or overtime payments.

These 1982-83 figures should be used with caution to produce any current estimate on the lines sought by my hon. Friend. Current earnings will be different because of the general upward trend. Moreover, because the Department does not record actual earnings the figures quoted are notional earnings calculated from the record of contributions paid. This calculation does not produce an accurate earnings figure for each person.

The steps in liability at £55 and £90 per week under the proposed new arrangements are small—both in absolute

terms and in relation to the existing "cliff edge" of liability at the lower earnings limit (£35·50): modest pay rises at these two steps will result in net increases in take home pay. All employees earning under £90 per week will be better off than at present—some 4·3 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the forecast payment of contributions to national insurance in 1985 by employers, employees and the self-employed; and if he will provide separate figures for the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Whitney: The Government Actuary's estimates for 1985-86 are in the table. No separate figures for the manufacturing sector are available.

	£ million
Class I (employed)	
Primary (employees)	10,768
Secondary (employers)	12,158
Class II (self-employed)	680

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what revenue is brought in by the reduced rate contributions to national insurance.

Mr. Whitney: The Government Actuary estimates that the class 1 primary (employees) receipts during 1985-86 from married women and widows who have opted to pay reduced rate contributions will be around £275 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what revenue is brought in by *(a)* the employee's national insurance contribution and *(b)* the employer's contribution in a full financial year.

Mr. Whitney: The Government Actuary's estimates of class 1 receipts during 1985-86 are:—

	£ million
Class 1 primary (employees)	10,768
Class 1 secondary (employers)	*12,158

* This figure does not take account of recoveries of statutory sick pay by employers.

Single Payments

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the actual maximum single payment made to meet the costs of a newborn baby in 1983; and what was the actual minimum payment made.

Mr. Whitney: Reliable figures cannot be given, since the annual statistical inquiry is based on a sample of cases and information about the individual maximum and minimum payments is unlikely to be representative.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if single payments for help with bus and rail fares for hospital visits are to be abolished under the proposals of the social security review.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 2·98 of volume 2 of the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security".

Birth Statistics

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the estimate of the number of live births to mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistani descent who themselves were born in the United Kingdom for 1983 or for the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will estimate for 1981, 1982 and 1983 the number of births to mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistani ethnic origin, excluding those of mixed descent who themselves were born in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available from the data collected at birth registration. However, preliminary estimates based on results derived from the 1983 labour force survey suggest that, during the period mid-1980 to mid-1983, between 4,000 and 5,000 children were born in the United Kingdom each year to mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistani descent who themselves had been born in the United Kingdom.

Convalescent Facilities

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of places in specifically designated National Health Services convalescent facilities for each year from 1980.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is given in the table.

NHS hospitals, England—Convalescent departments

Year	*Average daily number of available beds*
1980	534
1981	432
1982	302
1983	313

These figures exclude contractual arrangement facilities. The reason for the reduction in beds was given in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 8 July at column *363*.

Benefits

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made to provide people whose claims for social security benefits are refused with the addresses of local agencies offering advice and information about social security benefits.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 17 July.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total value per week to a disabled married claimant in 1985-86 (i) on the ordinary rate and (ii) on the long-term rate of *(a)* the disablement heating addition and *(b)* the laundry and special diet allowance, assuming additional resources to cover 20 per cent. of average rate bills were met on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: On the same basis as my reply to the hon. Member on 3 July, at column *182*, the implied amount for a disabled married claimant receiving the three additions named would be as follows:

Ordinary scale rate £	*Long-term scale rate* £
54·86	65·41

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount currently being spent on unemployment pay and on the various classes of benefit at an annual rate;

(2) what is the current cost per week of benefits of all kinds paid to persons who are unemployed and their dependants.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated cost of social security benefits paid in respect of unemployment in 1985-86 is £6·4 billion; equivalent to an average weekly expenditure of £123 million. The annual figure is made up of £1,645 million in unemployment benefit, about £3,850 million in supplementary benefit and about £950 million in housing benefit.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department is to hold a survey to find out what has been the effect on people of his policy of a limited National Health Service drugs list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We can see no need for such a survey.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will ask the review committee on the limited list to examine restoring Rohypnol (flunitrazepam) to the list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The recently established Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs will be free to reconsider at any time the need for Rohypnol, either on its own initiative or in response to representations from doctors or the manufacturers. No formal representations have yet been made about this drug.

Earnings Limit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government will now raise the earnings limit for the long-term unemployed to £10.

Mr. Newton: One of the proposals in the recent Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9518) is that for supplementary benefit claimants the earnings disregard for couples who have been unemployed for two years should be raised to £15. We hope to introduce these proposals from April 1987 and have no plans to raise the earnings limit in the meantime.

Departmental Staff (Newcastle)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra staff were taken on by his Department during the strike at the computer centre at Newcastle; how many of the posts occupied by such staff have been retained; and what plans he has for the future of those retained posts.

Mr. Whitney: Three thousand additional posts were allocated and filled to deal with the consequences of the Newcastle dispute. Some staff so employed have now been allocated to ordinary departmental work, but detailed information is not available. The Department's manpower targets remain at present as published in the latest expenditure report.

Computer Facilities (Data Privacy)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the data privacy implications of using national insurance numbers as indentifiers in existing and planned computerised data facilities at his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We are fully aware of the need to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of personal information. National insurance numbers are used as identifiers in a number of clerical or computer systems. We are reviewing the arrangements for preserving confidentiality in all computerised systems in the light of the Data Protection Act. In the development of new systems, full account is taken of the need to maintain confidentiality and to comply with the Act.

Local Offices (Computers)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what projections of anticipated staff savings from general implementation were made prior to the trial programme of microcomputers in local offices; what subsequent assessment was made of likely savings in staff from general implementation in the light of experience of the programme; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the outcome of the trial programme for other computerisation projects in his Department.

Mr. Whitney: An original estimate of savings of 600 posts was made regarding the microcomputerisation of supplementary benefit assessment work. The trial programme carried out in 1984, which related to a broader range of work, suggested savings in the range 1,650 to 2,000 posts approximately. This estimate will be refined as the project is implemented.

Experience of the trial programme for the local office microcomputer programme has reinforced our view that there are substantial benefits to be gained from the trial implementation in a small number of offices of major projects affecting the work of local offices.

Local Office Project

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, pursuant to the answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, columns *212-13*, he will give details of the review of the overall planning of the local office project; if he will give reasons for each of the changes arising from the review; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the changes for the time scale of hardware procurement for the overall cost of the projects, and the anticipated savings to arise from its implementation;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the total costs of (a) the whole local office computer project and (b) the first stage facilities of the project; what is the current value of orders for hardware for the first stage facilities; when the first hardware is now expected to be delivered; and how this compares with the original estimate for such deliveries;

(3) what is his latest estimate of the financial and staff savings, respectively, expected to arise from the first stage of the local office computer project; how these compare with his original estimates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The review resulted in a change only to the sequence of implementation of the various phases of the project. It concluded that the introduction of facilities for the assessment, calculation and payment of supplementary benefit in the first phase would lead to a more efficient system, would reduce disruption in local offices and would give better value for money than the original plan. The change did not, in itself, have any significant implications for the time scale of the major hardware procurement, although first deliveries will be later than expected.

It is estimated that the total cost of the project, up to April 1999, will be approximately £418 million, including capital, development and running costs. The costs of the first phase facilities have not been separately identified. No orders have yet been placed for hardware, the first of which will, it is expected, be delivered early in 1987. It is not possible, at this stage of project development, accurately to assess financial and staff savings. For the purposes of assessing the potential value of the project it has been estimated that staff savings will be of the order of 8,400 in a full year from the project as a whole. On that basis, over the costing period described above, it is estimated that gross financial savings will be of the order of £777 million. No valid comparison can be drawn with original estimates; they assumed a different approach to implementation.

Private Patients (Charges)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether control weaknesses have been found in all health authorities for which reports were issued following investigations by his Department audit staff in relation to the payment of private patient charges; and if the accounts of all such authorities have been qualified;

(2) whether control weaknesses have been found in all health authorities investigated by his Department's audit staff in relation to the payment of private patient charges; and if the accounts of all health authorities have been qualified;

(3) if he will list the health authorities for which reports have been issued following investigation by his Department's audit staff in relation to the payment of private patient charges.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We asked the statutory auditors to carry out a special review in May 1984 of the handling of private patient charges at 37 health authorities. The auditors identified material control weaknesses in, and, accordingly, issued reports in respect of, the 21 health authorities listed. The auditors did not qualify their certificates to the 1983-84 accounts of all of these authorities:

Darlington DHA
South Tees DHA
Bradford DHA
Nottingham DHA
Sheffield DHA

Mid Downs DHA
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire DHA
Oxfordshire DHA
Torbay DHA
Coventry DHA

West Suffolk DHA
Islington DHA
North East Essex DHA
Waltham Forest DHA
Camberwell DHA

Lewisham and North Southwark DHA
Merton and Sutton DHA
North Birmingham DHA
North Staffordshire DHA
Shropshire DHA

The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases SHA

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the health authorities for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income in their routine examination of accounts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following their routine examination of the accounts of health authorities for 1983-84 and for 1984-85 (which is not yet complete) statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income at the following 13 health authorities:

1983-84
Durham DHA
Airedale DHA
Calderdale DHA
Dewsbury DHA
Southern Derbyshire DHA
Brighton DHA
Croydon DHA
West Berkshire DHA
Wycombe DHA
Kettering DHA
Crewe DHA

1984-85
South Manchester DHA
East Berkshire DHA

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the health authorities investigated by his Department's audit staff in relation to the payment of private patient charges.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The health authorities concerned are:

Newcastle HA
Darlington HA
South Tees HA
Bradford HA
Wakefield HA
Sheffield HA
Nottingham HA
Hammersmith SHA
Paddington and North Kensington HA
North West Hertfordshire HA
Islington HA
Waltham Forest HA
North East Essex HA
Bloomsbury HA
Lewisham and North Southwark HA
Camberwell HA
National Heart and Chest SHA
West Lambeth HA
Mid-Downs HA
Merton and Sutton HA
The Hospital for Sick Children SHA
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases SHA
Oxfordshire HA
West Suffolk HA
Coventry HA
Torbay HA
Bristol and Weston HA
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire HA
North Birmingham HA
Herefordshire HA
Shropshire HA

North Staffordshire HA
Central Birmingham HA
Salford HA
South Manchester HA
Warrington HA
West Lancashire HA

Health Authorities (Uncollected Income)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the health authorities where estimates of annual income uncollected have been given by statutory auditors, giving the estimate for each health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In their reports on the audit of the accounts of health authorities for 1983-84 statutory auditors gave estimates of income uncollected. However, these figures do not cover income in respect of private patients alone. They also include income from other unrelated non-NHS activities and due under the Road Traffic Acts. The estimates were as follows:

	£
Bradford DHA	5,500
Darlington DHA	20,000
Sheffield DHA	9,000
Nottingham DHA	24,377
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA	21,360
Camberwell DHA	55,650
Merton and Sutton DHA	1,450
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases SHA	133,646
Oxfordshire DHA	7,918
Coventry DHA	45,000
Torbay DHA	1,000
North Birmingham DHA	11,154
Shropshire DHA	2,110
Durham DHA	3,600
Calderdale DHA	24,941
Airedale DHA	800

Harefield Hospital Heart Transplant Fund

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether payments by foreign nationals into the Harefield hospital heart transplant fund are fixed so as to cover the costs of the operation in question.

(2) what are the main sources of income and items of expenditure of the Harefield hospital heart transplant fund in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) by whose authority Harefield hospital carries out operations on foreign nationals in exchange for payments, fixed by the hospital, into the Harefield hospital heart transplant fund;

(4) whether the heart-lung transplant performed at Harefield hospital on Brooke Matthews was subject to the charges for services provided for overseas visitors set out in his Department's circular HC(85)14.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Overseas patients who receive heart transplant surgery at Harefield hospital are asked to make a deposit to cover the expected full cost of their treatment and aftercare. In addition to the statutory charges made under section 65(2) of the National Health Service Act 1977, a donation is also requested to bring the total deposit up to the sum which the hospital calculates should cover the full cost of treatment for each procedure.

This additional donation reflects the very high cost of the treatment compared to the charge and includes a substantial element in lieu of professional fees. If after the event it is found that the deposit does not reflect the final cost, adjustments may be made.

The donation is made to the Harefield hospital heart transplant fund which in turn reimburses the health authority. These arrangements would not apply to European Community nationals referred for treatment under the provisions of the European Community Social Services Regulations, the terms of which require that patients accepted for treatment must be regarded as ordinary National Health Service patients. The arrangements were followed in the case of Brooke Matthews.

The Harefield hospital transplant fund is an independent charitable trust set up to support and further research and development of the heart transplant programme. Our Department has no responsibility to oversee the trust's finances. However, I understand that in the current financial year the trust will donate up to a further £100,000 towards the programme's general nursing and equipment costs, with the emphasis on research and development.

Opticians

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the number of *(a)* ophthalmic opticians and *(b)* dispensing opticians in independent practice in each year since 1978;

(2) if he will list the number of enrolled bodies corporate practising as *(a)* ophthalmic opticians and *(b)* dispensing opticians in each year since 1978.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have information in the form requested. The following table shows the numbers of opticians and enrolled bodies corporate registered with the General Optical Council and the number of practices providing services under the NHS general ophthalmic services. We do not have information about the numbers in other forms of practice.

(England figures as at 31 December except where shown otherwise)

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Number of opticians on the GOC Register							
Ophthalmic opticians	4,883	4,925	5,013	5,033	5,086	5,165	5,221
Dispensing opticians	1,972	2,121	2,322	2,487	2,594	2,674	2,814
Number of enrolled bodies corporate on the GOC Register (UK figures as at 1 April)							
Ophthalmic opticians	591	596	597	576	563	557	537
Dispensing opticians	95	95	95	95	91	95	99
Independent establishments in the GOS							
Ophthalmic opticians	3,064	3,088	2,957	2,994	2,847	2,898	*
Dispensing opticians	354	378	326	373	398	426	*

	(England figures as at 31 December except where shown otherwise)						
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Establishments of enrolled bodies corporate in the GOS							
Ophthalmic opticians	1,482	1,504	1,518	1,547	1,630	1,675	*
Dispensing opticians	532	524	568	557	535	536	*

*Not yet available.

Chrysoidine Dye

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet received the medical advice concerning the relationship between chrysoidine dye and urothelial cancer that he called for upon receiving the special case control study by Birmingham researchers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A sub-group of the Committee on the Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has considered this study. We are still awaiting its advice.

NHS (Expenditure)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on each person resident in England in respect of National Health Service funding to England in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: National Health Service spending per head of population in England for the years 1980-81 to 1984-85 is as follows:

	£
1980-81	213
1981-82	238
1982-83	260
1983-84	275
1984-85	*295

* (estimated)

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to how many people do not receive a proportionate pension for service on retirement, due to a change of employment during their career;

(2) what information he has as to the percentage of the pensionable population who do not receive a proportionate pension for service on retirement owing to a change in employment during their career.

Mr. Whitney: Details of the number of people who do not receive a proportionate pension for service on retirement due to a change of employment during their career are not available. In his 1979 survey of occupational pensions schemes, the Government Actuary estimated an annual turnover of some 1 million scheme members, which is equivalent to about 10 per cent.

The effect on eventual pension of people who change employment depends on the rules of the individual pension scheme. However, we accept that people who change jobs often lose in terms of their pension. That is why we have taken steps in the Social Security Bill to require schemes to revalue preserved pensions for future early leavers in line with prices up to 5 per cent. a year compound. We are also giving future early leavers the right to take a transfer if they prefer that to a preserved pension.

Dietary Diseases

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has received the results of the studies into the incidence of anorexia nervosa and bulimia conducted at Leeds and Edinburgh universities; and what guidance his Department issues about encouraging better balanced dietary behaviour to avoid these conditions;

(2) when he expects to make a substantive reply to the question of the hon. Member for Harrow, East about the results of studies into the incidence of anorexia nervosa and bulimia conducted at Leeds and Edinburgh universities and guidance by his Department about encouraging better-balanced dietary behaviour to avoid these conditions.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *55*]: I am not sure which of the various studies of these conditions my hon. Friend has in mind. He may wish to let me have details. We have taken steps to encourage sensible eating habits, through the Health Education Council and by other means, and we are happy to consider any proposals for steps to prevent anorexia nervosa and bulimia — morbid conditions in which sufferers find themselves unable to eat sensibly.

Ressetlement Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many residents of his Department's resettlement units have been discharged from a mental hospital in each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible to obtain this information for the period January 1979 to February 1982 as some of the relevant papers have been destroyed as a matter of routine. The remaining information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial support has been given by his Department to each of his Department's resettlement units during the past two years.

Mr. Whitney: The gross amount of financial support given by the Department to each of its resettlement units and combined resettlement unit/re-establishment centres for the past two years is given in the table.

Unit	1983/84 £	1984/85 £
Alvaston near Derby	371,200	388,000
Brighton	203,500	161,000
Crown Quay Lodge, Sittingbourne	376,200	362,300
Fazakerley near Liverpool	404,700	434,600

Unit	1983/84 £	1984/85 £
Glasgow	495,700	536,700
Leeds	436,000	479,700
Leicester	452,900	444,300
Newbury	359,600	430,800
Plawsworth	500,500	524,500
Southampton	458,800	433,400
South Wales (Bridgend)	334,200	339,600
Walkden near Manchester	489,200	508,500
West Midlands (Stourbridge)	481,800	470,800
Winterbourne near Bristol	325,400	333,000
Woodhouse near Sheffield	437,800	471,390
Bridge House (North Kensington)	538,400	568,500
Camberwell	2,549,400	2,328,100
Camden	300,700	332,300
Cedars Lodge (Clapham SW4)	515,000	512,200
Lancelot Andrewes House (Southwark)	389,600	484,500
Pound Lodge (Willesden)	398,700	444,100
Spur House (Lewisham)	837,800	826,200
West End House (Soho)	554,000	622,300

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will allocate additional resources to local authorities to enable suitable alternative provisions to be made for those citizens who reside in his Department's resettlement units after the proposed closure.

Mr. Whitney: The regional reviews presently being undertaken involve consultation not only with voluntary organisations but with local authorities and will consider the replacement provision in the light of their findings in a particular area. The review teams will consider proposals coming forward from both the voluntary sector and local authorities before making their recommendations. Details of funding arrangements cannot be finalised until the reports by the regional review teams have been completed.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of citizens who have been accommodated in resettlement units administered by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Service Commissioner (Report)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to ensure that the cases of complaints of ill-treatment to elderly and physically and mentally-handicapped patients mentioned in the annual report of the Health Service Commissioner are thoroughly investigated.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pay Awards

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the contributions which have been made by his Department in each year since 1979 towards doctors' and nurses' annual pay awards.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what methods he is presently examining for linking pay awarded to general practitioners with the quality of their performance and their services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are examining the structure of general practitioners' remuneration, but are not yet ready to put forward proposals.

Family Doctors (Services)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to give assistance to the Royal College of General Practitioners in determining proposals to improve the quality of family doctors' services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We welcome the Royal College's constructive contribution to public discussion about the future arrangements for general practice. I am meeting representatives of the Royal College to discuss their ideas tomorrow.

Hospital Services (Privatisation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to invite chairmen of district and regional health authorities to discuss with him the effects which privatisation and contracting-out of hospital services have had on National Health Service manpower levels.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 23 May, at columns *544-45*.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to reply to the question from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras about the cardiac block at Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children, originally down for answer on 27 June.

Mr. John Patten: I hope to reply to the hon. Member later this week.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state the estimated savings he expects in the first full year of operation from changes in the board and lodging regulations as they affect mentally handicapped people *(a)* in total, *(b)* for Scotland and *(c)* for Edinburgh;

(2) if he will estimate how much money will be saved in the first full year of operation from changes in the board and lodging regulations as they affect mentally handicapped people, as a result of *(a)* changes in the maximum rents that can be charged, *(b)* abolishing the disability allowance for private nursing homes and residential care homes, *(c)* deducting the attendance allowances from claimants in nursing homes and residential care homes and *(d)* reducing the personal allowance from £10·30 to £8·50 a week for new claimants and freezing current personal allowances at £10·30 until the £8·50 is updated to match it.

Mr. Whitney: Estimates of savings in respect of the changes in the board and lodging regulations as they affect mentally handicapped people are not available separately.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from those concerned about changes in the board and lodging regulations as they affect the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Whitney: We have received a number of representations from individuals and organisations, including Mencap, Mind, United Response, Care and The Enterprise Foundation for People with Mental Handicap.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received to date expressing concern at the new board and lodging allowances.

Mr. Whitney: Since 29 April we have received about 600 letters from hon. Members and about 800 letters direct from individuals and organisations on the board and lodging changes.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of people who, since the introduction of the revised board and lodging regulations, have been obliged to leave board and lodgings and have subsequently not been able to obtain any other form of shelter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have no evidence that claimants affected by the expiry of time limits on payment as boarders have been unable to make alternative arrangements to receive supplementary benefit as householders or non-householders or to obtain payment as boarders in other areas.

Occupational Deafness Benefit

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if employees in any occupation other than those listed in Leaflet NI207, "Occupational Deafness," are eligible for occupational deafness benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton Leaflet NI207 lists all occupations covered by prescribed disease A10 "occupational deafness". A person may also qualify for industrial disablement benefit if deafness is caused by an accident at work.

Civil Servants (Ministerial Briefings)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis he selects the officials to brief him on particular topics; whether there are any civil servants specifically and personally debarred from briefing him on any matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Meetings, whether for briefing or any other purpose, are held with those officials most appropriate to the meeting's purpose. There are no other considerations.

Health Authorities (Property Sales)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* which mental hospitals have been sold during the last five years; and what was the total amount received by his Department;

(2) how much of the hospital land sold by regional health authorities during the last five years was in the green belt.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has issued to regional health authorities concerning the use of money received by them from the sale of buildings or land formerly used for the care of mentally ill or handicapped patients who have been discharged into the community.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 12 July, at columns *566-67*.

Central Bridging Fund

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total amount available in the central bridging fund.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I explained quite clearly in the debate on 11 July at columns 1374-75, why I see no clear case for a central bridging fund at the moment. Indeed, I am not sure that the Select Committee had thought through in detail its proposals for such a fund in its latest report. However, I accept that Government and regional health authorities must continue to ensure that bridging finance for capital and revenue is made available for well planned local proposals to replace outdated hospital-based care for mentally ill, mentally handicapped or the very elderly patients with better community-based services.

I have undertaken on many occasions to consider very carefully any applications for bridging finance from central funds if any such application is ever put to me by a health authority.

Schizophrenic Patients

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he has given to regional health authorities about facilities to be provided for the treatment of schizophrenic patients after the closure of long-stay mental hospitals.

Mr. John Patten: Health authorities are well aware that there is a continuing need for long-term inpatient care for some patients, including some schizophrenic patients. Our policy paper, "Mental Illness: Policies for Prevention, Treatment, Rehabilitation and Care", says on this:

> "Plans will be needed for suitable accommodation such as a hospital hostel along the lines discussed in the 1975 White Paper (para 4.54). DHSS has information on current studies in this field."

But the majority of people with schizophrenia already live at home, often with support from the psychiatric services (including admissions when necessary). We are anxious to improve the network of support for such people, and one of the projects in our "Helping the Community to Care" initiative is directed specifically to the need of people with schizophrenia.

We have made it clear to health authorities that we regard it as urgent, irrespective of closure plans, that all districts should develop a local service offering both "hospital" and "non-hospital" care. The closure of some large mental illness hospitals will follow the build-up of local services.

Drug (Research Guidelines)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has made to the approach by the British Medical Association to his Department about its proposals to set up an independent national

committee to provide ethical guidelines for research ranging from drug trials to tests of techniques and treatment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our officials have met the British Medical Association informally to discuss these proposals. We have asked to be informed of the progress of the association's wider consultations with interested bodies.

Social Work (Emergency Cover)

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* those social services authorities which do not provide emergency social work cover at weekends.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected centrally.

Gas Cookers

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the practice of his Department in advising claimants concerning the purchase of secondhand gas cookers when providing single payments to them.

Mr. Whitney: Claimants are advised in accordance with paragraphs 7214-7215 of the S manual, a copy of which is in the Library. They are normally told the level of expenditure considered reasonable and asked to produce a supplier's estimate of the cost of the item they have located. They are also advised to obtain an appliance that has been checked and to have it installed by a suitably qualified person (for example, the gas board or an installer registered with the Confederation for Registration of Gas Installers).

Social Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which single payments currently payable under the supplementary benefit scheme will be met by the social fund by means of *(a)* grant or *(b)* loans for; clothing and footwear, baby items/bedding, furniture and household equipment, hire purchase debt for furniture and household goods, removal expenses, house repairs, redecoration, returnable deposit for accommodation, rent in advance, legal fees for renewal of a lease, survey fees, irregular housing costs, gardening costs, costs associated with seeking and starting work, fares to visit a relative in hospital or a home or in a domestic crisis or to visit a child when custody has not been decided, fuel debts, heating appliances, draught-proofing, hot water cylinder jackets, slot meter and reconnection charges, and payments where a claimant has been underpaid or to replace money spent from weekly living expenses.

Mr. Newton: The proposals for the social fund, as outlined in chapter 2, volume 2 of the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security", imply a different approach to help with special needs from the present single payments system as categorised by the hon. Member. We shall be giving further consideration to the circumstances where payments might be made from the social fund in the light of consultations on the Green Paper.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many two-parent families he estimates would be eligible to claim family income supplement if the number of qualifying hours were reduced from 30 hours to 24 hours;

(2) what he estimates would be the effect on the number of eligible claimants for family income supplement of reducing the number of qualifying hours from 30 to 24.

Mr. Whitney: One-parent families may qualify for family income supplement at present on the basis of remunerative work involving at least 24 hours weekly. If the qualifying hours for two-parent families were to be reduced from 30 hours to 24 hours weekly, we estimate that the number of families eligible for FIS would be increased by less than 10,000.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if exceptionally severe weather payments are to be abolished as a result of his social security reviews;

(2) what new arrangements he proposes to make for the calculation of exceptionally severe weather and payments to assist with heating bills in such weather for 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: As I made clear to the House on 12 March, at columns 129-31, the present arrangements are under review and we shall announce our conclusions before next winter.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid out in exceptionally severe weather payments in 1984-85; and how many claimants benefited.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Support Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services at what level of income support benefit will be payable to the families of those involved in trade disputes following the abolition of the non-householder supplementary benefit scale rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We shall be giving further consideration to the implications of the proposed income support structure for the benefit position of those involved in a trade dispute.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many housing benefit recipients receive less than £11 per week for *(a)* rent and rates and *(b)* rent only; and what proportion these people are of the total number of housing benefit recipients;

(2) what number and proportion of housing benefit recipients receive below £1, £1-2, £2-3, £3-4, £4-5, £5-6, £6-7, £7-8, £8-9 and £10-11 per week respectively and what are their average earnings.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 June 1985, c. *366*]: The information requested is estimated in the table.

The estimates for standard cases have been based on family expenditure survey data which have been updated and then adjusted to reflect the current global case load and expenditure levels indicated by local authority subsidy claims. All the estimates are subject to error, the individual breakdowns should therefore be treated as orders of magnitude only.

Housing Benefit: Estimates of numbers of recipients by amount of benefit received

Great Britain

	Standard Cases			*Certificated Cases*	
	Number (thousands)	*Proportion of recipients (per cent.)*	*Average weekly income*	*Number (thousands)*	*Proportion of recipients (per cent.)*
Amount of benefit					
Less than £1	280	7	£85	25	1
£1-£2	500	13	£83	95	3
£2-£3	470	12	£75	130	4
£3-£4	390	10	£70	125	4
£4-£5	290	8	£65	110	4
£5-£6	220	6	£63	95	3
£6-£7	160	4	£70	85	3
£7-£8	130	3	£63	65	2
£8-£9	140	4	£65	55	2
£9-£10	110	3	£65	65	2
£10-£11	120	3	£55	65	2
Total under £11	2·8 million	75	—	0·9 million	30
Total under £11 for rent rebates and allowances only	1·7 million	80	—	0·8 million	30

Notes:

1. The estimate for standard cases relates to November 1984 but is based on family expenditure survey data for earlier years; that for certificated cases to December 1984.
2. The figures for average weekly income cover income from all sources including state benefits and savings, as many standard cases are not earners.
3. In all cases the percentages relate to the total number of recipients in that particular category.
4. Individual items do not necessarily add up to totals because of rounding. All figures should be treated as indicative estimates only.

Chiropody

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the estimated cost of offering free chiropody services to one-armed war pensioners;

(2) if he will introduce free chiropody services for one-armed war pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *56-57*]: Chiropody is already available free under the National Health Service and all disabled people are given priority. We are considering the case for providing private chiropody for war pensioner arm amputees when their need for treatment cannot be met through the National Health Service. The cost of doing so is estimated to be in the region of £31,000.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Hamsam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for each district health authority and for each regional health authority, what is the number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years living in long-stay mental handicap hospitals; and for each authority what is the number living in units of *(a)* 25 or more beds, *(b)* under 25 beds;

(2) for each district health authority and for each regional health authority what is the number of children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals; and for each authority what is the number living in units of *(a)* 25 or more beds, *(b)* under 25 beds.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each district health authority and each regional health authority, what is the number of children on short-term placements in long-stay mental handicap hospitals; and for each authority what is the number in units of *(a)* 25 or more beds and *(b)* under 25 beds.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *374*]: The table shows numbers of children and young people in mental handicap hospitals and units at 31 December 1983. They include those in small National Health Service units in the community, and those in slightly larger specialist local units for children and young people. The figures also include children and young people admitted for a few weeks, or an even shorter period, for short-term care or assessment; and those who spend part of their time at home and part in National Health Service care. Separate figures are not available centrally for these separate categories.

The table gives numbers of young people aged 16-18 which are the nearest available figures to the 16-19 age range requested. The Department's annual publication "Inpatient statistics from the mental health enquiry for England", copies of which are in the Library, does include national figures for residents by age and certain durations of stay.

Residents at 31 December 1983 in mental handicap hospitals and units in England

Regional and District Health Authority	Mental handicap hospitals and units: All — No. of residents		Mental handicap hospitals and units: Less than 25 beds — No. of residents		Mental handicap hospitals and units: 25 or more beds — No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Northern Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	90	93	—	—	90	93
Hartlepool	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Tees	6	6	—	—	6	6
South Tees	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Cumbria	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Cumbria	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Cumbria	9	10	—	—	9	10
Darlington	12	16	—	—	12	16
Durham	37	22	—	—	37	22
North West Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—
South West Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northumberland	26	39	—	—	26	39
Gateshead	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newcastle	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sunderland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	98	96	—	—	98	96
Hull	21	9	—	—	21	9
East Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grimsby	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scunthorpe	8	8	—	—	8	8
Northallerton	—	—	—	—	—	—
York	14	12	—	—	14	12
Scarborough	—	—	—	—	—	—
Harrogate	—	1	—	—	—	1
Bradford	11	18	—	—	11	18
Airedale	1	1	—	—	1	1
Calderdale	6	14	—	—	6	14
Huddersfield	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dewsbury	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leeds Western	—	—	—	—	—	—
Leeds Eastern	20	12	—	—	20	12
Wakefield	17	21	—	—	17	21
Pontefract	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trent Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	123	199	28	8	95	191
North Derbyshire	13	6	12	3	1	3
Southern Derbyshire	16	12	—	—	16	12
Leicestershire	20	14	—	—	20	14
North Lincolnshire	16	32	—	—	16	32
South Lincolnshire	2	3	—	—	2	3
Bassetlaw	6	2	6	2	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	8	23	—	—	8	23
Nottingham	16	10	—	—	16	10
Barnsley	—	—	—	—	—	—
Doncaster	1	5	—	—	1	5
Rotherham	12	80	—	—	12	80
Sheffield	13	12	10	3	3	9
East Anglian Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	56	45	—	—	56	45
Cambridge	19	11	—	—	19	11
Peterborough	7	7	—	—	7	7
West Suffolk	—	3	—	—	—	3
East Suffolk	8	8	—	—	8	8
Norwich	16	15	—	—	16	15
Great Yarmouth	5	1	—	—	5	1
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1	—	—	—	1	—

Regional and District Health Authority	All No. of residents		Mental handicap hospitals and units Less than 25 beds No. of residents		25 or more beds No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Huntingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Thames Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	61	89	6	14	55	75
North Bedfordshire	5	9	—	—	5	9
South Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
North West Hertfordshire	37	33	—	—	37	33
South West Hertfordshire	8	25	—	—	8	25
Barnet	5	7	—	—	5	7
Harrow	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brent	6	14	6	13	—	1
Paddington and North Kensington	—	1	—	1	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Victoria	—	—	—	—	—	—
North East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	61	75	—	1	61	74
Basildon and Thurrock	8	17	—	—	8	17
Mid Essex	5	9	—	—	5	9
North East Essex	25	32	—	—	25	32
West Essex	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southend	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	7	6	—	—	7	6
Hampstead	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bloomsbury	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	—
City and Hackney	—	1	—	1	—	—
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enfield	12	3	—	—	12	3
Haringey	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	4	7	—	—	4	7
South East Thames Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	108	79	16	—	92	79
Brighton	8	11	—	—	8	11
Eastbourne	—	2	—	—	—	2
Hastings	5	6	—	—	5	6
South East Kent	17	2	—	—	17	2
Canterbury and Thanet	9	16	—	—	9	16
Dartford and Gravesham	6	6	—	—	6	6
Maidstone	—	—	—	—	—	—
Medway	16	—	16	—	—	—
Tunbridge Wells	5	9	—	—	5	9
Bexley	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greenwich	24	14	—	—	24	14
Bromley	18	11	—	—	18	11
West Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camberwell	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lewisham and North Southwark	—	2	—	—	—	2
South West Thames Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	80	119	14	18	66	101
North West Surrey	7	13	—	—	7	13
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	—	1	—	—	—	1
South West Surrey	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Surrey	5	11	—	—	5	11
East Surrey	11	16	—	—	11	16
Chichester	—	—	—	—	—	—

Regional and District Health Authority	Mental handicap hospitals and units: All — No. of residents: Under 16 years	All — No. of residents: 16-18 years	Less than 25 beds — No. of residents: Under 16 years	Less than 25 beds — No. of residents: 16-18 years	25 or more beds — No. of residents: Under 16 years	25 or more beds — No. of residents: 16-18 years
Mid Downs	16	5	—	—	16	5
Worthing District	—	6	—	—	—	6
Croydon	6	5	—	—	6	5
Kingston and Esher	—	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	1	1	—	—	1	1
Wandsworth	—	9	—	—	—	9
Merton and Sutton	34	52	14	18	20	34
Wessex Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	180	93	34	15	146	78
East Dorset	38	6	—	2	38	4
West Dorset	24	7	—	—	24	7
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	59	26	14	4	45	22
Southampton and South West Hampshire	20	24	1	5	19	19
Winchester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	5	2	5	—	—	2
Salisbury	14	3	14	3	—	—
Swindon	9	16	—	—	9	16
Bath District	—	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	11	9	—	1	11	8
Oxford Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	92	63	7	3	85	60
East Berkshire	16	18	—	—	16	18
West Berkshire	20	8	—	—	20	8
Aylesbury Vale	10	12	—	—	10	12
Wycombe	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milton Keynes	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kettering	7	3	7	3	—	—
Northampton	29	18	—	—	29	18
Oxfordshire	10	4	—	—	10	4
South Western Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	116	112	72	38	44	74
Bristol and Weston	10	4	—	—	10	4
Frenchay	14	31	—	—	14	31
Southmead	6	8	—	—	6	8
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	37	12	37	12	—	—
Exeter	12	21	12	15	—	6
North Devon	—	1	—	1	—	—
Plymouth	13	10	—	—	13	10
Torbay	16	2	16	1	—	1
Cheltenham	—	1	—	1	—	—
Gloucester	7	8	7	8	—	—
Somerset	1	14	—	—	1	14
West Midland Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	122	119	26	10	96	109
Bromsgrove and Redditch	—	—	—	—	—	—
Herefordshire	8	4	8	3	—	1
Kidderminster and District	23	43	—	—	23	43
Worcester and District	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shropshire	—	2	—	2	—	—
Mid Staffordshire	3	—	3	—	—	—
North Staffordshire	14	12	—	—	14	12
South East Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rugby	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Warwickshire	12	11	5	2	7	9
South Warwickshire	8	1	—	—	8	1
Central Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Birmingham	—	1	—	—	—	1
West Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	—

Regional and District Health Authority	All		Mental handicap hospitals and units			
			Less than 25 beds		25 or more beds	
	No. of residents		No. of residents		No. of residents	
	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years	Under 16 years	16-18 years
Coventry	10	3	10	3	—	—
Dudley	15	7	—	—	15	7
Sandwell	—	—	—	—	—	—
Solihull	4	3	—	—	4	3
Walsall	25	32	—	—	25	32
Wolverhampton	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mersey Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	36	50	—	1	36	49
Chester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crewe	9	15	—	1	9	14
Halton	7	15	—	—	7	15
Macclesfield	—	—	—	—	—	—
Warrington	4	6	—	—	4	6
Liverpool (Central and Southern)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liverpool (Eastern)	11	9	—	—	11	9
St. Helens and Knowsley	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southport and Formby	4	3	—	—	4	3
South Sefton	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wirral	1	2	—	—	1	2
North Western Regional Health Authority						
Regional Health Authority						
Total	51	75	23	6	28	69
Lancaster	8	16	—	—	8	16
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	—	—	—	—	—	—
Preston	—	—	—	—	—	—
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	9	19	5	—	4	19
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	6	22	2	—	4	22
West Lancashire	8	4	—	—	8	4
Chorley and South Ribble	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bolton	3	1	3	1	—	—
Bury	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Central Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oldham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rochdale	8	4	8	4	—	—
Salford	4	8	—	—	4	8
Stockport	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tameside and Glossop	5	1	5	1	—	—
Trafford	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wigan	—	—	—	—	—	—

Social Security Review

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will expand on the description of claimants who have no recent links with the United Kingdom given in paragraph 2.87 of Cmnd. 9518;

(2) whether the presence test mentioned in paragraph 2.87 of the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9518, will exclude claimants who have gone abroad for long periods to visit or care for relatives;

(3) whether the presence test mentioned in paragraph 2.87 of the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9518, will include a reference to a claimant's immigration status.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985, c. *535*]: We are considering the details of the proposed presence test. In doing so we shall have regard to the characteristics of the tests which operate already for benefits such as child benefit, attendance allowance and mobility allowance, and how these tests apply to particular groups of beneficiaries.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that no treatment to kidney patients on dialysis or for kidney transplants are denied medication on the ground of cost; if he will indicate the steps he has taken to reduce the cost of proprietary drugs; if he will give the names of the drugs concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985]: It is for health authorities, on the advice of patients' clinicians, to decide which medication is to be made available. We do not control the initial pricing of drugs when launched, but subsequent price changes are governed by the extent of the manufacturer's allowed profitability on sales of medicines to the National Health

Service under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme. I understand that Sandoz Products Limited, the manufacturer of cyclosporin, a drug used extensively in the treatment of patients who have received an organ transplant, have stated that it does not intend to apply for departmental approval to increase the price of this product during 1985.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of kidney patients awaiting transplants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985]: The number of renal patients in the United Kingdom registered at the United Kingdom transplant service as awaiting a kidney transplant on 30 June 1985 was 3,043. Virtually all of these patients will already be receiving dialysis. Numbers continue to rise despite record numbers of kidney transplant operations performed in 1983 and 1984, since more renal patients have been accepted for treatment by dialysis, and as improvements in surgical and immunosuppressive techniques have meant that more renal patients can be referred as suitable for transplantation. There is a pressing need for more kidneys for transplantation, and the Government are grateful to all those who are helping to publicise this need at present.

Kidney Donors

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is considering additional action, apart from the current campaign, to increase the number of kidney donors; if he will indicate the current supply of kidney organs and the possible expansion of the supply of such organs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985]: New initiatives to promote the organ donor card and to increase the number of donor organs becoming available for transplantation are being taken all the time; for example, several of the major clearing banks and building societies have recently agreed to display posters and dispense cards.

I am advised that on certain occasions a constraining factor may be the reluctance of some doctors to initiate donation procedures, and the Chief Medical Officer has recently written to the directors of renal transplant units asking them to review their relationships with those hospital departments within their catchment areas which are most likely to have potential organ donors.

The number of kidney transplant operations performed in the United Kingdom during the first six months of this year, according to provisional data supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Service, was 643, and our efforts to increase the supply of donor kidneys are continuing.

THE ARTS

Exhibitions (Insurance)

Mr. Latham asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what progress has been made in the discussions between the Minister for the Arts and the chairman of the trustees of the Tate Gallery regarding the difference of interpretation over the indemnity insurance provisions for exhibitions on loan from national collections; and whether the Minister has received any assurances that the Tate Gallery will permit the Kessler collection to be exhibited in Leicester shortly.

Mr. Waldegrave: My noble Friend the Minister for the Arts is consulting the chairman of the trustees of the Tate Gallery on this matter. He hopes that it will swiftly be resolved.

CIVIL SERVICE

Private Security Companies (Contracts)

Mr. Dubs asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list all the current contracts between Government Departments and private security companies.

Mr. Hayhoe: This information is not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Business Appointments

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the practice of his Department in applying to admirals of the Fleet, field marshals and marshals of the Royal Air Force, who remain on the active list, the rule that Crown servants are free to accept certain business appointments without official permission two years after their retirement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Admirals of the Fleet, field marshals and marshals of the Royal Air Force are subject to the rules governing the acceptance of outside appointments in the same way as other Crown servants to whom the rules apply. Whilst they remain on the active list and for two years after their names are removed from that list, they are required to seek the Government's approval before taking up any outside appointments.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Orange Marches

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from Mr. Tom Walsh of the Gaelic Athletic Association concerning Orangemen marches in Catholic areas in the Province; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I received a letter from Mr. Walsh on 10 July. I also received copies of it from two hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry). My private secretary will be writing to Mr. Walsh shortly and I shall arrange for both hon. Members to receive a copy of the reply.

Down Royal Racecourse

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been paid from the horse racing fund to Down Royal racecourse in each of the last five years.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	£
1980-81	28,490
1981-82	41,080
1982-83	24,875
1983-84	22,340
1984-85	70,000

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what has been the amount of grant aid paid to Down Royal racecourse by the Department of Agriculture in each of the last five years;

(2) to what extent the Department of Agriculture has grant aided prize money for Down Royal racecourse in each of the last five years.

Dr. Boyson: The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland has paid grant aid to Down Royal racecourse as follows:

	£
1980-81	49,050
1981-82	50,410
1982-83	5,485
1983-84	1,925
1984-85	95,810

Of this, £39,945 in 1984-85 was towards prize money.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the current tax cost in mortgage interest relief of each 1 per cent. increase in interest rates.

Mr. Moore: The direct revenue cost of mortgage interest relief from a 1 percentage point increase in mortgage interest rates would be about £350 million at current levels of lending, if the increase were to apply for a full year.

Rates

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures showing domestic rate payments as a percentage of personal disposable income in *(a)* the latest year for which figures are available, *(b)* five years earlier and *(c)* 10 years earlier.

Mr. Peter Rees: Estimates of domestic rate payments net of rate rebates in the United Kingdom as a proportion of total personal disposable income are as follows for the financial years 1974-75, 1979-80, 1984-85:

	Per cent.
1974-75	1·9
1979-80	2·0
1984-85	2·3

Sources: Department of the Environment Central Statistical Office.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures showing rates as a proportion of total taxation in *(a)* the latest year for which figures are available, *(b)* five years earlier and *(c)* 10 years earlier.

Mr. Peter Rees: Local authority rates as a proportion of total general Government taxation (including national insurance, and so on, contributions) was as follows:

	Per cent.
1974-75	10·2
1979-80	9·6
1984-85*	10·5

*Provisional.
Source: Financial Statistics June 1985 edition and CSO Databank.

Capital Goods Exports

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he proposes to consult the financial community on mechanisms for providing soft loans for capital goods exports; and what time scale is envisaged.

Mr. Peter Rees: Consultations between officials of various Departments and the Bank of England and representatives of the financial community, are now taking place.

Infrastructure

Mr. Dubs asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about increased spending on the infrastructure.

Mr. Peter Rees: Several.

Tax Allowance

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the level of single transferable tax allowance which could be funded in 1985-86 on a revenue neutral basis, assuming separate taxation of investment as well as earned income, abolition of wife's earned income allowance, of the age allowance and of the additional person allowance, and that the category B wife's pension would be taxed as belonging to the wife.

Mr. Moore: The resulting fully transferable personal allowance would be about £2,260.

Personal Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost in the present financial year of the additional personal allowance.

Mr. Moore: The estimated direct revenue cost of the additional personal allowance is £150 million at 1985-86 levels of income.

Sterling Divergence

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his written reply dated 5 July concerning the exchange rate between the £ sterling and the ecu, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each month since March 1983 the average movement of the sterling divergence indicators.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is in the table:

£ divergence indicator—monthly averages since March 1983*

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
January		−147	321
February		−90	276
March	425	30	146
April	−236	61	−19
May	−218	−3	−76
June	−101	49	−121
July	−100	73	
August	−174	31	
September	−150	21	

£ divergence indicator—monthly averages since March 1983*

	1983	1984	1985
October	−78	97	
November	−146	130	
December	−124	178	

* The divergence indicator is calculated by expressing the ecu's premium or discount against sterling (that is the percentage deviation of sterling's market ecu rate from its notional central rate) as a percentage of sterling's maximum divergence spread (ie 1·91 per cent.) if it were a normal member of the mechanism.

Building Societies

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received in connection with the publication of the Green Paper, "Building Societies: A New Framework", concerning the practice of certain building societies of making advances out of their funds for purposes not connected with house purchase or home improvement; and if he will make it his policy to include in his proposed new legislation a code of practice to ensure fair competition for any extension of building society powers;

(2) what representations he has received in connection with the publication of the Green Paper, "Building Societies: A New Framework", concerning the evidence that building societies obtain from borrowers that loans made by means of a second charge are for home improvement or purposes reasonably incidental to it; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that his proposed new legislation will include a requirement for societies to satisfy the Inland Revenue that loans qualifying for tax relief under MIRAS are for mortgages of freehold or leasehold estate and home improvement purposes only.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have received a number of representations about building societies lending for purposes other than house purchase or improvement. The Government have announced that they intend to bring the treatment of lending institutions under the Consumer Credit Act into line, but a final decision on how best to achieve this has not yet been taken.

There have also been some representations on the evidence societies obtain on the purpose of loans. Loans are eligible for tax relief under MIRAS only if made for purchase or improvement of the main residence of the borrower (or his divorced or separated spouse or dependent relative or if they are made to a person over 65 for the purchase of a life annuity secured on his main residence). The borrower is already required under existing law to certify that his loan meets the conditions for tax relief.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present pension of a person who retired from *(a)* local government and *(b)* other sectors of public service immediately after the index-linked pension system became operative whose salary at that time was £3,000, £4,000, £5,000, £6,000, £7,000 and £10,000 respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since the size of a pension depends not only on final salary but on length of service it is not possible to answer the question as put. However, the annual pension of a public servant who retired on 27 July 1971, the date of Royal Assent of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971, would now be roughly 4½ times larger in cash terms than when it was first awarded.

For example, a local government officer who retired in July 1971 on a salary of £3,000 after a full career of 40 years' service would have received an original pension of £1,500 and would now be receiving a pension of £6,860. If his pensionable service had been, say, 20 years, his original pension would have been £750 and would now be £3,430. The comparable figures where the final salary was £10,000 would, for an individual with 40 years' service, be £5,000 in 1971 and £22,860 now; and for the individual with 20 years' service, £2,500 in 1971 and £11,430 now.

The position for civil servants, NHS staff, teachers and members of the armed forces would be broadly the same as for local government staff. The pension of police and firemen would also be broadly the same assuming that they exercised the option of commuting a quarter of their pension into a lump sum.

Deeds of Covenant

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost in 1985-86 of the tax relief on *(a)* charitable deeds of covenant and *(b)* non-charitable deeds of covenant.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Nationalised Industries (Annual Reports)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which nationalised industries present their annual accounts on a current cost basis and which on an historic cost basis; and whether it is his policy to secure a greater degree of uniformity.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

European Monetary System

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what change in circumstances triggers a change in the central rate of currencies forming the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exchange market pressures requiring an adjustment of central rates can stem from a number of sources. These include, in particular, the degree of convergence of economic performance and policies as regards inflation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the central rate of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system *(a)* in September 1984 and *(b)* currently; and what change has taken place in the £ sterling's relationship to it in that period.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 3 July 1985, at column *174*.

Early-leavers Entitlements

Mr. Walters asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to introduce fiscal incentives to encourage pension organisations to preserve and revalue early-leaver entitlements.

Mr. Peter Rees: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much revenue is lost by *(a)* wife's earnings election and *(b)* wife's earnings allowance;

(2) what would be the estimated cost to the Exchequer of raising the married and single personal allowances to £4,500 and £2,250, respectively; and how much of this would represent a parallel increase in the wife's earnings allowance.

(3) how much revenue is raised through income tax on the difference between the relevant personal allowance and *(a)* £4,500 for a married person and *(b)* £2,250 for a single person.

(4) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated cost of wife's earnings allowance by tax unit income bands in the current financial year.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue is brought in by value added tax and stamp duty on the various transactions involved in buying and selling houses and other living accommodation.

Mr. Hayhoe: The stamp duty on residential property is estimated to have raised £290 million in 1984-85. I regret that a meaningful estimate of theVAT on such transactions cannot be given.

Average Earnings

Mr. Portillo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many income tax payers there are who are on average or below average earnings.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Torney asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the role played by Mr. Michael Hepker, chairman of Sumrie Clothes, Leeds in the events leading to the collapse of the Johnson Matthey Bankers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the role played by Mr. Michael Hepker, chairman of Sumrie Clothes plc, Leeds, in the events leading up to the collapse of Johnson Matthey Bankers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Members have a reply as soon as possible.

Tax Files

Mr. Madden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the repository of files from Bradford tax districts is being moved from Bradford to Leeds; what type of accommodation is required for storing files; how many premises in Bradford were considered; when the repository in Leeds will open; whether it is intended that this facility will be used permanently; how long a repository for tax files has been located in Bradford; what manpower implications result from re-locating the repository in Leeds; and what is the cost of establishing the repository in Leeds.

Mr. Moore: The Bradford repository, used since 1970, has a number of unsatisfactory features, including asbestos problems. The files will be moved permanently to an ideally suitable and readily available light industrial Crown building in Leeds in March 1986. It is therefore unnecessary to consider alternative accommodation in Bradford. Six jobs will go to Leeds. The cost of establishing the Leeds repository will be around £575,000.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Winnick asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's latest policy on public expenditure on the social, welfare, housing services and the infrastructure.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1985, c. *150*]: It remains the Government's policy to direct resources, within the overall spending totals, taking account of their priorities and commitments and the effectiveness with which they are used.

North Sea Oil Revenue

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total contribution of yields from North sea oil to the United Kingdom's gross domestic product in each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 July 1985, c. *150*]: The information is set out in the table.

Contribution of North sea oil and gas to GDP

	£ billion 1980
1979-80	8·9
1980-81	9·1
1981-82	9·9
1982-83	11·5
1983-84	12·5
1984-85	13·1

TRANSPORT

Bus Services

7. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to increase central grants to local authority transport services, following the Government's response to the Transport Committee report on buses.

Mr. Ridley: No.

27. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about his response to the Transport Committee's report on buses; and if he will make a statement.

35. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received about the response to the Transport Committee's report on buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: To date I have received only one representation about the Government's response to the Transport Committee's report on the White Paper "Buses".

London Regional Transport

12. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received from London Regional Transport for reductions in the scale of the London underground network.

Mrs. Chalker: I have received no such proposals.

Rail Engineering Works (Swindon)

14. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the implications for his rail policy of the proposed closure of the British Rail engineering works at Swindon.

Mr. Ridley: I have received 26 representations from those personally affected.

Severn Crossing

16. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the latest progress of the feasibility study into the building of a second Severn crossing.

Mrs. Chalker: Detailed work is in hand and consultations are being held on the options for the two corridors about which my right hon. Friend informed the House on 1 April 1985. We expect the study to be completed by the target date of August 1986.

St. Pancras-Sheffield Line

17. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to discuss the timekeeping of trains on the St. Pancras-Sheffield line with the chairman of the British Railways Board.

Mr. David Mitchell: Responsibility for the punctuality of services on individual lines lies with the British Rail. However, my right hon. Friend and the chairman have discussed train punctuality and the chairman has described the measures the board is taking to achieve the punctuality standards the board has set. If the hon. Member has a specific complaint about services on the line, I suggest he takes the matter up with the chairman in the first instance.

Roads (East Dorset)

18. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on road developments in east Dorset.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The only road in east Dorset for which I am responsible is the A31-A35 trunk road. In recent years we have provided bypasses along this road for Wimborne (1981) and Bere Regis (1982). Work is in progress on a bypass of Ferndown, and the recently published roads report lists four further schemes which are in preparation.

Transport Bill

19. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on the Transport Bill; and of these, how many were in favour and how many against.

24. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received seeking changes in the provisions of the Transport Bill.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since the Transport Bill received its Second Reading in the House of Lords on 11 June, I have received around 400 representations the majority of which seek assurance or express anxiety about various aspects of the Bill. In most cases I hope my replies will have reassured those concerned.

M1 Repairs

20. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further repairs to the M1 motorway are expected during the second six months of the current year.

Mrs. Chalker: Four major renewal schemes are programmed to be carried out on the M1 in the second half of this year. One, the junction 8 scheme, finished on 11 July, five days ahead of schedule. The other three will be in Buckinghamshire, Leicestershire and South Yorkshire. There will in addition be minor repairs taking place from time to time.

33. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he made of the effect on traffic flows at junction 8 of the M1 in the first two weeks of July of his Department's recent publicity campaign regarding the repair works being carried out there.

Mrs. Chalker: The two-way traffic flow through junction 8 was reduced by over 40,000 vehicles per 16-hour day during the critical period of the works, undoubtedly as a result of our publicity campaign and the other measures adopted.

National Bus Company

21. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the National Bus Company to discuss the future of the National Bus Company pension fund.

26. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of the National Bus Company to discuss the future of the National Bus Company pension fund.

Mr. Ridley: This was one of the matters I discussed with the chairman at our meeting on 11 June.

Basildon (Signposting)

22. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress there has been in the placing of road signs to Basildon on major roads throughout Essex and on the M25.

Mrs. Chalker: Specifications for signs to Basildon on the M25, the A127 and the A1089 trunk roads are now being prepared prior to their manufacture. I hope they will all be erected within the next three months.

Bus Services (Thurrock)

23. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the likely effects of the possible deregulation of bus services in Thurrock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have made no specific assessment of the effects of deregulation in Thurrock, but I have no reason to doubt that competition will benefit bus passengers in Thurrock as it will elsewhere in the country.

Roads (Maintenance)

25. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will withdraw the code of practice for the maintenance of trunk roads and motorways issued by his Department earlier this year.

Mrs. Chalker: No. The introduction of the code of practice is an important step towards obtaining consistent and safe maintenance standards and best value from the funds available for routine maintenance on the national road network. Improvements to the code will be made as experience is gained.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), intends to reply to the letter to her from the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, dated 20 May, regarding the code of practice for routine maintenance of motorways and all purpose trunk roads.

Mrs. Chalker: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Tyne and Wear Metro

28. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his officials have yet met representatives of the Tyne and Wear county council to discuss the metro, following his undertaking to that effect to the Transport Committee.

Mr. David Mitchell: Discussions between officials of my Department and those of Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive are continuing.

Blackwater Valley Route

29. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to designate the Blackwater Valley route a trunk road.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no plans to intervene in the preparation of this scheme by Hampshire and Surrey county councils.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Links)

30. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with European Transport Ministers on high speed rail links through a possible Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: In discussions with the French Transport Minister, Monsieur Auroux, in connection with the Channel fixed link I have made it clear that, while through rail links are primarily a question for negotiation between the railway administrations concerned and the promoters of the fixed link,. I would welcome any commercially viable arrangement which could be reached.

British Rail (Purchasing Policy)

31. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise the subject of British Rail's purchasing policies.

Mr. David Mitchell: I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss a wide range of matters of mutual interest, including the board's purchasing policy when appropriate.

British Airports Authority (Stansted Airport)

32. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has held any discussions with the British Airports Authority about extending its powers to purchase property severely affected by his decision to allow the expansion of Stansted airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The BAA's powers of acquisition are limited to land which is or might be needed for airport purposes. But once the BAA is reconstituted as a Companies Act company in preparation for privatisation it will be able to acquire properties by agreement with the owners without such restrictions. Moreover, as the White Paper on airports policy (Cmnd. 9542) states, the Government are considering whether owners of properties blighted by aircraft noise should be able to require an airport authority to purchase them.

European Road Safety Year

34. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for European Road Safety Year.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall use the year to highlight road safety initiatives in the field of legislation and research. Our publicity programme, and the efforts of other bodies, will be designed to increase public awareness of road safety problems in this country and abroad. We are still considering detailed possibilities, but I hope to increase our publicity efforts and in particular to encourage closer liaison between all the agencies involved and to bring in private sector sponsorship of road safety activities. Plans are also being developed in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Rail Engineering Industry

36. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received from staff at the Glasgow works of British Rail Engineering Limited concerning the future of the United Kingdom rail engineering industry.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since the beginning of the year we have received four letters about the future of BREL's Glasgow works, including one from an employee. Also, a group of BR and BREL trade unionists recently raised the matter with me. In each case I explained that this was a matter for management decision by BREL and the British Railways Board.

European Community (Cabotage)

37. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport which European Economic Community countries, apart from the United Kingdom, allow competitive access to their coastal shipping, cabotage trades.

Mr. Ridley: Apart from the United Kingdom only Belgium, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland and, in practice, Denmark allow such access. This is a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs which I am pursuing urgently in bilateral discussions with EC Ministers. Discussions are also taking place within the Community on a proposal

from the Commission which would have the effect of ensuring mutual competitive access to all member states' cabotage trades.

Rail Electrification (North Wales)

38. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any proposal from British Rail to electrify the north Wales main line, or any other connecting service to the west coast main line.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

British Rail (Investment)

39. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total authorised level of investment for British Rail over the next five years; and how this compares with the period 1974 to 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board's 1984 corporate plan includes a five-year investment programme from 1985-86 worth £2·2 billion (at 1984-85 prices). Individual schemes are authorised as they reach an appropriate stage. During the five years from 1974 to 1978 inclusive, BRB invested £903 million, which is equivalent to £2·08 billion at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss future investment.

Mr. David Mitchell: I frequently meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Operator's Licences)

40. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the rules for local residents raising objections to applications for heavy goods vehicles operator's licences.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the provisions allowing local residents to make representations about applications for goods vehicle operator licences came into effect in June 1984 we have received comments on various aspects of the system. As part of the review we are about to undertake of the way the provisions are working, we shall consider these comments and also seek the views of interested organisations.

Unlicensed Vehicles (Bromley)

41. **Mr. John Hunt** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made any assessment of the results of the campaign against unlicensed and abandoned vehicles in the London borough of Bromley, launched by his Department in collaboration with the Bromley borough council in April; how many cases of unlicensed vehicles were referred for prosecution during the period of the campaign; and how many vehicles were removed from the streets during the same period.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The campaign against unlicensed and abandoned vehicles in the London borough of Bromley resulted in the collection of more than £61,000 in additional voluntary relicensing. Reports on over 700 unlicensed or abandoned vehicles were received, 200 cases have so far been referred for prosecution, five cases are the subject of removal notices by the local authority and investigations into the remainder are continuing.

Driving Test

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate for the last five years the number taking the driving test at the Truro centre and the number passing; and what were the national average figures for the same period.

Mrs. Chalker: For Truro alone the only readily available information is that in the year 14 July 1984 to 6 July 1985, 4,114 tests were conducted and 2,143 candidates passed — a pass rate of 52 per cent. The following information relates to the western traffic area, in which Truro lies, and Great Britain.

Calendar Year	Western Traffic Area			Great Britain		
	Tests Conducted	Number Passed	Per cent.	Tests Conducted	Number Passed	Per cent.
1980	135,155	68,299	50·53	1,962,034	927,795	47·29
1981	105,877	51,131	48·29	2,031,225	966,845	47·60
1982	138,554	69,632	50·26	2,005,296	965,036	48·12
1983	138,975	70,494	50·72	1,892,315	921,008	48·67
1984	140,327	71,276	50·79	1,784,112	875,432	49·07

Trinity House (Overseas Work)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the amount of work on behalf of Trinity House placed with overseas shipyards in the last three years; what information he has as to the reasons for such expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 15 July with the consent of my right hon. Friend, Trinity House signed a contract with Hyundai of Korea for the construction of a lighthouse tender at a total cost then estimated at £9·6 million. Hyundai's price was £5 million below the lowest UK bid, which far exceeded the support that could be offered from the shipbuilding intervention fund. The whole cost of the vessel falls on the general lighthouse fund, which is private money for which my right hon. Friend is publicly accountable. We decided it would be incompatible with our responsibility for the fund to secure less than the best value for money obtainable. Fifty-six per cent. of the value of the content of the vessel will be procured in the United Kingdom. With the exception of the contract with Hyundai, Trinity House has placed no work with overseas shipyards in the last three years.

Motorways (Surfaces)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has yet decided whether concrete or tar surfaces are most cost beneficial for use on motorways; and what are the reasons for this choice.

Mrs. Chalker: It is not possible to make a general decision on which material is the more cost beneficial. Either of these materials can give equally good performance, although their relative merits may depend on the particular requirements of the scheme in question. For those reasons the Department usually allows for a choice of design and accepts the lowest tender, whether it be for concrete or bituminous materials or a combination of the two. Design standards are revised and updated in the light of information on performance and the results of research and development.

M3 (Extension)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the public inquiry into the extension of the M3 motorway from Bar End to the Chilworth roundabout to be completed and the inspector's report to be available to him.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the inspector hopes to complete the inquiry early next month. The timing of the submission of the report is a matter for the inspector, but, on the basis of experience of other inquiries, I would hope to receive it within about three to six months of the close of the inquiry.

Air Travel Reserve Fund

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received to the consultations on the future of the air travel reserve fund; and when he expects to announce his conclusions.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been very encouraged by the response. There is widespread support in favour of changes to the present arrangements for protecting air package holidaymakers. I hope to announce very shortly my conclusions on the consultations.

Vehicles (Roadworthiness)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what tests are done to ensure the roadworthiness of vehicles leaving the United Kingdom;

(2) what regulations govern the roadworthiness of coaches leaving the United Kingdom, the competence of the drivers and the safety of the passengers, over and above those required for driving in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not impose special regulations or tests on vehicles or drivers leaving the United Kingdom, and know of no other country which does so.

Marques

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the vessel the Marques was given a load-line certificate of exemption by his Department without his Department surveying the vessel.

Mr. Ridley: Matters of this kind will be considered at the formal investigation into the loss of the Marques. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on them in advance.

Coach Drivers

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what precautions are taken to ensure that foreign coach drivers are properly qualified and experienced to drive in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: The police and authorised officers of the Departmemt of Transport have powers to require production of drivers' licences. Drivers of coaches which temporarily enter the United Kingdom must hold the appropriate class of foreign licence or international driving permit.

Civil Actions

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many cases of legal proceedings have been instituted by private citizens or by organisations against his Department in each single year since 1979; what was the nature of the cases which the plantiffs presented; and what proportion of them were ruled in favour of the plantiff by the appropriate judge.

Mr. Ridley: Legal proceedings have been instituted against the Department on a wide variety of subject matters, including claims for damages, challenges to administrative decisions, appeals against licensing decisions and references on matters of compensation, as well as many other topics. I therefore regret that the information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

London (Traffic Control)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how, in the light his Department's press notice 211, he proposes that the number of cars entering central London and traffic levels in inner London, including those on orbital routes such as the south circular, should be controlled.

Mrs. Chalker: As my speech quoted therein made clear, there is no easy answer to London's complex traffic problems, but a sensible balance between public and private transport is the right approach. Seeking to control traffic by fostering bad conditions and congestion is certainly not the right way forward. The importance of proper studies of environment and traffic in specific areas such as the south circular corridor is all the more vital with the changing traffic patterns as the M25 approaches completion.

Coastguard

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the level of provision of coastguard services around the coasts.

Mr. David Mitchell: Her Majesty's Coastguard's 10-year modernisation programme will be virtually complete with the opening in December this year of the new maritime rescue subcentre "Solent", at Lee-on-Solent. All 24 centres will then be fitted with the latest technology for the co-ordination of maritime search and rescue in close co-operation with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, aircraft of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force and British Telecom's coast radio stations.

This country now possesses the most comprehensive maritime and coastal search and rescue service anywhere

outside the United States; and I would like to pay tribute to the skill and dedication of the Coastguard Service, which last year recorded 4,879 incidents, and co-ordinated assistance to 8,516 persons in danger at sea or on the coastline. In spite of their tremendous efforts, 257 lives were still lost.

It remains the responsibility of those on our coastline and in yachts and fishing vessels to exercise due care for their own safety. In particular, all boats should be encouraged to carry marine band VHF radio, which enables mariners to call the Coastguard for assistance, allowing the latter in any part of the United Kingdom to fix swiftly the position of a casualty by radio direction finding.

Lorry Bans

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of lorry bans applied by local authorities and the total number of miles of roads affected by such bans in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. *106*]: Information is not available in the form requested.

The most recent survey carried out by the Department identified some 2,250 lorry controls that had been introduced by local authorities on amenity grounds. A list of schemes entitled "List of Lorry Control Schemes Made on Amenity Grounds" is in the Library, and I am putting a supplementary list in the Library in respect of the 143 schemes in operation in 1983 in Greater London.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 23 July 1985

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to his statement of 12 July, *Official Report*, column 1451, he can now give more precise figures for the cost of Select Committees.

Mr. Biffen: In 1984-85 the identifiable costs of Select Committees were £600,000. This figure represents the costs of travel within the United Kingdom and abroad by Select Committees; of shorthand writers; witness expenses and salaries for specialist assistants. It does not include elements of expenditure which cannot be isolated, such as the salaries of the Clerks and the costs of using the facilities of the House; nor the compliance costs of Select Committees in Government Departments.

Houses of Parliament (Costs)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to his statement of 12 July, *Official Report*, column 1451, he can now give more precise figures for the cost of running Parliament between 1981-82 and 1984-85 and the rate of rise in the retail price index during the same period.

Mr. Biffen: The total identified costs for the Houses of Parliament, rose from £56·2 million in 1981-82 to £77·5 million in 1984-85. This represents a rise of 38 per cent. Between 1981-82 and 1984-85 the retail price index rose by 17·7 per cent.

St. Stephen's Club

Mr. Body asked the Lord Privy Seal what plans there are for the use of the former St. Stephen's club; and whether the matter is to be considered by the catering sub-committee.

Mr. Biffen: The former St. Stephen's club at No. 1 Bridge street is one of the buildings being considered by the new building sub-committee of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in its inquiry into the possible use and financing of phase II of the Bridge street development. I understand that discussions are continuing between the new building sub-committee and the property services agency and others, and that the catering sub-committee is being consulted as appropriate.

WALES

Rural Areas (Financial Assistance)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available financial assistance to rural areas of Wales outside the locations covered by Mid Wales Development on similar lines to that available within that geographical area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to extend the coverage of the financial assistance currently provided by the Development Board for Rural Wales. Areas outside the responsibility of the board will continue to have support from other agencies.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider seeking to establish a separate new grant for rural areas in Wales on similar lines to the present urban aid scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am always ready to consider ways of sustaining the rural economy in Wales and am keeping the position under review.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to amend the constitution of district health authorities in Wales to ensure that each district council has a representative on the health authority which covers its area.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Members appointed by district councils are not intended to be representative of any particular district council as such, but should be appointed by the district councils in each district health authority area with due regard to members' expertise and experience.

ECSC (Loans)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made concerning the non-availability of low-interest European Coal and Steel Community loans for industrial development in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Representations have been made to the Commission of the European Communities about the suspension of new ECSC loans business and I am awaiting the outcome of urgent discussions now in progress.

Agricultural Organisation Society

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been paid to the Wales Agricultural Organisation Society in each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Grants paid to the Welsh Agricultural Organisation Society in each of the past five years are listed. Currently these funds represent about 40 per cent. of the society's total expenditure, the remainder coming from members' subscriptions, fees and miscellaneous income.

Year ended 31 March	£
1980-81	76,020
1981-82	85,776
1982-83	96,000
1983-84	85,000
1984-85	89,250

Note: Funds were advanced under an Agency agreement with the Central Council for Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation until March 1983, this Agreement was then taken over by Food from Britain.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the numbers of inpatients, day cases and outpatients attendances in Wales in 1978 and 1984, together with the percentage change.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	Numbers		*Percentage change*
	1978	*1984*	*1978-1984*
In-patient cases	349,628	412,866	+18
Day cases	27,030	35,934	+33
Out-patient attendances	1,761,693	2,130,709	+21

Heart Bypass Operations

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the percentage change in the number of patients accepted for heart bypass operations in Wales between 1978 and 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of heart bypass operations carried out in Wales increased by 154 per cent. between 1978 and 1984.

Kidney Patients

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the percentage change in the number of new patients accepted for kidney failure treatment in Wales between 1978 and 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of new patients accepted for all types of treatment of end-stage renal failure in Wales has increased by 110 per cent. between 1978 and 1984.

Perinatal Deaths

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the percentage change in the number of perinatal deaths in Wales between 1978 and 1984.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Number of perinatal deaths		*Percentage change*
1978	*1984*	*1978-1984*
566	380	−33

Medical Staff

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the numbers of *(a)* consultants in acute and supporting specialties, *(b)* consultant paediatricians, *(c)* geriatric nurses, *(d)* mental illness/handicap nurses and *(e)* hospital midwives in Wales in 1978 and 1984, or the latest available year, together with the percentage change.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	1978	*1984*	*Percentage change*
	1978	*1983†*	
Number of consultants in acute and supporting specialties (wte)*	502·8	555·0	+10
Number of consultant paediatricians (wte)*	26·7	29·8	+12
Number of geriatric nurses (wte)*	2,423·9	3,074·5	+27
Number of mental illness/ handicap nurses (wte)*	3,651·7	4,572·0	+25
Number of hospital midwives‡	714·0	840·0	+18

* Whole-time equivalents.

† 1983 is the latest year for which figures are available in a form that can be compared with 1978.

‡ Does not take into account the fact that the working week changed from 40 hours to 37½ hours in 1980.

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the numbers of doctors, dentists, health visitors, district nurses and midwives in Wales in 1978 and 1984 and the percentage change in their numbers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	1978	*1984*	*Percentage change 1978-1984*
General Medical practitioners (number)	1,418	1,661	+17
General dental practitioners (number)	598	714	+19
Health visitors (wte)	475	587	+24
District nurses and midwives (wte)*	1,273	1,533	+20

* Does not take into account the fact that the working week changed from 40 hours to 37½ hours in 1980.

Home Helps

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the numbers of home helps in Wales in 1978 and 1984, and the percentage change in their numbers.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There were 3,463 home helps in Wales in 1984, and increase of 20 per cent. on the figure of 2,894 in 1978. The numbers are both expressed in terms of whole-time equivalents.

Health Authorities (Funding)

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for the overall growth in funding of district health authorities in Wales, between 1979-80 and 1985-86 in financial and in percentage terms.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Between 1979-80 and 1985-86 the growth funds available to health authorities in Wales was £87·8 million or 16·3 per cent. after taking into account changes in pay and prices in the NHS.

TRANSPORT

Municipal Airports (Privatisation)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what control will be exercised over capital receipts from the privatisation sales of municipal airports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under existing legislation capital receipts cannot be used to finance current expenditure. For capital expenditure, the Secretary of State for the Environment prescribed a proportion of receipts that may be added to each authority's annual allocation. For 1985-86 the proportion is 30 per cent. for all receipts other than for housing. The remainder can be used for financing expenditure within the allocation, subject to 10 per cent. virement between years. The Government is at present considering how the current system should be improved.

Motor Vehicles (Ownership)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make proof of ownership of a car registration necessary before a number plate is produced.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Such legislation would be very difficult to enforce in present circumstances. However my Department is reviewing with the British Standards Institute the possible inclusion of number plates in a kite mark scheme, as a basis for tightening control of the sale of plates.

Merchant Navy (Defence Role)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the shipping economics advisory group study on the availability of merchant shipping for a defence role will be complete.

Mr. Ridley: I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library today. For reasons of confidentiality, at a few points in the copy information has been consolidated.

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans to issue any indication of his policy regarding the size of Government subsidies to passenger transport joint boards and the account he is taking of the implications of the level of Government financial support for fare levels in the light of the enactment of the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Policy on subsidies to public transport services in the metropolitan counties, including policy on fare levels, will from 1 April 1986 be the responsibility of the new passenger transport authorities established under the Local Government Act 1985. These authorities will be eligible for Government grants, including rate support grant. I have made clear on many occasions my view that present levels of revenue support to public transport services in the metropolitan areas are excessive, and in May my Department issued advice to the passenger transport executives that they should plan on the assumption that the level of revenue support for 1986-87 will be between five per cent. and 15 per cent. in cash terms below the protected expenditure level set for 1985-86. For their first three financial years the new authorities will be subject to precept control under the Rates Act 1984. Expenditure levels under the provisions of that Act will be determined as soon as the authorities are constituted.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to how many new fishing vessels have been registered in *(a)* Grimsby, *(b)* Hull, *(c)* Fleetwood, *(d)* Aberdeen and *(e)* Peterhead since 1 January 1983.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of commercial fishing vessels (over 10 metres in length) either newly built or new to the United Kingdom fleet and registered since 1 January 1983 are as follows:

	Number
Grimsby	1
Hull	3
Fleetwood	1
Aberdeen	9
Peterhead	10

In addition, a number of vessels have been transferred from ports elsewhere in the United Kingdom since 1 January 1983 and reregistered at these ports. The numbers (of over 10 metre vessels) are as follows:

	Number
Grimsby	3
Hull	0
Fleetwood	*8
Aberdeen	12
Peterhead	9

* Four of the 8 Fleetwood vessels are no longer fishing or have since been sold elsewhere.

Finally, vessels may be transferred to ports and be based there but are not reregistered, e.g. there are eight such vessels at Fleetwood. No meaningful information is available for under 10 metre vessels.

Fishing Inspectors (Grading)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will authorise fisheries inspectors to compare the grading of fish coming to Grimsby onshore from Scotland and Ireland with that locally landed.

Mr. MacGregor: Responsibility for grading fresh and chilled fish to EC standards lies with the industry. As part of the advisory and supervisory role of the fisheries inspectorate, the chief inspector is currently engaged on an examination of grading performance at Grimsby and a number of other ports.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Hoyle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the location of the 145 intervention stores in England and Scotland which were referred to by the hon. Member for South Norfolk in his reply of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *30*; and what uses other than animal feed is made of the wheat.

Mr. MacGregor: Wheat is now held in 146 intervention stores at the following locations in England and Scotland. Wheat has a number of uses. Unless covered by special arrangemens, there would be no restriction on the use of wheat sold from intervention.

List of Wheat Stores in the United Kingdom

Abingdon (2)
Ancaster
Avonmouth
Aylesbury
Banbury
Barrow-on-Humber
Bicester
Birkenhead
Boroughbridge
Boston
Braintree (2)
Bressingham
Bury St. Edmunds (2)
Christchurch
Clopton
Colsterworth
Coventry
Dagenham
Diss
Doncaster (2)
Downham Market
Driffield (2)
Droitwich
Dudley
Duns
Essingwold
Elsworth
Ely (2)
Felixstowe (2)
Finmore
Ford
Foulsham
Fulbourn
Gainsborough (2)
Gateshead
Glenrothes
Gloucester
Grantham (2)
Grateley
Grimsby
Hadleigh
Hadstock
Halesworth
Halstead
Haresfield
Hartlebury (2)
Hatfield
Hayes
Heighington
Hemswell
Heybridge
Horncastle
Hull (3)
Huntington
Immingham
Ingham
Kings Lynn (2)
Kirkcaldy
Kirton Lindsey
Lincoln (2)
Linton
Locharbriggs
London
Luton
Lutterworth
Lympne
Maldon (2)
Manby
Market Harborough
Melmerby
Membury
Methwold
Misson
Mistley
Navenby
Newcastle
Newmarket
Normanton
Ormiston
Pebmarsh
Pocklington
Prees Heath
Raydon
Ringwood
Roydon
Royston (2)
Salisbury (2)
Sawston
Scunthorpe
Skegness
Sleaford
Snetterton
Soham
South Wigston
St. Ives
Stoke Ferry
Stowmarket (2)
Streatham
Sudbury (2)
Swaffham
Swinderby
Swindon
Tadcaster
Tangmere
Thorne
Tuxford
Ulceby
Uttoxeter
Walsingham
Wellingborough
Wells
Westbury
West Hallam
West Wratting
Whittlesford
Wimblington (2)
Wingham
Wisbech
Witham
Wroughton
York (2)

Veterinary Investigation Service Study

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now make a further statement on the efficiency study of the Veterinary Investigation Service.

Mr. Jopling: In my statement of 15 April on this study I announced a period of consultation with outside interests. That period is now at an end and I am studying the points made to me. I will also shortly be receiving the cost appraisals I referred to. I will make a comprehensive statement as soon as possible after the summer recess. In the meantime, however, I confirm the planned closure of Liverpool VI centre and the transfer of the work from there to the new centre at Barton Hall, Preston, once this is completed and becomes operational, which is expected to be about the end of September.

Bell Report

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is now able to make the further statement on the recommendations contained in Professor Bell's report of a study of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service promised in the answer to the hon. Member for Sherwood on 24 May, *Official Report*, column *582*.

Mr. Jopling: When I announced on 13 November column *164* the report by the new Director General of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, I said that I endorsed the conclusion that in principle it was entirely appropriate that farmers and others in the industry who avail themselves of the services of ADAS should contribute to their costs. I have also made it clear that the Government plan to reduce the net cost of ADAS advisory and statutory services by about £16·5 million in the financial year 1987-88. In my original statement on Professor Bell's report, I said that I was proceeding to a detailed examination of what would be involved in the implementation of his recommendations. One of those recommendations was that consideration should be given to the possibilities of charging users for part or all of any service (including work under statutory schemes) where there is an identifiable benefit to the customer. Following detailed consideration of that recommendation I am now ready to initiate discussions with the industry about the overall scope for raising revenue for advisory and statutory work and the areas in which it might be raised.

So far as advisory work is concerned I envisage a mixture of types of charge and types of advisory provision. These would include fees or subscriptions for specified ranges of advice, and specific charges for other services both to individuals and organisations and to groups of farmers acting in association. Statutory work makes up over one third of the work of ADAS. In this context I wish to explore charging possibilities in areas within which ADAS undertakes work in pursuit of animal, plant and public health and standards objectives.

In addition to revenue from charging, savings in ADAS manpower will also contribute to the reduction in the net cost of ADAS to which I refer above. But the extent of these savings and hence the resulting range of services which ADAS will be able to provide must depend on the response of the industry both to charging for advice and the proposed extension of charging for statutory work. Moreover, it is clear that services to be charged for should be carried out as efficiently and economically as possible. Taking into account the useful results of various studies of areas of ADAS activity I have commissioned in recent years, I intend to see what additional savings and improvements in efficiency can be made.

Consultations with industry are already in progress on the funding of research and development work undertaken

within ADAS and by other research organisations. ADAS research and development resources will also be available for contract work. The quality of the work of ADAS research and development establishments will in future be subject to review by independent visiting groups.

To help ADAS meet the new challenges that face it, I intend to constitute a management board, which, under the chairmanship of the Director General, will consist of the four heads of services, the newly created director of ADAS administration, a representative from Wales and three outside members who, I hope, will between them have experience in the areas of marketing, information technology, the farming industry and industrial research and development. In addition, a marketing officer for ADAS will be appointed at a senior level who will have access to outside expertise.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Court Costs Riot Trial (Costs)

Mr. Barron asked the Attorney-General what were the costs of the prosecution for the Doncaster coal house riot trial held at the Sheffield crown court; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The costs of the prosecution in this case are to be paid from central funds and are subject to taxation by the appropriate officer of the court. The costs awarded will be such sums as appear to the officer reasonably sufficient to compensate the prosecutor for the expenses properly incurred by him in carrying on the proceedings. This process of taxation has not yet begun.

Mr. Barron asked the Attorney-General what were the costs of the prosecution for the Orgreave riot trial held at the Sheffield crown court; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The costs of the prosecution in R *v.* Greenaway and others are to be paid from central funds and are subject to taxation by the appropriate officer of the court. The costs awarded will be such sums as appear to the officer reasonably sufficient to compensate the prosecutor for the expenses properly incurred by him in carrying on the proceedings. The process of taxation has not yet begun.

THE ARTS

Export of Works of Art (Report)

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether the Minister for the Arts will request the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art so to arrange its timetable that its report covering the year ended 30 June is made available to the public not later than nine months after the conclusion of the 12-month period reported upon.

Mr. Waldegrave: The aim each year is to publish the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art as soon as possible after the end of the period covered. Exceptionally heavy case loads in two consecutive years resulted in delay in the publication of the 1983-84 report. It is hoped to achieve publication of the 1984-85 report within the period stated by the hon. Member.

CIVIL SERVICE

Private Security Companies

Mr. Dubs asked the Minister for the Civil Service how staff of private security companies are vetted when working for Government Departments.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is the responsibility of individual Government Departments to ensure the suitability of any private company and its employees for work on their behalf. It would not be appropriate to give details of the steps taken to do so.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Professions (Competition)

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to increase competition in the professions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: Competition in the professions, as elsewhere, can be a powerful force for protecting the interests of consumers by encouraging greater efficiency and the provision of better service, lower prices and wider choice. The Government have already done much to relax restrictions in the professions. For example, we have ended the optician's monopoly on the dispensing of spectacles; legislation has been brought forward this Session to allow licensed conveyancers to compete with solicitors for conveyancing work; and restrictions on fee scales and advertising imposed by a number of professional bodies on their members, including architects and surveyors, solicitors, accountants, stockbrokers, opticians and vets, have been relaxed.

These measures have been taken after careful assessment of the nature and effect of the restrictions involved, in most cases by the Director General of Fair Trading or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I propose to continue this process of scrutiny of restrictions in the professions with a view to establishing whether further relaxations would now be justified.

There remain a number of professional bodies which continue to impose restrictions on advertising by their members. Although mandatory fee scales appear no longer to be in use, some professional bodies recommend what level of fees their members should charge. This practice, taken together with other restrictions such as on advertising, may have much the same effect as a mandatory scale. There are also some restrictions on the legal form of business through which a member of a profession may practise; and the practice of some professions is restricted by statute to registered practitioners. The origin of these restrictions was no doubt a concern to safeguard the interests of the public. But any restrictions on competition need to be reviewed from time to time to see whether they remain appropriate to changing circumstances.

I have therefore consulted the Director General of Fair Trading about a programme of work which his office might conduct over the next 12 months. We have agreed that this programme should include:

(i) A review of the right of representation held by patent agents and solicitors under the Patents Act 1977, which I have asked the Director General to undertake in order to give effect to the recommendation for such a review

in Sir Robin Nicholson's Green Paper "Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9117); and a review of advertising and charging restrictions relating to patent agents.

(ii) A review of advertising and charging restrictions in the professions serving the construction industries (including consulting, structural and civil engineers).

(iii) A review of remaining significant advertising restrictions elsewhere in the professions; and

(iv) A review of restrictions on the kind of organisation through which members of professions may offer their services (for example, restrictions on inter-professional links or mixed partnerships).

This is a substantial programme for carrying forward the government's policy of promoting competition in the professions. The Director General expects that the phased programme of reviews will be completed by August 1986.

Exports (Profitability)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his answer of 5 July, if he will list the factors which have caused the relative profitability of exports to increase since 1978 despite a 25 per cent. increase in relative unit labour costs; and if he will make a statement regarding the criteria which determined his use of relative profitability as a measure of competitiveness.

Mr. Fletcher: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade gave on 16 July regarding the relationship between relative unit labour costs and the relative profitability of exports. While the latter is not a direct measure of international competitiveness in the same way as the former, it is a useful indicator of the economic background to our export performance.

EC (Trade Statistics)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to his written reply dated 5 July concerning trade of the United Kingdom in Germany, to what factors he attributes the fact that *(a)* the EC share of United Kingdom exports has not increased over the six-year period and *(b)* the EC share of imports has increased.

Mr. Fletcher: There were no large changes in the EC share of United Kingdom exports and imports of manufactures between the first quarters of 1979 and 1985. The figures, consistent with the previous answer, are in the table.

*European Community share of United Kingdom exports and imports of manufactures**

Percentage

	Exports	*Imports*
Q1/1979	40	52
Q1/1985	39	51

* Standard International Trade Classification, sections 5 to 8.
Source: Eurostat Monthly External Trade Bulletin. CRONOS.

Consumer Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, at an annual rate, the value of imports and exports of consumer goods since September 1981, together with the unit values and volume indices with the unit values from 1970 to 1980.

Mr. Fletcher: The information is as follows:

Trade in consumer goods

1980=100 OTS basis

	Unit value index	
	exports	*imports*
1970	28·1	27·9
1971	30·3	30·1
1972	32·9	33·3
1973	37·4	41·2
1974	42·9	49·5
1975	51·9	58·6
1976	60·7	72·6
1977	74·0	82·9
1978	82·1	90·5
1979	89·9	96·2
1980	100·0	100·0

	Value £ million		*Volume index*		*Unit value index*	
	exports	*imports*	*exports*	*imports*	*exports*	*imports*
1981*	4,574	8,822	98·7	114·6	110·5	114·8
1982	4,483	8,791	93·5	112·3	116·1	116·4
1983	4,916	10,560	94·3	125·0	126·5	126·9
1984	5,725	12,015	104·0	134·4	137·0	136·7
1985†	6,620	13,048	111·0	134·1	145·6	148·9

* September to December 1981.
† January to May 1985.

Argentina

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of British exports to Argentina in 1980-81 and 1981-82 measured in fixed prices; and what was the equivalent value of Argentine imports for each of the same years.

Mr. Fletcher: The value of United Kingdom exports and imports measured in fixed prices is not available. In the period April 1980 to March 1981, United Kingdom exports in current prices were valued at £155 million and United Kingdom imports at £145 million.

Figures for the corresponding period in 1981-1982 were £105 million and £175 million, respectively.

Source: United Kingdom Overseas Trade tatistics.
Notes: (i) United Kingdom exports are valued fob.
(ii) United Kingdom imports are valued cif.

Steel

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total volume of steel imported from the European Economic Community and from the rest of the world, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available and in each of the previous nine years.

Mr. Fletcher: The following is the information:

Tonnage of United Kingdom imports (including conversion material) of steel industry products

'000 tonnes

	From European Community	*From rest of world*
1976	2,590	1,498
1977	2,345	1,373
1978	2,231	1,441
1979	2,347	1,437
1980*	3,059	1,561
1981	2,515	800
1982	2,615	1,221

	From European Community	From rest of world
1983	2,363	982
1984	2,632	922
1985 (January to May)	1,085	400

* Affected by BSC strike.

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau from Her Majesty's Customs returns.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the percentage reduction in steel capacity in the United Kingdom and each of the member states of the European Economic Community since the beginning of 1979.

Mr. Fletcher: The following is the available information:

Production potential of steel in European Community

	1979 million tonnes	1983 million tonnes	Percentage change 1979 to 1983
Belgium	19·7	17·0	−14
Denmark	1·2	0·9	−25
France	32·0	28·8	−10
Greece	*	4·0	*
Ireland	0·1	0·3	*†
Italy	37·0	39·6	+ 7
Luxembourg	7·3	6·4	−12
Netherlands	8·4	8·0	− 5
United Kingdom	28·9	24·5	−15
West Germany	68·8	61·4	−11

* Not available.

† Precise percentage change for Ireland cannot be provided from these figures.

Source: ECSC investment in the Community coalmining and iron and steel industries.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received British Shipbuilders annual report and accounts for 1984-85.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In accordance with sections 17(9) and 18(6) of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977, my right hon. Friend will tomorrow lay before each House copies of British Shipbuilders' annual report and accounts for 1984-85.

Computer Software (Schools)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure the supply of software to schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. As a result of this Government's policies we have a more highly developed use of computers in the United Kingdom than any other comparable country.

The Government wish to maintain the momentum created and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is announcing today a new programme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland to replace the microelectronics education programme after March 1986.

My Department intends to contine its support for the education system in this field. In particular we need to ensure that hardware already installed is supported by an adequate supply of educational software. We have decided, therefore, to provide additional help in this area during the current financial year, 1986-87 and 1987-88. Accordingly, sums of £0·5 million, £2 million and £1 million have been set aside in each of the three financial years concerned for local education authorities and independent secondary schools. The purpose of this support is to enable the education system to buy more educational software from the commercial sector. The scheme will apply throughout the United Kingdom. It represents support for the consumer rather than the producer and local education authorities will be free to make their own decisions about which software to buy.

I regard this as significant support by the Government for both the education system and educational software suppliers which will help schools to make full use of their existing investment in hardware. I hope that as a result of this support, software houses and educational publishers will recognise the determination of the Government to maintain the British lead in this area and that they will consider further investment in education software accordingly. The scheme should also provide a solid base in the United Kingdom from which our companies can take advantage of export opportunities.

Sumrie Clothes plc Leeds

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will institute an inquiry under the Companies Acts into the activities of Sumrie Clothes plc, Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: I am considering whether any action by my Department should be taken in respect of alleged breaches of the Companies Act.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Mortgages

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek to stop moves by local authorities to dispose of their mortgages en-bloc to institutions in order to circumvent limits on capital expenditure.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Local authorities have normally retained mortgages until they have been redeemed by the individual borrower in the same way as private sector lenders such as the building societies and the banks. Last autumn, however, I welcomed the initiative which a number of local authorities and new town corporations were taking to speed up this process by arranging for building societies to offer replacement loans to the authority's borrowers individually enabling them to pay off their council mortgages. The borrower is free to decide whether or not to enter into a new mortgage contract with the building society, which may offer better terms. And the local authority gets the advantage of an earlier capital receipt.

Recently, however, some authorities have packaged their mortgage loans and sold them direct to financial institutions, without consulting the borrowers, in order to generate in a short time large blocks of additional capital receipts. This is an artificial transaction and should not count as an addition to capital receipts. Moreover, the borrower may have no say in the matter, and may be

unaware of the transaction until after the event. We believe that local authorities should not sell a mortgage without the prior consent of the mortgagor.

Accordingly, the Government propose to legislate at the earliest opportunity to give home owners with a local authority mortgage the right to decide whether or not the local authority may dispose of its interest to a specified purchaser. A transfer without consent would be invalid. In order to give interim protection to such mortgagors, our intention is that the legislation conferring this right should have retrospective effect as from midnight tonight.

We shall also consider whether the borrower's consent should be required before a local authority sells a mortgage of industrial or commercial property; we shall consult on this.

Some sales of mortgages have taken place on terms which may leave the local authority with a continuing financial risk in relation to the mortgage. Such transactions are, in substance, the equivalent of expensive borrowing rather than a genuine disposal of assets.

Subject to further consideration and consultation on the practicalities, we intend to legislate to require that any sale of a mortgage should provide for the transfer of risk to the purchaser, if it is to be treated as a capital receipt; but any requirement of this kind would not have effect from today.

My Department is writing today to local authorities and other interested organisations to draw this announcement to their attention, and to consult on the details of the proposal. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is writing in similar terms to Welsh local authorities.

EC (Water Quality)

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the European Community directive on the "Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption", 80/778/EEC.

Mr. Gow: The EC directive on the "Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption" was notified to member Governments on 17 July 1980. They were required to comply with it within five years.

The directive lays down standards for concentrations of chemical, toxic or microbiological material present in drinking water; and for its other qualities. It allows member states, in defined circumstances, to authorise departures from some of these standards, by granting derogations, provided that these do not constitute a public health hazard (article 9). It also provides for member states to obtain the agreement of the Commission to an extended period within which to achieve the directive's standards by means of a timetabled programme of action (article 20).

In order to implement the directive, water authorities and water companies were asked in August 1982 to review their water supplies in the light of the directive's standards. Ninety per cent. of public water supplies meet the directive's standards in all respects. The Department has considered 350 applications in respect of parameters in particular water supply zones in conjunction with medical officers of the Department of Health and Social Security.

In the coming weeks, the Government will take the following action:

—We have been committed since August 1983 to reducing the lead content of drinking water by December 1989. We shall seek the agreement of the Commission, under article 20, to the completion of the necessary treatment programmes by that date.

—In respect of nitrate, we shall grant time-limited derogations if, and only if, the concentration of nitrate ion in supply does not exceed a three-monthly average of 80 mg/litre and a maximum of 100mg/litre save in exceptional and transitory circumstances. In those circumstances, and generally, water undertakers will be required to comply with the advice given by the Joint Committee on the Medical Aspects of Water Quality in April 1984. I have placed in the Library of the House a memorandum on nitrate in drinking water. This includes correspondence which I have had with the Chief Medical Officer, DHSS, who confirms that my policy is consistent with the current state of medical knowledge.

—The directive lays down a single standard for pesticides. However, this is now inappropriate, in the light of the greater diversity of pesticides now available, and greater knowledge of their effects. We shall request the EC Commission to review the pesticide parameter.

—After taking medical advice, we shall grant derogations in respect of some 150 supplies which exceed other standards laid down in the directive, most commonly in respect of the concentrations of manganese and iron.

—Private water supplies have not hitherto come within the full statutory framework governing the wholesomeness of drinking water and we shall seek EC Commission agreement to a 10-year delay in the implementation of the directive in relation to private supplies serving fewer than 500 people.

—Derogations are not available in respect of toxic or microbiological parameters. The review has shown that some supplies fall marginally short of microbiological standards and we shall seek EC Commission agreement to the necessary programme of improvement which will be carried out urgently.

In applying the directive we are allowing no relaxation in present standards of drinking water quality and have identified such further programmes of action as are needed. Water undertakers follow guidelines laid down by the World Health Organisation in 1970, on which the directive's standards are based. For that reason, the recent review of public water supplies has not given rise to substantial new programmes of remedial work.

Nevertheless, the Government, in common with other European Community states, welcome the adoption of explicit and ascertainable criteria for the wholesomeness of drinking water, and the extra protection of public health afforded by the directive.

River Mersey

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the major sources of pollution of the Mersey with percentages, their location and the substance that is discharged.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for the control of pollution in the River Mersey lies with the North West water authority and comprehensive information is not held by my Department.

Thamesmead

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any present plans to visit Thamesmead.

Sir George Young: I plan to visit Thamesmead again on 1 August and will meet representatives of the Thamesmead Community Association.

North-East Hampshire Structure Plan

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answers of 7 May, *Official Report*, column *299* and 10 July, *Official Report*, column *479*, if he will make a statement on the delay in the publication of the report of the North-East Hampshire structure plan, and give a date for its eventual publication.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Publication of the report of the examination in public of the proposed alteration to the North-East Hampshire structure plan has been awaiting completion of full consideration of all the recommendations in the report and all the objections and representations. The report will be published shortly.

House Building

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the expected level of investment in public sector house building in each of the next three years, expressed in both cash and real terms using 1985 as a base year, and for private house building over the same period.

Mr. Gow: The White Paper on the Government's "Public Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9428) shows gross capital expenditure on housing as:

	million
1985-86	3,051
1986-87	3,120
1987-88	3,150

The equivalent figures in real terms at 1985-86 prices are:

	million
1985-86	3,051
1986-87	2,995
1987-88	2,911

No plans have been published for 1988-89. My Department makes no forecast of what proportion of this planned expenditure will be used for house building, nor does it make any forecast of investment in private house building.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environmet if he will publish a list showing the physical, chemical and radioactive nature of the types of waste likely to arise in decommissioning a typical Magnox nuclear power station, distinguishing each stage of decommissioning and, for each type of waste, stating *(a)* the approximate volume arising, *(b)* the approximate specific activity and *(c)* the approximate radioactive half-life.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is to be found in the Central Electricity Generating Board report entitled "Proposals for Decommissioning Magnox Nuclear Power Stations", a copy of which will shortly be available in the Library of the House.

Council Houses

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the average cost of rate fund contribution and main housing subsidy for each occupied council house in England at the latest available date.

Sir George Young: The available information for local authorities in England for 1984-85 is as follows. The figures are based on estimates provided by local authorities in their housing subsidy claim forms for the year, and allow for an estimated national average of 2·3 per cent. vacant dwellings.

	£
Main housing subsidy per occupied dwelling	88
Rate fund contribution per occupied dwelling (Net of transfers from housing revenue account to general rate fund)	94

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department has responded to the United Nations international year of shelter for the homeless, 1987.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) on 18 July.

Oil and Gas Exploration (Corporation)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received advocating the amendment of the Land Compensation Act 1973 so as to create a statutory right for householders affected by oil and gas-related activities to claim compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: In addition to my hon. Friend's recent letter on this subject, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) has also raised this issue with me. I see no reason why oil and gas operations should be made the only form of private sector development subject to statutory compensation under the Land Compensation Act 1973. I shall be writing to my hon. Friend shortly to explain why.

Metropolitan Councils (Staff)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to issue any guidance to staff of the metropolitan councils about their future job prospects in the light of the enactment of the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have no present plans to add to the guidance to staff contained in the paper entitled "Abolition of the GLC and MCCs, Arrangements for Staffing the New Structure", issued in November 1984. But the "Guidance Note to Metropolitan District Councils", which my Department issued on 16 July, reminds successor authorities of their duties under the Local Government Act 1985 and the need to take early steps, within procedures laid down by the Staff Commission, to make offers of jobs to staff they will need to meet their new or enhanced responsibilities.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to establish satisfactory severance terms for those employees of the

South Yorkshire county council who may be adversely affected by the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend will, after consultations with interested bodies, make regulations under section 24 of the Superannuation Act 1972 to provide for compensation to any local authority employee who may suffer loss of employment in consequence of any provision made by or under the Local Government Act 1985. The compensation terms will combine fairness to the staff concerned with fairness to the ratepayers who will bear the costs.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in the light of the various changes made in the passage of the Local Government Bill, and in particular those relating to funding voluntary organisations, he will now revise the estimated savings expected to arise in the metropolitan counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when he next meets chairmen of the south west water authorities, he will raise with them the accuracy of information being disseminated by water authorities concerning the possible effects of privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: The South West water authority's views on privatisation are contained in its response to my Department's discussion paper. This has been placed in the Library of the House, together with memoranda received from other water authorities, the Water Authorities Association, and the Water Companies Association. South West raises a number of points which will need to be considered, if privatisation goes ahead, but, like the Water Authorities Association, makes no recommendation for or against privatisation. The Government are considering the responses they have received in the context of their own examination of the prospects for privatisation in the water industry. If our study of the issues brings to light any points that need to be taken up further with the water authorities, we shall certainly pursue them.

Rosehill Estate

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now make a statement arising from the deputation seen by officials on 18 July on what action is to be taken to ensure that the Walsall council has sufficient resources to undertake the modernisation of Rosehill estate, Willenhall.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Liverpool City Council

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an assurance that rate support grant will continue to be paid to Liverpool city council at the same level as that paid during the first three months of the current financial year.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: No. Following the House's approval of the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report for 1985-86, the city council will, from 7 August, be paid grant based on the budget of £265 million included in its resolution of 14 June.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make arrangements to meet a delegation from Liverpool city council to discuss questions such as disregards, capital and partnership allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: As I indicated to the hon. Member when I met him and other hon. Members for Liverpool on 15 July, I do not believe that at the moment there are any grounds for my meeting a delegation from Liverpool city council. But I shall of course consider carefully any written representations the city council wishes to make.

Traditional Urban Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities received allocations under the traditional urban programme for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is as follows:

	Authorities receiving main phase approvals Number
1978-79	88
1979-80	119
1980-81	111
1981-82	145
1982-83	167
1983-84	163
1984-85	134
1985-86	106

The total for 1978-79 and 1979-80 includes allocations to nine partnership and 15 programme authorities which in later years became ineligible for approvals through the traditional urban programme. A further eight authorities became ineligible in 1984-85 following their promotion to programme authority status.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes for the traditional urban programme for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The limited resources available under the traditional urban programme will continue to be concentrated on fewer authorities. In these circumstances, my right hon. Friend does not consider that it is any longer appropriate to issue a general circular inviting new bids. Instead, we will be putting to the local authority associations proposals for issuing invitations to specific local authorities.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any changes in the housing factor E7 used in calculating grant-related expenditure allocation.

Sir George Young: Proposals for changes to the assessment of the E7 GRE component for 1986-87 have come forward in this year's round of consultations with the local authorities on GRE development. No decisions on any options have yet been taken. My right hon. Friend will be considering all the possibilities shortly, and will announce his decisions in due course, as part of the RSG settlement for 1986-87.

Radioactive Wastes

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the study of the best practicable environmental options for radioactive wastes following the Halliday report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: An interim report has been produced on methodology and data, and I have today placed copies in the Library of the House. The overall purpose of the study is to consider disposal and storage options for low and intermediate-level wastes which would be individually acceptable in terms of radiation exposure, and compare them to establish their relative merits for any given type of waste. The interim report on methodology and data summarises work undertaken in the first phase of the study, and will enable my Department to review the approaches and models adopted, in consultations with the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, the Trades Union Congress and others concerned, and identify issues which need further consideration before preparing the final report of the study, which is due for completion by the end of the year. No clear conclusions emerge at this stage.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many permanent local residents were employed in the construction of the Falklands Islands airport; and what was the total number employed in the construction of the airport.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The Falkland islands Government have made it clear that the local labour force is so limited that any significant recruitment by PSA contractors could prejudice Government services. The PSA has therefore instructed its contractors to consult the Falkland Islands Government before recruiting local workers. At present the Laing-Mowlem-Amey Roadstone Construction joint venture are employing one Falkland islander on the Mount Pleasant airport project. There are currently 2,000 other contractors' employees engaged on the project. In accordance with United Kingdom policy, these workers have been recruited in the United Kingdom.

Housing Investment Programme (Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the housing investment programme allocation made to the city of Manchester for 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 at constant prices.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]:

The final housing investment programme allocations made to the city of Manchester in each of the years in question, at constant 1984-85 prices, are as follows.

	£ million
1982-83	58·439
1983-84	46·643
1984-85	40·499
1985-86	34·498

In addition, local authorities are able to supplement their allocations by the prescribed proportion of any capital receipts which they generate.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Complaints Board

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the final review report of the Police Complaints Board.

Mr. Brittan: The report is published today.

On behalf of the Government, I wish to record my thanks to Sir Cyril Philips and his colleagues and their predecessors on the board for their work since June 1977. The board made a major contribution to the task of maintaining and developing public confidence in the police during those years, and it paved the way for the new developments in regard to police complaints of which the creation of the Police Complaints Authority is the major element. The board has provided an excellent foundation on which the new authority can build.

Carers (Criminal Records)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to announce the conclusions of his review of the disclosure of information on the criminal background of those seeking positions which would give them substantial access to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: I have received the first report of the review, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The report recommends a wide extension of the arrangements for checking the criminal background of those seeking to work with children and improvements in the arrangements for reporting convictions for offences committed after engagement. The proposed scheme would apply in the first instance to those seeking to work in the statutory sector, whether on a paid or voluntary basis, and would enable senior nominated staff of the relevant statutory bodies to make thorough checks on any criminal record through local police forces. Applicants would be asked to disclose in advance any convictions or cautions recorded against them, and to agree in writing to the check being made.

I welcome the proposals in the report, which provide a valuable basis for improving the protection of children. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and Social Services, for Education and Science and for Wales and I will now hold urgent consultations with

interested organisations, with a view to bringing new arrangements into early effect. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland will also be considering what implications the report may have for their own disclosure arrangements.

While these consultations are taking place, the review will proceed to consider what checking arrangements might suitably be introduced to cover those working in the voluntary sector, with the aim of submitting a second report before the end of the year.

The new arrangements will be on a non-statutory basis, but I am confident that they can be made to work effectively for the benefit of the children they are designed to protect, while at the same time providing appropriate safeguards for those who will be the subject of checks. But I should be willing to consider introducing legislation if experience shows that it is required.

Fire Precautions Act 1971

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 has been completed.

Mr. Brittan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have today published a consultative document entitled "A Review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971". The document embodies proposals, formulated over several years within the machinery of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Councils for England and Wales and for Scotland, for a modified system of fire precautions controls which would replace the fire certification arrangements of the current system with a statutory duty on the owners-occupiers of premises put to a designated use to achieve and maintain a reasonable standard of fire safety. We are most grateful to the organisations represented on the CFBACs for helping to bring this work to a successful conclusion in the publication of this document. I should, however, emphasise that the proposals in no sense represent final conclusions and my right hon. Friend and I will want to consider them again in the light of comments which are made on them. I have in particular, invited Mr. Justice Popplewell to consider the proposals in the context of his inquiry into the operation of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 following the Bradford fire, so that any relevant conclusions can be taken into account.

Copies of the consultative document, on which written comments are invited by 31 December 1985, are being sent to fire authorities and to other interested bodies and individuals, and copies have also been placed in the Library of the House. Further copies can be obtained on request in writing to the Home Office Fire and Emergency Planning Department, Room 916, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

Prisoners (Release)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the arrangements for the release into the community from hospital of prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment who are subsequently transferred to and remain in hospital under the provisions of section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Brittan: When life sentence prisoners transferred to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 are to be released, it has hitherto been the practice to discharge such persons on a warrant of conditional discharge under section 42(3) of the Act. I now intend to use the powers available to me under section 50(1)*(b)* of the Act, which enables me to release such persons under the same arrangements as those they would have been subject to had they remained in, or been returned to, prison. This means that, in future, such persons will normally be released on life licences under the provisions of section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967, in accordance with the sentencing courts' intention, that is, on the recommendation of the Parole Board and after consultation with the Lord Chief Justice and, if available, the trial judge. In exceptional cases, where the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge so recommend, I will be prepared to consider whether it would be more appropriate to authorise discharge under section 42(3) of the 1983 Act.

Under the new procedure, a life sentence prisoner who has been transferred to hospital, can be released on life licence without having to return to prison before release. Persons released on life licence under these arrangements will be subject to recall to prison under the provisions of section 62 of the 1967 Act. Should their mental condition be such that they are recommended for transfer to hospital this could very quickly be effected under the provisions of section 47 of the 1983 Act.

Detained Persons

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were detained in prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1984 following completion of a custodial sentence.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish records of those detained under Immigration Act powers on a regular basis.

Mr. Waddington: Figures of detention orders served under paragraph 2 of schedule 3 to the Immigration Act 1971 and of illegal entrants detained are already regularly published in "Control of Immigration: Statistics" and information on persons received into prison under the powers of the Immigration Act 1971 is likewise already published in "Prison Statistics". The collection of information on the numbers of persons detained under Immigration Act powers has been recently extended and the question of whether and in what form further information should be published is under consideration.

Recidivism

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female adult prisoners discharged during 1981 were reconvicted within two years;

(2) what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female young prisoners discharged during 1981 were reconvicted within two years;

(3) what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female juvenile borstal trainees discharged during 1981 were reconvicted within two years;

(4) what percentage of *(a)* male and *(b)* female young adult borstal trainees discharged during 1981 were reconvicted within two years;

(5) what percentage of juvenile detention centre trainees discharged during 1981 were reconvicted within two years;

(6) what percentage of young adult detention centre trainees discharged during 1981 were reconvicted within two years.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information relates to persons convicted within two year of discharge from prison department establishments in 1980 and is published in tables 8(b) and 8(e) of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1983" (Cmnd. 9363). Similar information for persons discharged in 1981 will be published soon in the volume for 1984.

Stonehenge

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many complaints have been registered against the police in connection with the operation at Stonehenge on 1 June;

(2) whether any police officers have been disciplined as a result of police action at Stonehenge on 1 June.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The present position is that 12 formal complaints relating to police action at Cholderton on 1 June are being investigated by a senior officer from Surrey in accordance with the procedures laid down in part 9 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The Police Complaints Authority has been notified and is supervising the investigation. One further complaint is no longer being pursued by the complainant.

Gun Thefts

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the record of thefts from licensed owners of *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* rifles and *(c)* hand guns, in England and Wales, and in Scotland, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information relates to England and Wales and is given in the table. The information collected centrally does not distinguish those weapons which were stolen from certificate holders. The position in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Burglaries and thefts, recorded by the police, in which firearms were reported to have been stolen by type of weapon
England and Wales *Number of offences*

	Shotgun	Pistol	Rifle
1979	551	136	119
1980	608	155	109
1981	723	205	117
1982	716	189	111
1983	660	163	112

British Subjects (Passports)

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he uses in determining whether an applicant who has proved his status as a British subject but who is not a British national under the terms of the British Nationality Act 1981 should be issued with a passport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: A British passport describing the holder as a British subject may be issued only to an applicant who produces satisfactory evidence that he has the status of a British subject within the meaning of part IV of the British Nationality Act 1981.

Protection of Children Act 1978

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought against persons charged only with offences under the Protection of Children Act 1978 in each full year since July 1978; and what were the corresponding numbers of convictions.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, is given in the following table. Corresponding information for 1984 is not yet available.

Persons proceeded against in magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts of offences under the Protection of Children Act 1978
England and Wales *Number of persons*

Year	Proceeded against in magistrates' courts			Found guilty in all courts		
	Principal offence		Non-principal offence	Principal offence		Non-principal offence
	Total	Of which only offence		Total	Of which only offence	
1979	6	4	14	2	1	6
1980	7	5	33	15	1	27
1981	11	6	30	14	5	35
1982	9	*	*	12	*	*
1983	12	*	*	12	*	*

* Not available.

Immigration (Indian Subcontinent)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to ensure that questioning procedures with regard to visitors arriving in the United Kingdom from the Indian subcontinent are made more efficient and that refreshment facilities are provided at more regular intervals; and what plans he has to increase the number of immigration officers at Heathrow and other airports to receive and question such visitors in order to reduce the work load of the present number already employed there.

Mr. Waddington: Immigration service staff are deployed in a way that is designed to enable the majority of passengers to pass through the control in the shortest practicable time. But at peak arrival periods, particularly in the early mornings at Heathrow, terminal 3, the simultaneous arrival of large numbers of passengers is

bound to lead to delays. We try to keep these to a minimum, but there are limits to the extent for which we can employ staff just to deal with this peak demand.

A small minority of passengers have to be referred for secondary examination and the substantial growth of passenger traffic this year has contributed to an increase in their numbers. Where further examination is necessary, priority is given to the elderly and those with young children. Cases requiring additional interviews can be transferred to the port or airport nearest to the sponsor's home.

The refreshment facilities are satisfactory at the detention units at Harmondsworth and Queen's Building, Heathrow. Drinks and light refreshments are available in the secondary examination area at Heathrow, terminal 3, but I am aware that there have been some recent difficulties at times of pressure and the present arrangements are being reviewed.

The availability of immigration service staff including interpreters to meet peak demands is kept under constant review and staff are redeployed between ports in the light of variations of traffic.

Racial Harassment (Statistics)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide a breakdown by London borough of charges brought and type of charge laid against persons in relation to racial attacks and racial harassment for 1984 and the first six months of 1985;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown by London borough of the conviction rate for charges brought against persons for racist attacks and racial harassment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not collated in the form requested. The number of reported racial incidents in all Metropolitan police districts which resulted in arrests was 197 for 1984 and 113 in the first six months of 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown, by London borough, of cases of racial attack and racial harassment for the first six months of 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Statistics on racial incidents are not kept on a borough basis. The figures for reported racial incidents in the Metropolitan police area by district from 1 January 1985 to 30 June 1985 are given in the table:

District	*1 January 1985 to 30 June 1985*
A	1
B	3
C	1
D	1
E	22
F	4
G	15
H	111
I	0
J	40
K	68
L	24
M	6
N	16
P	13
Q	108
R	44
S	19
T	34
V	25
W	26
X	46
Y	19
Z	45
Total	691

Police Service (Civilianisation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from all chief constables as to the progress of implementation of the recommendations in the 1983 report entitled "Police Service: Civilianisation and Related Matters" and as to the cost savings so far achieved through the substitution of civilians for police officers in certain aspects of police work.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. This report was prepared by the former Audit Inspectorate of the Department of the Environment (now Audit Commission). Its report recognised, as we do, that civilianisation cannot be considered in cost terms alone. Our policies were set out in Home Office Circular No. 114/1983 on "Manpower, Effectiveness and Efficiency in the Police Service", which is in the Library.

Metropolitan Police and Docklands Forum

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contact is maintained between the Metropolitan police and the Docklands forum.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the commander of "H" district and the chairman of the Docklands forum have provisionally agreed to the setting up of a sub-committee of the forum to look at the changing policing needs of docklands. The sub-committee will include representatives of all police districts covering docklands and, subject to the approval of the full forum, is likely to start work shortly.

ENERGY

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy how the costs of reprocessing spent thermal oxide fuel compare with those for dry storage of such fuel.

Mr. Goodlad: Oxide fuel is not currently being reprocessed in the United Kingdom. At this stage any comparison must be speculative and would need to take account of the cost of subsequent treatment of fuel after dry storage, whether that be by reprocessing or direct disposal, and other factors such as the availability and price of fresh uranium.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has made of the maximum safe storage periods for advanced gas-cooled reactors and pressurised water reactors spent nuclear fuel, respectively, in wet and dry storage facilities.

Mr. Goodlad: No firm estimates are available, but I am advised that both PWR and AGR fuel could in

principle be stored in dry conditions for a considerable time before reprocessing or disposal. PWR fuel can also be stored in water for very long periods. AGR fuel may be stored under water for 10 years or more given satisfactory pond conditions.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what have been the trends in costs of reprocessing spent thermal oxide fuel and in the price of uranium fuel in the past five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The price of nuclear fuel reflects a number of factors including the cost of uranium ore, fuel enrichment and fuel fabrication. Recently nuclear fuel costs have declined and this trend may continue for some time. Oxide fuel is not reprocessed in the United Kingdom at present.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what research and development work has been done on the decommissioning of magnox nuclear power stations; and what has been the cost of such work.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB has been carrying out a programme of research and development specifically on the decommissioning of its magnox nuclear power stations for the last five years. The approximate total cost involved amounts to £1 million.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the approximate cost of decommissioning a typical magnox nuclear power station to *(a)* stage 1, *(b)* stage 2 and *(c)* stage 3, stating the assumptions made about the timing of each stage of decommissioning and excluding the costs of dispersal of the radioactive waste.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB has estimated decommissioning costs for a typical magnox nuclear power station as follows (1982 prices):

Stage 1 (removal of fuel and operational wastes): about £25 million. This will take about five years following station shutdown.

Stage 2 (removal of all plant and buildings outside the reactor biological shields): About £50 million. This will take a further five to seven years depending on the timing of Stage 3 (dismantlement of reactors and site clearance).

Stage 3: here, two operations have been considered—early decommissioning to follow immediately on Stage 2, completed within approximately 17 years after shutdown at a cost of £215 million; or deferment of reactor dismantlement for up to 100 years, at a cost of about £95 million.

Costs for packaging and transporting waste are notionally included in the above. Costs of disposal as such are excluded.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, for each year since 1979, the annual cost of research and development work on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: Annual expenditure in the United Kingdom of research and development work on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations of all types is as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	2·3
1979-80	2·4
1980-81	3·2
1981-82	7·1
1982-83	6·2
1983-84	6·0
1984-85	6·1

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list and describe the research and development work done on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Much of the research and development work on decommissioning of nuclear power stations in this country has been in connection with the Windscale AGR project, and I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 18 June at column *73*. This work is expected to have wider benefits for the decommissioning of nuclear power stations generally.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the approximate total cost of research and development work on magnox nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Research and development on magnox stations has at various stages been carried out by the UKAEA, the CEGB and BNFL. The AEA spent about £20 million up to the mid-1960's when its magnox programme ended. The CEGB has spent some £80 million over the past 20 years. BNFL has spent £68 million in connection with magnox fuel fabrication and reprocessing since 1979.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a list showing for each licensed nuclear site containing a nuclear reactor that is no longer operational *(a)* the name of the site, *(b)* the name of the licence, *(c)* the type of nuclear reactor, *(d)* the date when it ceased to be operational, *(e)* the date when stage 1 decommissioning finished, or is planned to finish, *(f)* whether or not stage 3 decommissioning is planned, or has been completed and *(g)* if applicable, the date when stage 3 decommissioning finished, or is planned to finish.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

	Licence No. 1	*Licence No. 2*	*Licence No. 21*	*Licence No. 23*
(a)	MERLIN, Aldermaston	JASON, Slough	QMC, Stepney	QMC, Newham
(b)	Associated Electrical Industries Ltd.	Hawker Siddeley Nuclear Power Co. Ltd.	Queen Mary College.	Queen Mary College.
(c)	Low-powered research reactor.	Low-powered research reactor.	Low-powered research reactor.	Low-powered research reactor.
(d)	Shutdown August 1962.	Shutdown June 1961.	Shutdown October 1966.	Shutdown April 1982.
(e), (f) & (g)	Decommissioned 1962-63 and site returned to other uses. Licence surrendered December 1963.	Reactor moved to Royal Naval College Greenwich. Site returned to other uses. Licence surrendered January 1962.	Reactor moved to Newham (licence No. 23). Site returned to other uses. Licence surrendered March 1967.	Decommissioned 1982-83. Licence surrendered November 1983. Buildings now being converted for other uses.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information is available to his Department on the decommissioning of nuclear power stations in the United States; and if he will make a statement on American experience of decommissioning nuclear power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: Details of nuclear power plant decommissioning in the United States of America have been published from time to time. Such details are freely available in this country and are believed to present a substantially complete picture of nuclear power plant decommissioning in the USA.

Experience of decommissioning in the USA is on a comparable scale to experience in the United Kingdom, although the reactor types involved are different. There is a useful interchange of information via the two main international agencies concerned with nuclear power, the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD and the International Atomic Energy Agency of the UN. This interchange is supplemented by direct contacts when appropriate.

Various research and prototype power reactors have been decommissioned in the USA. These include Elk River (BWR: 50 MWt) the site of which was cleared in the mid-1970s; and Shippingport (PWR: 70 MWe) which was shut down in 1982. Decommissioning is planned to be completed in 1988, and will include the complete removal of the reactor and the clearance from the site of all ancillary equipment and buildings except where these are designated for modification and re-use.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will describe the nuclear site licences, and the conditions attached to such licences, granted to the Central Electricity Generating Board in respect of magnox power stations; and if he will place in the Library a copy of a representative licence for one of the older magnox power stations, with a copy of the conditions attached.

Mr. Goodlad: A nuclear site licence defines the site and describes the plant. Licence conditions relate to management of the site, the safety of the plant and the safety of workers. A typical set of licence conditions is reproduced in the booklet "The Work of HM Nuclear Installations Inspectorate" which is available in the Library of the House. A copy of the licence relating to Dungeness, which includes a representative magnox power station, is also being placed in the Library.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the terms of the agreement made between Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the licensees of magnox nuclear power stations providing for a review of each station's safety features and performance after 20 years of operation; and if he will place copies of the agreement in the Library.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Health and Safety Commission that the arrangements for each long term review of magnox nuclear power stations are a matter for discussion between Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the licensee concerned and take into consideration the age and operational history of the station.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, for each magnox nuclear power station that has reached 20 years of operation *(a)* the name of the power station, *(b)* the date that each reactor reached 20 years of operation, *(c)* the date of the relevant statutory shutdown of each reactor after 20 years of operation, *(d)* the date the licensee completed its 20-year review of the station's safety features and performance, *(e)* the date following *(c)* above when consent was given by the Health and Safety Executive for each reactor to be started up again, and *(f)* the date following *(d)* above when Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate completed its work on the licensee's 20-year review.

Mr. Goodlad: The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate make it a condition of nuclear power station licences that all stations must be shut down every two years for maintenance and inspection. The station is not permitted to start up again until the NII is satisfied, in the light of this exercise, that it is safe for it to do so. In addition, it is a policy of the inspectorate that licensees should carry out a general safety review after a station has been operating for about 20 years which will enable longer term safety issues to be addressed. This review is not associated with any particular station shut-down, but its findings will be taken into account in considering a station's longer terms operation. The information is:

(a) *Name of power station*	*Reactor*	*(b)* *Date reactor reached 20 years of operation*	*(c)* *Date of statutory shut-down next following 20 years of operation*	*(d)* *Date licensee completed long-term review*	*(e)* *Date of consent to start up after (c)*	*(f)* *Date NII completed work on long-term review*
Calder Hall	1	August 1976	January 1981 after 4 years shutdown	Completed December 1982	December 1982, October 1984	March 1983
	2	February 1977	February 1978		March 1983, March 1985	
	3	February 1978	July 1979		September 1982, August 1984	
	4	April 1979	April 1980		June 1983, May 1985	
Chapelcross	1	January 1979	October 1979	Completed December 1982	August 1983	March 1983
	2	July 1979	April 1980		July 1984	
	3	October 1979	May 1980		May 1985, May 1985	
	4	March 1980	July 1980		October 1984	
Berkeley	1	June 1982	February 1984	Nearing completion	Not yet	
	2	October 1982	March 1981		January 1984	
Bradwell	1	July 1982	April 1983	Nearing completion	December 1983	
	2	December 1982	August 1984		November 1984	

(a) Name of power station	Reactor	(b) Date reactor reached 20 years of operation	(c) Date of statutory shut-down next following 20 years of operation	(d) Date licensee completed long-term review	(e) Date of consent to start up after (c)	(f) Date NII completed work on long-term review
Hunterston A	1	February 1984	September 1984	Nearing completion	December 1984	
	2	July 1984	May 1985		June 1985	
Hinkley Point A	1	March 1985		In progress		
	2	May 1985	None yet			
Trawsfynydd	1	March 1985	None yet	In progress		
	2	May 1985				

41. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide information on the thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by each of the Central Electricity Generating Board magnox reactors in the fiscal year 1984-85; and if he will update to 31 March the information on the allocation of plutonium produced in the Central Electricity Generating Board and South of Scotland Electricity Board magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 25 January, at columns *545-7*.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 July 1985, c. *198-9*]: The following table sets out the allocation or use of plutonium produced in the magnox reactors of the SSEB and CEGB at 31 March 1985.

Allocation of plutonium produced in CEGB or SSEB Magnox reactors (position at 31 March 1985)

	Tonnes (nearest 10 tonnes)
Plutonium in irradiated fuel	
(a) Estimated in fuel in CEGB/SSEB Magnox reactors	910
(b) Estimated plutonium in fuel discharged from CEGB/SSEB Magnox reactors, but not yet reprocessed	4
Separated plutonium	
(c) In stock at British Nuclear Fuels plc as oxide	21
(d) In process at British Nuclear Fuels plc in intermediate other forms (eg nitrate)	10
(e) Sold or leased to UKAEA for Fast Reactor R&D since 1969	5
(f) Exported for civil purposes to countries other than the US	10
Sub total	400
(g) Balance (see note (g) below)	

Notes:

(a) These figures are derived from the known tonnage of fuel elements and their estimated overall average irradiation and cannot be accurately calculated.

(b) As for (a). About 25 per cent. of amount shown was held by BNFL.

(c) About 20 per cent. of amount shown was held by BNFL.

(g) The balance of plutonium produced in the boards' magnox reactors was consigned to the United States before 1971 under the United States/United Kingdom Defence Agreement, and as stated by the Prime Minister, on 21 April 1964, was used by United States for civil purposes. Because of the barter arrangements under which this plutonium was consigned, it would not be in the national interest to publish this figure.

Euratom Procedures

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied that Euratom procedures are adequate to enable the United Kingdom and other countries to comply with their obligations under the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom complies fully with its non-proliferation treaty obligations, and accepts IAEA safeguards under a voluntary offer. We are satisfied with Euratom procedures.

Uranium Export

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy for what purposes uranium was exported to Luxembourg; and what precautions were taken by the exporter to ensure that it was used for the purposes intended.

Mr. Goodlad: A quantity of approximately 42 tonnes of depleted uranium was exported by BNF plc to Luxembourg in March 1984 for use in the production of master alloys for steel making. The export was made under safeguards.

Oil Companies

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the future exercise of his powers to require oil companies who are partners in new oilfield developments to enter into participation agreements with the British National Oil Corporation or its successor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As I stated on Second Reading of the Oil and Pipelines Bill on 14 May at column *194*, it is the Government's intention that as new oilfields reach the development stage, the licensees should continue to conclude agreements which enable the British National Oil Corporation or its successor, the Oil and Pipelines Agency, to participate in the oil produced. However, the agency may not, without the Secretary of State's consent, elect to take petroleum under such agreement.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Physiotherapy

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many physiotherapists have been employed at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast in each of the last three financial years for which records are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested, expressed in whole-time equivalent terms, is as follows:

	Number
1 April 1983	42·1
1 April 1984	39·3
1 April 1985	39·3

The current whole-time equivalent number is 38·1.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of proposed cutback in expenditure in the physiotherapy department at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Eastern health and social services board, but I understand that the physiotherapy department has been set a savings target of £65,330 for the current financial year.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if there will be any reduction in the number of physiotherapists presently employed at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast during 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Eastern health and social services board. However, I understand that no decision has yet been taken on whether staffing levels in the physiotherapy department at the Royal Victoria hospital will be reduced.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to seek to ensure that the standard of care for patients requiring physiotherapy at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, is maintained and that staffing levels in the physiotherapy department are consistent with the required level of service.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Eastern health and social services board since the staffing levels for specific services at individual hospitals can only be determined in the light of local priorities and needs. I can, however, assure the hon. Gentleman that I share his interest in ensuring that standards of care for patients are maintained. I have therefore drawn his concern about this matter to the attention of the chairman of the Eastern board.

Southern Education and Library Board

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many pupils attended each secondary or grammar school in the Southern education and library board area in each of the last two years;

(2) how many pupils attended each primary school in the Southern education and library board area in each of the last two years.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

Enrolment at January

Schools	*1983*	*1984*
Primary		
Annaghmore	88	86
College Lands	25	26
Tullyroan	46	38
Loughgall	52	43
St. Jarleth's	219	211
St. Oliver Plunkett, Loughgall	102	94
Tullymore	66	67
Kinnego	40	40
The Cope	101	98
Drumsallen	33	32
Salter's Grange	23	20
St. Colmcille's	40	36
Tullysarren	62	72
Hardy Memorial	370	352
Derryhale	81	77
Mullavilly	31	31
Cabra	44	43
St. Patrick's, Armagh	419	408
St. James', Tandragee	90	91
Mount St. Catherine's	422	431
St. Malachy's Boys, Armagh	198	198
Killylea	83	76
Ahorey	52	49
Tandragee	352	365
Armstrong	491	480
Christian Bros', Armagh	444	449
Lisiea	24	23
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass	78	78
Middletown	63	60
Clonalig	132	132
Drelincourt	35	39
Waste lands	29	26
St. Louis' Convent	42	41
St. Joseph's, Armagh	102	116
St. Michael's, Clady	50	45
St. Mary's, Granemore	52	54
St. Mary's Boys', Keady	260	257
Glassdrummond	41	42
St. Clare's Convent, Keady	278	280
Ballynewry	33	40
Tynan	40	34
Clare	44	45
Mullabrack	30	31
St. James' Markethill	69	60
Callone	106	105
Aghavilly	47	61
Tullyherron	60	58
Lissummon	34	42
St. Mary's Barr	80	82
St. Mochua's, Derrynoose	73	78
St. Malachy's, Glenanne	62	70
Clay	41	33
Lisnadill	53	56
Poyntz Pass	79	80
Markethill	193	185
Foley	76	83
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook	361	320
St. Brigid's, Drumilly	77	88
St. Michael's, Newtownhamilton	106	103
St. Lawrence's	55	60
St. Peter's, Cloughreagh	296	290
St. Patrick's, Newry	413	394
St. Malachy's, Camlough	265	242
St. Malachy's, Newry	73	158
Drumhillery	92	98
Keady	65	62
Cladymore	64	63
Mountnorris	125	116
St. Clare's Convent, Newry	826	766
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry	504	489
St. Colman's Abbey	936	897
Carrickrovaddy	38	42
Cloghoge	351	321
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna	230	234
St. Joseph's, Killeavy	172	174
Lisdrumcor	37	36
Darkley	71	72
Killean	83	87
Kingsmills	23	20
Mullaghglass	57	56
Anamar	30	35
St. Mary's Mullaghbawn	222	229
Dromintee	129	126
Jonesboro'	111	118
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen	355	358
Bessbrook	116	86
Newtownhamilton	123	128
Cortamlet	59	56

Schools	1983	1984
Newry Model	124	112
St. Oliver Plunkett, Forkhill	69	62
St. Brigid's Crossmaglen	61	64
Ballynaclosha	84	81
Windsor Hill	271	267
Ardmore	44	39
King's Park	571	590
Carrick (Lurgan)	259	248
Hart Memorial	459	439
Richmount	85	85
Birches	133	124
Edenderry, Portadown	433	415
Tullygally	411	368
Carnew	37	34
Shinn	16	14
Leitrim	14	14
Donaghmore	22	24
Katesbridge	17	20
Dromore Road	61	60
Gransha	47	38
Croneagh	13	16
Dromore Central	391	381
Edendale	53	56
Abercorn	431	433
Moyallon	129	140
Craigavon	131	128
Waringstown	203	210
Bleary	108	114
Iveagh	263	268
Ballydown	141	154
Tullynacarette	96	92
Ballyward	58	56
Ballyroney	90	85
Kilkeel	542	543
Milltown	18	19
Loughbrickland, Rathfriland Road	55	64
Grange	109	108
Crowhill	69	64
Carrick (Warrenpoint)	178	184
Magheramayo	69	70
St. John's Newry	69	80
St. Patrick's Magheralin	72	72
St. John's Gilford	149	160
St. Colman's Boys', Kilkeel	185	187
Star of the Sea, Newry	51	52
Mayobridge (St. Patrick's)	236	238
Ballylifford	38	37
Lissan	88	93
Glencull	74	75
Derrylatinee	43	46
Castlecaulfield	66	65
St. Patrick's Convent, Dungannon	430	423
Laghey	71	71
St. Patrick's Monastery, Dungannon	446	443
Edendork	229	251
Primate Dixon Memorial Boys'	338	344
Primate Dixon Memorial Girls'	381	396
Roan	66	69
St. Mary's, Dungannon	29	36
St. Macarten's Convent, Clougher	103	112
St. Mary's, Cookstown	240	236
St. Patrick's Dungannon	172	181
St. Mary's, Stewartstown	102	107
Crievagh	51	39
Aughadarra	28	27
St. Brigid's, Mountjoy	131	118
St. Mary's, Dunnamore	178	171
Moortown	175	159
Derrychrin	183	192
Aughamullan	102	97
St. John's, Moy	125	117
St. Patrick's, Mullinahoe	224	251
St. Mary's Aughnacloy	64	61
St. Brigid's, Augher	52	63
St. John's, Kingisland	89	87
St. Mary's, White's Road, Dungannon	228	223
St. Mary's Ballygawley	93	93

Schools	1983	1984
St. Mary's, Fivemiletown	82	81
Closkelt	24	21
Scarva	116	108
Hilltown	18	16
Annalong	156	167
Maralin Village	124	106
Ballykeel West	15	16
Ballynenagh	40	38
Ballinderry	25	24
Moneymore	169	176
Toberlane	50	55
Benburb	45	46
Coalisland	19	16
Churchill	41	39
Lisfearty	25	32
Ballytrea	58	64
Eglish	48	49
Aughnacloy	99	101
Tamnamore	70	75
Donaghmore, Dungannon	67	66
Tullaghoge	27	31
Augher Central	67	60
Moy Regional	106	102
Stewartstown	81	73
The Howard	286	272
Coagh	82	73
Mullycar	33	34
The Walker Memorial	97	98
Clogher Regional	61	56
Innismagh	36	34
Lisnagleer	37	32
Carnstall	86	88
Ballygawley	79	83
New Mills	96	95
Dungannon	322	320
Cookstown	788	706
Glasskermore	37	37
Edenderry, Banbridge	458	445
Kinallen	98	92
Woods	60	64
Millingtown	646	616
Kilbroney	38	32
Dickson	254	245
St. Paul's, Kilkeel	30	27
St. Mary's, Rathfriland	100	104
St. Michael's, Finnis	75	68
St. Colman's Girls', Kilkeel	213	205
Dechomet	37	38
St. Patrick's, Hilltown	257	259
St. Teresa's, Corbet	13	13
St. Mary's, Banbridge-Derrytrasna	52	53
St. Colman's, Rathfriland	35	35
St. Patrick"s, Aughnagallon	134	128
St. Colman's, Dromore	101	100
St. Mary's, Annalong	102	104
St. Mary's, Derrymore	100	98
All Saints	32	35
St. Peter's, Warrenpoint	274	272
Loup	152	155
St. Joseph's, Gallbally	203	213
St. Mary's, Banbridge	488	499
Annaghmore (Coalisland)	229	237
St. Malachy's, Moneymore	82	79
St. Colman's, Banbridge	87	97
St. Brendan's, Moyraverty	483	491
St. Joseph's, Killeenan	128	129
St. Peter's Boys', Lurgan	232	223
Sacred Heart Girls', Lurgan	232	210
St. Mary's Boys', Pomeroy	180	186
St. Patrick's, Moneymore	112	115
St. Joseph's Junior, Lurgan	320	336
Rock	115	118
Seagoe	166	153
St. John the Baptist, Garvaghy	439	434
St. Brigid's, Cookstown	521	550
Caledon	70	71
Holy Cross	98	86

Schools	1983	1984
Derrycarne	32	33
Lurgan Model	100	93
Drumgor	580	571
Fivemiletown	163	160
Brackenagh West	73	64
Minterburn	63	58
Ballyoran	280	292
Bocombra	168	191
Churchtown	20	29
Granville	51	41
Dollingstown	35	33
Donacloney	129	136
Killyman	96	98
Queen Elizabeth II, Pomeroy	33	36
Orritor	110	108
Donaghy	129	128
Bush	66	67
Presentation Convent	121	120
Eglish, Portadown	43	40
Clintyclay	56	52
Tannaghmore	744	732
St. Columba's Boys', Portadown	84	90
Our Lady's	47	50
St. Teresa's, Lurgan	157	160
St. Mary's, Maghery	113	115
St. Patrick's, Lurgan	129	146
St. Anthony's, Legahory	553	543
Loughbrickland, Scarva Road	53	55
Barn	144	135
Lurgancahone	34	37
Clontifleece	88	83
Killowen	58	65
St. Joseph's, Ballymartin	54	68
Cabra, Newry	30	30
St. Mary's Boys', Rostrevor	174	168
Rostrevor Convent of Mercy	160	158
Star of the Sea Convent, Warrenpoint	273	268
Leganany	40	42
Moneydarragh	67	65
Loughorne	47	50
Ballyholland	174	156
Secondary and Grammar		
Newtownhamilton	116	114
St. Catherine's College	885	921
St. Brigid's Boys', Armagh	296	307
St. Paul's, Bessbrook	1,241	1,233
Tandragee Junior High	299	333
Markethill Junior High	322	382
Armagh Secondary	632	679
St. Joseph's, Crossmaglen	546	556
St. Joseph's, Newry	557	563
St. Mary's Girls, Newry	722	705
St. Patrick's, Keady	745	783
Newry High	808	809
St. Patrick's College, Armagh	383	387
Christian Brothers', Armagh	405	400
St. Colman's College, Newry	700	707
Our Lady's Grammar, Newry	699	709
Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry	678	727
Abbey Grammar, Newry	690	713
Armagh Girls' High	290	269
Armagh Royal*	402	438
Kilkeel High	729	727
Clonagh Junior High	688	678
Banbridge High	578	593
Killicomaine Junior High	680	699
Donnore High	706	705
Lurgan Boys' Junior High	412	388
Lurgan Girls' Junior High	395	385
Fivemiletown High	560	561
Rathfriland High	318	323
Aughnacloy Secondary	185	183
Brownlow High	324	340
Cookstown High	1,087	1,134
Dungannon Secondary	647	705
St. Columban's High, Kilkeel	508	515
St. Patrick's High, Banbridge	601	582
St. Paul's Junior High, Lurgan	637	651
St. Mary's Junior High, Lurgan	719	705
St. Patrick's Girls' Secondary, Dungannon	308	302
St. Mark's High, Warrenpoint	848	824
Our Lady's High, Cookstown	558	561
St. Malachy's Boys' High, Portadown	369	359
St. Ciaran's High, Ballygawley	538	603
St. Patrick's High, Cookstown	464	495
St. Brigid's Girls' High, Portadown	474	466
St. Joseph's High, Coalisland	704	672
Lismore Comprehensive	1,008	1,060
St. Patrick's Boys', Dungannon	430	431
Banbridge Academy	840	855
Dungannon Girls' High	342	339
Lurgan College*	316	326
Portadown College*	737	736
Royal School, Dungannon*	418	399
St. Patrick's Boys' Academy, Dungannon	569	576
St. Patrick's Girls' Academy, Dungannon	540	571
St. Louis' High, Kilkeel	430	421
St. Michael's High, Lurgan	482	494
St. Joseph's Convent Grammar, Donaghmore	313	318

* Included are pupils enrolled in the preparatory departments of these schools.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which primary schools in the Southern education and library board area have *(a)* one teacher, *(b)* two teachers, *(c)* three teachers and *(d)* four teachers and over, at the latest date for which information was available in 1985.

Mr. Scott: The latest year for which this information is available is as at January 1984, and is as follows:—

Primary schools with 1 teacher—13

Kingsmills
Collegelands
Shinn
Leitrim
Donaghmore (Newry)
Katesbridge
Croreagh
Milltown
Hilltown
Ballykeel West
Coalisland
Churchtown
St. Teresa's, Corbet

Primary schools with 2 teachers—76

Tullyroan
Kinnego
Drumsallen
Salters Grange
Mullavilly
Cabra
Wastelands
Ballynewry
Tynan
Clare
Aghavilly
Lissadill
Lisdrumchor
Loughgall
St. Colmcille's, Armagh
Lisles
St. Louis Convent, Middletown
St. Michael's, Clady
St. Mary's, Granemore
Glassdrummond
Tullyheron
Lissummon
Clay
St. Laurence's, Belleeks
Carrickovaddy

Anamar
Drelincourt Infants
Mullabrack
St. Paul's, Kilkeel
Dechomet
St. Mary's, Banbridge
St. Colman's, Rathfriland
All Saints
Derrycarne
Ardmore
Carnew
Gransha
Loughbrickland
Closkelt
Scarva
Ballyneagh
Ballinderry
Benburb
Churchill
Lisfearty
Eglish
Aughnacloy
Tullyhoge
Mullyear
Innismagh
Lisnagleer
Glaskermore
Edenderry (Banbridge)
Kinallen
Kilbroney
Granville
Dollingstown
Queen Elizabeth II
Presentation Convent
Clintyclay
Our Lady's, Carnagh
Loughbrickland
Lurgancohone
Killowen
St. Joseph's, Ballymartin
Cabra
Legananny
Loughorne
Star of the Sea, Newry
Ballylifford
Derrylatinee
St. Mary's, Dungannon
Crievagh
Aughadarra
St. Brigid's, Augher

Primary schools with 3 teachers—58
The Cope
Derryhale
Ahorey
Poyntzpass
Foley
Keady
Cladymore
Darkley
Mullaghglass
Cortamlet
Tullymore
Tullysarron
St. Joseph's, Poyntzpass
Middletown
St. Mary's, Barr
St. Mochua's, Keady
St. Malachy's, Ballymoyer
St. Brigid's, Belleeks
St. Oliver Plunkett, Forkhill
St. Brigid's, Glassdrummond
Ballynaclosha
Richmount
Dromore Road
Edendale
Ballyward
Ballyroney
Toberlane
Ballytrea
Tamnamore
Donaghmore (Dungannon)
Augher Central
Stewartstown
Coagh
Clogher Regional
Carntall
Ballygawley
Woods
Brackenagh West
Minterburn
Bush
Clontifleece
Crowhill
Magheramayo
St. John's, Newry
St. Patrick's, Magheralin
Lissan
Glencull
Castlecaulfield
Laghey
Roan
St. Mary's, Aughnacloy
St. John's, Kingisland
St. Mary's, Fivemiletown
St. Michael's, Finnis
St. Mary's, Derrytrasna
St. Malachy's, Moneymore
St. Colman's, Banbridge
Caledon

Primary schools with 4 teachers and over—137
Annaghmore (Portadown)
Hardy Memorial
Killylea
Tandragee
Armstrong
Collone
Markethill
Drumhillery
Mountnorris
Bessbrook
Newtownhamilton
Newry Model
Windsor Hill
St. Jarlath's, Blackwatertown
St. Oliver Plunkett, Kilmore
St. Patrick's, Armagh
St. James', Tandragee
Mount St. Catherine's, Armagh
St. Malachy's Boys', Armagh
Christian Brothers, Armagh
St. Joseph's, Armagh
St. Mary's Boys', Keady
St. Clare's Convent, Keady
St. Joseph's, Bessbrook
St. Michael's, Newtownhamilton
St. Peter's, Bessbrook
St. Patrick's, Newry
St. Malachy's, Camlough
St. Malachy's, Carnaght
St. Clare's Convent, Newry
St. Joseph's Convent, Newry
St. Colman's Abbey, Newry
Cloughoge
St. Patrick's, Cullyhanna
St. Joseph's, Killeavy
Killeen
St. Mary's, Mullaghbawn
Dromintee
Jonesboro'
St. Patrick's, Crossmaglen
St. James', Markethill
Clonalig
Lurgan Model
Kings Park
Carrick (Lurgan)
Hart Memorial
Birches
Edenderry (Portadown)
Tullygalley

Dromore Central
Abercorn
Moyallen
Craigavon
Warringstown
Bleary
Iveagh
Ballydown
Tullymacarette
Kilkeel
Annalong
Maralin Village
Moneymore
Moy Regional
The Howard
The Walker Memorial
Newmills
Dungannon
Cookstown
Millington
Dickson
Drumgor
Fivemiletown
Ballyoran
Bocombra
Donacloney
Donaghy
Orritor
Killyman
Tannaghmore
St. Columba's Boys', Portadown
St. Teresa's, Lurgan
St. Mary's, Maghery
St. Patrick's, Lurgan
St. Anthony's, Legahory
Bann
St. Mary's Boys, Rostrevor
Rostrevor Convent of Mercy
Star of the Sea Convent, Warrenpoint
Moneydarragh
Ballyholland
Grange
Carrick (Warrenpoint)
St. John's, Gilford
St. Colman's Boys', Kilkeel
Holy Cross
St. Patrick's, Mayobridge
St. Patrick's Convent, Dungannon
St. Patrick's Monastery, Dungannon
Edendork
Primate Dixon Memorial Boys'
Primate Dixon Memorial Girls'
St. Macartan's Convent, Clogher
St. Mary's, Cookstown
St. Patrick's, Dungannon
St. Mary's, Stewartstown
St. Brigid's, Mountjoy
St. Mary's, Dunnamore
Moortown
Derrychrin
Aughamullan
St. John's, Moy
St. Patrick's, Mullinahoe
St. Mary's, Ballygawley
St. Mary's, Rathfriland
St. Colman's Girls', Kilkeel
St. Patrick's, Hilltown
St. Patrick's, Aughagallon
St. Colman's, Dromore
St. Mary's, Annalong
St. Mary's, Derrymore
St. Mary's, Dungannon
St. Peter's, Warrenpoint
Loup
St. Joseph's, Galbally
St. Mary's, Banbridge
Annaghmore (Coalisland)
St. Brendan's, Moyraverty
St. Joseph's, Killeenan
St. Peter's Boys', Lurgan
Sacred Heart Girls', Lurgan
St. Mary's Boys', Pomeroy
St. Patrick's, Moneymore
St. Joseph's Junior, Lurgan
Rock
Seagoe
St. John the Baptist, Garvaghy
St. Brigid's, Cookstown

District Heating

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Housing Executive on the breakdown of charges made for district heating on the Springfarm estate, Antrim, including information as to the fuel, maintenance and other components of such charges.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1985, c. *45*]: I understand from the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the current weekly budget charges for district heating in the Springfarm estate, Antrim, are as follows:

	£
2 Person Dwelling	10·78
3 Person Dwelling	13·10
4 Person Dwelling	14·79
5-6 Person Dwelling	17·66

The average weekly budget charge is £15·57 and can be broken down as follows:

£1·59 standing charge — to cover transmission losses, heat management charges (including maintenance within the boilerhouse) electricity, rates, insurance and meter reading charges;
£1·60 hot water charge; and
£7·38 variable charge to cover heat consumption, based on fuel costs and an annual allowance for heat consumption.

EMPLOYMENT

Benefit Office, Denton

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff were employed at Denton unemployment benefit office, 68 Hyde Road, Denton, during the last 12 months; how many hours have been lost due to staff absence or due to illness or other reasons; how many hours overtime were worked; how many claimants per staff were dealt with; and what plans there are to change the staffing levels.

Mr. Alan Clark: Over the last 12 months 16 staff have been employed at Denton unemployment benefit office and there are no plans to change staffing levels. During the same period 3,807 hours were lost due to staff absence or illness; 512 hours of overtime were worked and on average each staff member dealt with 117 claimants.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have registered as willing to work, giving details of their skill and experience, at jobcentres covering the county of Cheshire at the most convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 16,638 job seekers registered for employment at jobcentres

covering the county of Cheshire. Analysis of this figure by details of skills or experience is not available. It includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefits. Job seekers are no longer required to register at a job centre as a condition for receiving unemployment benefits; nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre.

The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the county of Cheshire on 13 June 1985 was 51,646. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the percentage quota of registered disabled staff currently employed by public sector employers, excluding Government Departments.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 1 June 1984, the latest date for which information is available, the approximate average was 0·9 per cent.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors were allocated to the construction industry in January of each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of health and safety inspectors allocated to inspection work in the construction industry were:

	Number
January:	
1979	86
1980	87
1981	90
1982	89
1983	88
1984	88
1985	86

In addition, there are a number of inspectors in Her Majesty's factory inspectorate's construction national industry group and in other specialist branches of the Health and Safety Executive who are engaged in advisory and policy work related to the construction industry.

Average Weekly Income

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish figures to show the average weekly income in terms of modal range for *(a)* men and *(b)* women in employment in Great Britain in 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply on 26 November 1984, at column *382*, for the latest information, which relates to full-time employees.

Discrimination

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he has any proposals to combat discrimination against lesbians and homosexual men in employment; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will detail the work done by his Department to combat discrimination against lesbians and homosexual men in employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Wages Councils

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the percentage of the workers covered by each wages council who belong to a trade union.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Precise information is not available, but the indications from sources such as the new earnings survey, the workplace industrial relations survey and ACAS reports are that trade union members are commonly in a minority in wages council trades.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the existing procedures under which he may modify or abolish individual wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to sections 4 to 7 inclusive and schedule 1 to the Wages Councils Act 1979. Copies of the Act are available in the Library.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, for wages councils as a whole, the number of independent members in each of the various backgrounds or occupations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The backgrounds of the 47 independent members of wages councils are as follows:

	Number
Industry and commerce	12
Public service (administration)	5
The professions	6
Education	23
Journalism	1

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment for each year since 1979, how many workers covered by wages councils had their pay checked; how many were found to be underpaid; and how many arrears was paid by employers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is given in the following table:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Workers whose pay was checked by visit	244,941	269,134	181,974	165,118	139,305	148,073
Workers whose pay was checked other than by visit	not available	26,357	23,830	162,509	193,548	268,821
Total	244,941	295,491	205,804	327,627	332,853	416,894
Workers found to be underpaid	23,223	29,314	25,482	20,406	20,832	18,048
Arrears paid	£1,511,760	£2,100,512	£2,037,930	£1,861,783	£1,860,110	£1,871,140

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions were made for failure to comply with a wages council order in each of the last six years; and for each year what was the average penalty imposed at 1985 prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is given in the following table:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Investigations resulting in prosecution and conviction	12	8	8	7	2	2
Average amount paid in fines at constant (June) 1985 prices	£177	£246	£466	£238	£208	£107

The wages inspectorate's policy, endorsed by successive Governments over many years, is to seek compliance with the legislation by advice and persuasion. Prosecution is considered only where the offence is deliberate or repeated and the evidence adequate.

The level of fines is a matter for the courts.

Steel Industry

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage reduction in employment in the steel industry in the United Kingdom and in each of the member states of the European Economic Community since the beginning of 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available data are given in the following table. This shows the percentage changes in employment in the iron and steel industries of each of the member states of the European Coal and Steel Community between the end of 1978 and the end of 1983.

Change in employees (December 1978 to December 1983)

	Per cent.
Federal Republic of Germany	−19·3
France	−31·1
Italy	− 8·9
Netherlands	− 9·8
Belgium	−18·5
Luxembourg	−22·9
United Kingdom	−61·5
Ireland	− 5·9
Denmark	−34·3

Source:
Eurostat 'Employment and Unemployment: Social Aspects of Employment in the Iron and Steel Industry (ECSC)'.

Youth Training Scheme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the extra funds which he promised to make available for encouraging extended periods of training to school leavers under the youth training scheme will be used to promote further schemes in the west midlands region.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: No decisions have been taken, but the allocation of Government money for the youth training scheme between different geographical areas will continue to take account, after the extension of the scheme, of the needs of industry and the demand for training places.

SCOTLAND

Job Sharing

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many job-sharing schemes are currently operating within local authorities in Scotland; and how many people are involved in job sharing.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Within Scottish local authorities at 16 July 1985 there were three job-splitting schemes operating in which six people were participating. At the same date there were 80 people in total participating in 40 job-splitting schemes throughout Scotland.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what job-sharing schemes he is promoting among his Department's staff; and how many Scottish staff are involved in job sharing.

Mr. Younger: Although my Department has no formal job-sharing scheme, there are four posts the work of which is shared among eight staff.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward a housing condition survey.

Mr. Ancram: No. My right hon. Friend has yet to be convinced that the results of a national house condition survey would justify the very considerable effort and cost involved.

Bypasses

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects the Edinburgh outer city bypass to be completed; and what is his estimate of the effect on traffic within the city.

Mr. Ancram: This project is the responsibility of Lothian regional council. I understand that it hopes to complete work on the remaining sections of the bypass broadly within the decade.

The bypass will reduce through traffic within the northern, southern and western suburbs of the city and will provide a more direct link from proposed industrial developments in the Esk valley, east Edinburgh and Musselburgh with the west.

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce the line for the Dumfries bypass.

Mr. Younger: I expect to make a decision on the preferred route for the Dumfries bypass, and to publish a draft trunk road order, in the autumn.

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce the result of the Annan bypass inquiry.

Mr. Younger: Part I of the report on the Annan bypass public local inquiry was circulated on 18 July and comments are due to be returned to the inquiry reporter by mid-August. Until the report is completed and the reporter's recommendations have been considered I cannot announce a decision, but I hope to do so before the end of the year.

Earnings

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show for 1984 the average level of earnings in terms of modal range for *(a)* men aged 21 years or over in Scotland and *(b)* women aged 18 years or over in Scotland; and how these averages compare with the mean level of earnings for both groups during that period.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 26 November 1984, at column *373*, relating to adult male and female employees at April 1984. No subsequent estimates are yet available.

Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been paid to the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd. in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: Payments made by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd. for the promotion and development of agricultural and horticultural co-operation are shown in the table. The remainder of the society's income, representing a little under half of the total, is derived from members subscriptions, fees and accumulated interest.

Financial Year	£
1980-81	84,000
1981-82	96,000
1982-83	115,000
1983-84	105,000
1984-85	123,000

Islands Councils (Montgomery Committee Report)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the report of the committee of inquiry into the functions and powers of the islands councils of Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I have now completed my consideration of this report. Of the 49 recommendations which the committee has made, I accept 37 of them, a few with some qualifications, and I have already implemented a further one. I have today placed in the Library a copy of a statement giving my detailed response to each recommendation.

Electricity Boards (Financing Limits)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the external financing limits for the Scottish electricity boards in the current financial year.

Mr. Younger: I propose to make the following changes in the external financing limits of the two Scottish electricity boards in 1985-86.

	SSEB £ million	*NSHEB £ million*
Previous limit	191·0	+9·2
Revised limit	238·2	−19·0
Change	+47·2	−28·2

These new limits take account of the knock-on effects of the miners' strike and provide for a rephasing of expenditure on Torness power station. They also take account of the need for a financial adjustment between the boards following the South of Scotland Electricity Board's revision in 1984-85 of its nuclear and coal-fired power station asset lives, which has no net effect on the total of their EFLs. The net increase in EFLs of £19 million is being charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the public expenditure planning total.

PRIME MINISTER

Argentina

Q39. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what response Her Majesty's Government have had from the Government of Argentina to the United Kingdom action of Monday 8 July, ending the ban on Argentine goods entering Britain; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Argentine Government's statement of 10 July described our action as a "positive act". But it went on to reiterate their insistence on British agreement to discuss sovereignty as a pre-condition for discussion of practical measures to improve bilateral relations. This is, of course, unacceptable. We look to them to make a more constructive response to our initiative.

Bearsden

Q89. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Bearsden.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

President Ortega

Mr. Corbyn asked the Prime Minister if she will place copies of her correspondence with President Ortega of Nicaragua in the *Official Report*.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to publish my correspondence with other Heads of State or Government.

Engagements

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 23 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Members' Correspondence

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister to what she attributes the variation between Ministers in the time taken to reply to hon. Members' correspondence; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The information requested by the hon. Member could be obtained only at disproportionate costs. All Departments receive a very large volume of ministerial correspondence. In all cases Ministers will make efforts to reply quickly. The information which I have available indicates that questions from hon. Members are dealt with with reasonable expedition, although inevitably the time taken varies depending upon such factors as the amount of research required and the number of people who need to be consulted.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister what arrangements are being made by Departments to seek to ensure that hon. Members' correspondence is dealt with timeously during the summer recess; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It is the aim of Ministers to respond with appropriate dispatch and priority to correspondence from hon. Members at all times.

So far as is possible the normal departmental arrangements for dealing with correspondence will be applied during the recess. Where this is not possible each Department will adjust these arrangements to meet its particular circumstances and to maintain an effective service.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received in connection with the publication of the Green Paper "Building Societies: A New Framework", concerning the practice whereby certain building societies intervene when applications are made by their members to borrow funds from another source secured by a second charge by refusing to give consent to the registration of the charge and offer to tend money themselves for purposes unconnected with house purchase or home improvement; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that his proposed new legislation will include a code of practice to ensure fair competition for the provision of financial services;

(2) if, in considering the response he has received concerning the Green Paper, "Building Societies: A New Framework", he will make it his policy to ensure that his proposed new legislation will prohibit building societies and local authorities from operating a blanket refusal policy which prevents the registration of a second charge where a member wishes to secure a loan from another lender; and if he will ensure that competition for the provision of financial services is fair to all sectors of the financial market.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have received a number of representations concerning the practice by some building societies of restricting entry by borrowers into a second mortgage. I am advised, however, that it is the exception rather than the rule for a borrower to require the society's consent to a second mortgage, and even more unusual for consent to be refused. There have been no recent complaints to either the Office of Fair Trading or the Building Societies Association about prohibitions on second charges, and in the light of this I have no plans for adding to the present system of controls on societies or local authorities.

Transfer of Assets

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will use his powers under the Bank of England Act to require the banks to supply information concerning the transfer of assets abroad by United Kingdom residents to facilitate the collection of tax due on the income earned from such assets.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I am advised that neither the Treasury's nor the Bank of England's powers under the Bank of England Act 1946 could be used for this purpose.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total corporation tax received from companies whose main activities is the manufacture of cider for each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Moore: I regret that this information is not available.

Tax Arrears (Remission)

Mrs. Currie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there has been any further review of the income limits which govern the Inland Revenue's practice for remitting arrears of tax which have arisen through official error.

Mr. Moore: Yes. The Inland Revenue's practice of remitting tax in cases of official error is set out in a White Paper of July 1971 (Cmnd. 4729), under which the proportion of arrears collected varies according to the size of the taxpayer's gross income; the balance of the arrear is remitted. The scale has been revised several times since 1971; the current scale, introduced in July 1984, is as follows:

Gross income	*Percentage of arrears*	
	Collected	*Remitted*
Not above £8,000	None	All
£8,000 but not above £10,000	0·25	0·75
£10,000 but not above £12,500	0·50	0·50
£12,500 but not above £15,000	0·75	0·25
£15,000 but not above £21,500	0·90	0·10
£21,500	All	None

It has been decided to increase these limits. The new scale of limits will apply to arrears of tax, the actual or likely amount of which is first notified to the taxpayer or his agent on or after today. The date of notification will also be the date for testing eligibility for the pensioners' limits.

The scale generally applicable will be:

Gross income	Percentage of arrears	
	Collected	Remitted
Not above £8,500	None	All
£8,500 but not above £10,500	0·25	0·75
£10,500 but not above £13,500	0·50	0·50
£13,500 but not above £16,000	0·75	0·25
£16,000 but not above £23,000	0·90	0·10
£23,000	All	None

In the case of taxpayers aged 65 or over or who are in receipt of the National Insurance retirement or widows' pension each of the above limits will be £2,500 greater. If a taxpayer in this category has gross income of £11,000 or less the whole of the arrears will be remitted, whilst some remission will be allowed on gross income up to £25,500.

Rates

Mr. Hirst asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 22 May 1985 to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) *Official Report*, columns *472* and *473*, what procedure will be followed by the Inland Revenue in assessing to tax the benefit of employer-provided accommodation in Scotland following the recent rating revaluation there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: As I announced on 22 May, the measure of the value of accommodation provided by reason of employment is in certain circumstances taken to be the property's gross rateable value. The recent rating revaluation in Scotland will mean that gross rateable values in Scotland will be considerably higher than those in England and Wales or Northern Ireland for equivalent properties.

To avoid unfairness as between taxpayers in different parts of the United Kingdom, the Inland Revenue has decided not to follow the practice of assessing the benefit arising on property in Scotland in strict accordance with the recent rating revaluation figures, while the future of rating revaluations is under consideration. Instead, the Inland Revenue will by concession use the existing 1978 figures as the basis of assessment for existing properties for 1985-86 and 1986-87. For 1987-88 and subsequent years and for new properties the Inland Revenue will scale back the 1985 figures by the average increase in rateable values in Scotland between 1978 and 1985 (170 per cent.).

Details of the treatment of employer-provided accommodation will be published in the Board of Inland Revenue's published list of extra-statutory concessions in due course. A copy of the Inland Revenue press release giving full details of the concession will be placed in the Library.

EC (Finance)

Mr. William Ross asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total payments by the United Kingdom to European Economic Community funds from 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1984 showing the body to which the payments were made and including payments to the European Investment Bank and the European Coal and Steel Community, and also showing the total amounts the United Kingdom has received from these bodies in the same period in *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 July 1985, c. *446*]: The information set out below includes the latest estimates of our gross contributions to and receipts from the European Economic Community, and our transactions with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Atomic Energy Authority (EURATOM) for 1984. Information on transactions with the European Coal and Steel Community for 1984 is not currently available.

European Communities Budget (ECB)	£ million
1973-1984	
UK gross contributions	17,895
UK receipts including refunds	12,500
European Investment Bank (EIB)	
UK payments to capital	138
UK payments to reserves	20
UK loans from EIB own resources*	3,338
UK loans from New Community instrument* †	172
UK loans from EURATOM* †—46 mecu (received in 1983—some £27 million converted at the appropriate budget exchange rate)	
There are no grants from the EIB or EURATOM.	
European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)	
1973-1983	
ECSC loans to UK*	1,608
ECSC grants to UK* ‖	262
Industrial levies paid to ECSC‡ by the UK coal and steel industries—1981 to 1983—86·24 mecu (some £48 million when converted at the appropriate annual average exchange rates)	

* Total of loans and grants received from European Community institutions from 1 January 1983 to 31 December 1984. These are not the amounts currently outstanding.

† Under the New Community Instrument the European Commission borrows on the international capital markets in its own name and on-lends within the European Community, using the EIB as Administrator. The EURATOM loan scheme was set up in 1977. This scheme also is administered by the EIB, which customarily co-finances the project from its own resources, within the constraint that total Community involvement should not exceed 50 per cent. The remaining funds are raised by borrowing on the international capital markets. The moneys are lent to member states.

‡ The resources of the ECSC are financed partly out of the budget of the European Economic Community and partly by levies received from the Coal and Steel industries of the member states, based on a percentage of their production. Details of member states' individual levy payments were not published by the ECSC prior to 1981.

‖ Commitments undertaken by the ECSC to make awards of grant to the UK during the period 1973 to 1983, outturn in calendar years is not readily available.

Note: In addition to the payments listed in the table the UK also makes payments to the Community's Joint European Torus project by virtue of its host status—currently around £7 million per year. This project was started in 1978.

Sources:

ECB figures—taken from departmental returns and EEC No. 1 Account data.

EIB figures—EIB annual reports and the Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Supplementary statements

ECSC figures—ECSC annual financial reports and DTI returns.

DEFENCE

HMS Coventry

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if diving operations for documents and strategic material in the wreck of HMS Coventry have now been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: As the hon. Member was told on 15 November 1982 (*Official Report*, column *44*), naval divers were deployed to recover classified equipment and documents from the wreck of HMS Coventry. This work was successfully completed later that year.

CERN Ranges

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider the extention of the consultation period of the Cavanagh report on the CERN ranges.

Mr. Butler: The trade unions have been given a little over two months in which to comment on our consultative document on this report which I believe to be adequate.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what savings his Department expects to make with the contracting out of the work of the Royal Aircraft Establishment ranges.

Mr. Butler: I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to certain recommendations in the Cavanagh report on CERN ranges. No estimates of savings from further contractorisation are available. The report in question recommended that there should be an examination of the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of such a course as well as making recommendations on the management, organisation and loading of the ranges and it is currently the subject of consultation with the trades unions. Only when this process is complete will it be possible to decide whether or not to go ahead with the recommended examination.

Procurement Contracts

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total procurement contracts awarded by his Department in the last year have gone to small firms.

Mr. Butler: The information available indicates that the proportions, by value, of the total procurement expenditure by my Department directly with small firms in the financial year 1983-84 (the only year for which information is at present available) were as follows:

Firms with up to 50 employees—approximately 4 per cent.

Firms with up to 200 employees — approximately 10 per cent.

These percentages do not take account of the significant amount of work awarded to small firms on a sub-contract basis.

Helicopters (Queen's Flight)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many helicopters are currently in service with the Queen's Flight.

Mr. Butler: The Queen's Flight is equipped with two Wessex helicopters.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the age of the current helicopters of the Queen's Flight.

Mr. Butler: The Wessex helicopters of the Queen's Flight were manufactured in 1969.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans to replace the helicopters of the Queen's Flight.

Mr. Butler: There are no plans to replace the helicopters of the Queen's Flight, which have many years' safe and useful operating life left.

Research Establishments

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the staffing levels which have been employed in research establishments for which his Department is responsible in each single year since 1979.

Mr. Butler: Staffing levels in the research establishment of the procurement executive of the Ministry of Defence have been as follows:

	Non-industrial	*Industrial*	*MOD Police*	*Total*
1 April 1979	14,591	13,155½	—	27,746½
1 April 1980	14,447½	12,737	—	27,184½
1 April 1981	13,471½	12,228	—	25,699½
1 April 1982	12,739	11,773	—	24,512
1 April 1983	12,487½	10,887½	—	23,375
1 April 1984	12,123½	10,349	576	23,048½
1 April 1985	11,194½	9,370½	589	21,154

Note: Before 1 April 1984 MOD police numbers were not attributed to the research establishments.

Undergraduates

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers of undergraduate students at universities who have received financial support from his Department for their courses in each academic year since 1979-80; if he will give a breakdown of the academic faculties and the individual universities in which they studied; and what specific new awards he plans to introduce for students of science-related disciplines.

Mr. Butler: My Department is planning to increase substantially from the start of the coming academic year the number of sponsorships it offers to students reading for first degrees in engineering, scientific and related disciplines. Our student engineer scheme, through which we recruit most of our professional engineers, will have its capacity doubled to sponsor up to about 140 undergraduates each year. We are, in addition, introducing a new scheme on the lines of the student engineer scheme to provide sponsorship for up to 100 undergraduates reading for science degrees in disciplines relevant to the Department's work programmes. I shall write to the hon. Member about the statistical information she has asked for as soon as possible.

Joint Research Scheme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria will be used for determining successful or unsuccessful applications for grants submitted by universities to his Department for research in areas of potential strategic interest within the framework of the £10 million joint research scheme to be administered

in co-operation with the Science and Engineering Research Council; and why universities have been given until 1 December to submit such applications.

Mr. Butler: Applications for grants under this scheme will be assessed by the relevant research council against their usual criteria and by the Ministry of Defence for relevance to defence, following initial submission to the former. No date has yet been announced for the first tranche of applications but a reasonable time span is clearly needed for documentation inviting applications to be prepared, and for academic institutions to consider what response to make. Up to £5 million will be made available for the scheme.

Recruitment

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons were recruited in Scotland for each of the armed services during 1984-85; and if he will break down the figures by careers information office areas.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of service personnel recruited at careers information offices in Scotland between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985 are set out in the following table. These figures exclude the recruitment of officers and Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service who are recruited centrally.

CIO	RN/RM	Army	RAF	All Services
Aberdeen	34	117	109	260
Dundee	51	406	107	564
Edinburgh	130	547	117	794
Glasgow	179	1,099	234	1,512
Inverness	102	162	—*	264
Total	496	2,331	567	3,394

* Attestations of entrants to the RAF from the Inverness CIO were made at Aberdeen and are included in the Aberdeen numbers.

US Service Men

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States service men are stationed at *(a)* Machrihanish, *(b)* Holy Loch, *(c)* Edzell and *(d)* Thurso.

Mr. Lee: Information on the number of United States service personnel at these facilities is compiled annually. As at October 1984, the figures were as follows:

	Number
Machrihanish	95
Holy Loch	1,821
Edzell	731
Thurso	156

Levene Report

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Levene report on defence procurement to be published.

Mr. Lee: It is not proposed to publish the report on defence equipment procurement which Mr. Levene prepared last year when he was personal adviser to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as this was an internal management document.

HMS Euryalus

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the refitting of HMS Euryalus and, in particular *(a)* the cost comparison with the royal dockyard and *(b)* damage done to component parts of the frigate during the refit.

Mr. Lee: The cost of the refit of HMS Euryalus, in terms of the price paid to the contractor and the other expenses incurred by Ministry of Defence, will be compared on an equitable basis with that of the similar refit of HMS Arethusa at Devonport dockyard. There has been no untoward damage to Euryalus during her refit; recent publicity related to a weapon launcher supplied to the contractor that was found to be defective on setting to work.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish all the figures available to him of the range of estimated savings and costs for *(a)* transitional arrangements and *(b)* year-to-year expenses in the running of the royal dockyards under a private agency-management scheme; and what is the assumed profit margin for the contractor.

Mr. Lee: It would not be appropriate to disclose the details of the estimates which have been made because this would prejudice future negotiations with contractors should commercial management be adopted. However, taking account of the initial implementation costs of some £60 million, our most recent assessment is that annual savings would amount to some £25 million rising to some £29 million-£33 million.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has calculated the sum of money required to set up a pension fund for royal dockyard employees in the event of a franchise arrangement for the dockyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No. Broad estimates have been made but the Department would take actuarial advice on the precise level of funding required for any new pensions arrangements for royal dockyard employees.

Klaus Barbie

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in the light of the publication in France of the report, "L'affreux Secret", by John Loftus, United States Justice Department special investigator, he will reconsider his decision not to make available to the Public Record Office his Department's file on Klaus Barbie.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Defence Projects (Completion Delays)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish in the *Official Report* those projects which, as a direct result of inefficiency by Devonport or Rosyth dockyards, have not been completed to time, cost and quality during the last 10 years or any suitable period.

Mr. Lee: Inefficiency can arise from a number of factors — for example material shortages, inadequate

work specifications, restrictive work practices, weaknesses in planning and control, late changes to the refit requirements or to the overall dockyard programme—some of which are within and some outside the dockyard's direct control. Ships are only accepted back into service when quality standards have been met, but timekeeping and costs suffer as a result of such inefficiencies. During the past five years (the period for which information is readily available) some two thirds of refits have exceeded time and cost estimates, although for the latter inflation would also have been a contributory factor.

Parliamentary Maritime Group

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date he learnt of the invitation by the parliamentary maritime group to Sir John Fieldhouse to address a meeting of the group; what consideration he gave to this request; why he has not agreed to this request; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hesseltine: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Dockyards

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to close, or reduce staffing at, the chief executive royal dockyards headquarters in Bath.

Mr. Lee: The defence open government document 85/01 published in April re-affirmed the view that the Ministry of Defence and the dockyards should establish a clear customer/supplier relationship. It is therefore planned that the headquarters of the chief executive royal dockyards in Bath be progressively superseded by new customer organisation which will draw on the existing staff.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the manpower reductions at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: From May 1979 to April 1985 civilian manpower at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards has increased by 313 and 353 respectively.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish a list in the *Official Report* of those organisations and individuals who responded to open government document 85/01, "The Future of the Royal Dockyards"; and which of those expressed concern about the time available for consultations.

Mr. Lee: Of some 60 representations received in the Department from members of the public on subjects relating to the future of the royal dockyards, one expressed concern at the period allowed for consultation. Twelve of these were presented as submissions in response to the open government document 85/01, of which none expressed this concern.

In addition, formal responses to the Document have been received directly from six local authorities and institutions:

Plymouth City Council (which also forwarded the views of a number of other authorities)
Borough of West Devon
Devon County Council
Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Fife Regional Council
Dunfermline District Council

Four of the six expressed concern at the consultative period. There have also been responses from the Shipbuilding Trades' Joint Council (trade union side), the Ministry of Defence Council of Civil Service Unions, and the Trades Union Congress, all of which express such concern.

Finally, there has been a continuing expression of interest from industry.

Maritime Services Organisation

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for changes to the Marine Services Organisation.

Mr. Lee: A management audit of the Marine Services Organisation was completed recently. The audit acknowledged that the standard of service provided is high; that the marine services undertake important operational tasks; and that a viable in-house organisation needs to be retained for the future. However, its principal findings were that there was substantial scope for improving the efficiency of the marine services and that there was a prima facie case for contracting out the bulk of the operations. A consultative document detailing the audit's findings is being issued to the trade unions today and a copy will be placed in the Library of both Houses. There will be full consultation before major decisions on implementation are reached. However, in the meantime, management's aim must be to ensure that efficiency is improved substantially and costs reduced, while still meeting the essential operational needs of the Fleet. Implementation of necessary changes would be phased over three years and directed by a steering group.

Orangeleaf

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has reached a decision on the contractor for conversion of Royal Fleet auxiliary Orangeleaf to the support tanker role; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: A number of tenders for this work were received. The contract is being awarded to Tyne Shiprepair Ltd. This firm's tender offered significant advantages over its nearest competitors' in terms of both price and time.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the amounts of long-term development aid supplied by the United Kingdom to Ethiopia over the last four years and projected levels for the next two years; how this compares with other EEC and other major world donors; and if he will further express these total figures as per capita figures, for Ethiopia, and per capita figures for donor countries, respectively.

Mr. Raison: The details of our bilateral long-term development aid to Ethiopia over the last four years are as follows:

	£,000
1981	144
1982	106
1983	32
1984	170

These figures include project aid, technical co-operation and debt cancellation, but exclude disaster relief and aid channelled through the European Community, the world food programme and other multilateral agencies. We are aiming to spend about £500,000 this year, mainly on technical co-operation, and the level of future aid is currently under consideration.

Details of total net official development assistance, including per capita figures, to Ethiopia by the United Kingdom and other western donors, for 1980 to 1983, as reported to the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD are given below. The 1984 statistics are not yet available. Under the DAC reporting system, these statistics include food aid and emergency relief. Comparative figures for long-term development aid alone are not available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the amount of grain that has arrived in Ethiopia from each developed country in the last six months; how far this is short of Ethiopia's needs; and in which month in the coming months each country's promised delivery is likely to arrive in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: Information on deliveries made and planned is contained on pages 40-41 of the latest status report number 12 dated 1 July 1985 from the world food programme's Africa task force secretariat. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

The total amount delivered in the first six months in 1985—some 650,000 tonnes—covered half the annual need estimated by the United Nations famine relief co-ordinator.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the present level of grain stock at Assab and Mossawa in Ethiopia and in Djibouti; and how these levels compare with stocks in each of the last six months.

Mr. Raison: Information from the world food programme Africa task force secretariat is that present levels are:

	Tonnes (landed)
Assab	76,000
Massawa	25,000
Djibouti	31,000

Stocks in each of the last six months were (tonnes):

	January	*February*	*March April May June*
Assab	27,000	50,000	(80,000—147,000 range)
Massawa	*	*	(30,000—60,000) range
Djibouti	*	*	(15,000—46,000) range

* No accurate data available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information there is as to the most recent estimates of the amount of grain that will arrive at the port of Assab in Ethiopia in each of the next eight weeks, and as to how much will be in store at the port in each of those weeks.

Mr. Raison: The latest information from the world food programme Africa task force secretariat is that on 14 July there were on the quay in Assab 76,000 tonnes of grain and offshore 61,000 tonnes (including 25,000 tonnes of commercially imported grain). A further 17,000 tonnes are expected in the week 14-20 July.

Shipping arrangements are made by donors in close consultation with the world food programme on a monthly basis; in July some 95,000 tonnes are scheduled with a similar amount for August depending on port capacity in Ethiopia.

The amount in store at port will depend on the level of offtake from the port which is currently 2,500 to 3,000 tonnes each day on average.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many aircraft have been supplied by the British Government and European Governments, respectively, for famine relief in Ethiopia during the last 12 months.

Mr. Raison: As well as the two RAF aircraft stationed in Ethiopia since November 1984, which have been supported by a weekly Hercules resupply flight, we have helped to pay for 12 other aircraft on special charter flights to move food and other relief supplies to and within Ethiopia.

According to the latest information, other European Governments have supplied aircraft at various times during the last 12 months as follows:

Country	
Belgium	4 including 2 for use by the International Committee for the Red Cross
Bulgaria	4 including 2 helicopters
France	1
Federal Republic of Germany	2
German Democratic Republic	4
Italy	2
Poland	Red Cross helicopters—numbers uncertain
Sweden	1 for use by International Committee for the Red Cross
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	Possibly 36 including 24 helicopters, used mainly for the resettlement programme

UNESCO

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the representations made to him concerning the proposed United Kingdom withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; and if he will place copies of all such representations in the Library.

Mr. Raison: It is not the practice to reveal details of correspondence from private individuals or organisations without their consent.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions on which he or other Ministers have met representatives of the Heritage Foundation to discuss the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; and if he will place in the Library copies of the representations made by that organisation.

Mr. Raison: I received Mr. Owen Harries, John Molin Fellow of the Heritage Foundation, twice in 1984 and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has met him once informally.

There have been no written representations from this organisation.

Sudan

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been given to Sudan since June 1984.

Mr. Raison: We have provided £26·3 million as a long-term development assistance to the Sudan since June 1984. In addition, we have given over £23 million in emergency famine relief since October 1984.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers (Appraisal and Promotion)

11. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now introduce legislation to provide for a system of regular appraisal for teachers and promotion based upon such appraisal.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government will be taking an early opportunity to seek the power to require local education authorities regularly to appraise the performance of their teachers. I would like to see more good teachers promoted to higher scales and those promotion decisions put onto the more consistent and reliable basis facilitated by an appraisal system.

51. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he is making with his plans to improve the quality and the career structure of teachers.

53. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress there has been towards relating teachers' pay and promotion to merit and performance.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have had some discussions with the local authority associations on my letter of 21 May which set out the Government's proposals for making progress towards these objectives. I have also discussed some of the issues arising with the Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association, the National Association of Headteachers and the Secondary Heads Association. I shall continue to urge the parties to negotiate on these proposals which would enable local authorities to offer substantially improved career and promotion prospects based on consideration of all the relevant factors such as teachers' qualifications, skills and experience, the quality of the work done and the demands of particular teaching posts and the difficulty of filling them.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

12. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he will take to ensure the change over to the general certificate of secondary education in September.

Mr. Dunn: The first GCSE courses will begin in September 1986, and the first GCSE examinations will be held in 1988. In preparation, there is to be a special programme of in-service training for all GCSE teachers during the 1985-86 academic year, to which the Government are making a substantial financial contribution. We continue to discuss with the examining groups and the secondary examinations council their developing plans for the introduction of the new examination courses.

Schools (Parental Choice)

22. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the operation of the provisions relating to choice of schools contained in the Education Act 1980.

Mr. Dunn: Yes.

Mature Students

23. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to improve access to further and higher education for mature students.

Mr. Brooke: Mature candidates compete on equal terms for places in further and higher education alongside younger candidates. All those who are eligible should be able to find a place. For higher education the recent Green Paper (Cmnd. 9524) redefines the guidelines for determining access to place greater emphasis on the intellectual competence, motivation and maturity of the student in a way that should benefit the mature candidate without formal qualifications (paragraphs 3.1-3.3). The Green Paper also draws attention to the value of access courses for older candidates aspiring to higher education (paragraph 6.9). The projections of demand for higher education underlying the Government's expenditure plans allow for increasing numbers of mature entrants to higher education as the relevant age groups increase with the onward movement of the population bulge.

Teachers (Pay Dispute)

24. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has reached a conclusion on whether to seek to change the machinery for the determination of teachers' pay.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. I am giving the most careful consideration to recent developments and their implications for the current negotiating machinery.

25. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to meet representatives of the teachers' side of the Burnham committee to discuss the teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron).

30. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is considering any new initiative to seek to solve the teachers' dispute.

34. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' pay dispute.

35. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute.

50. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' pay dispute.

52. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the current situation of the teachers' pay dispute.

56. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current situation in the teachers' pay dispute.

57. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the recent developments on the question of teachers' salaries.

58. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current position of the teachers' dispute.

60. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current state of negotiations over the future of teachers' pay and conditions of work.

62. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for settling the teachers' dispute before the commencement of the next school year.

68. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what initiatives he plans to take as a contribution to settling the teachers' dispute before the commencement of the next school year.

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what initiatives he plans to take as a contribution to settling the teachers' pay dispute before the commencement of the next school year.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), my hon. Friends the Members for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and Banbury (Mr. Baldry), the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand), my hon. Friend the Member for Crayford and Erith (Mr. Evennett), the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor).

47. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the chairman of Cambridgeshire county council education committee about the teachers' dispute since the local authority elections in May.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have recently received a letter dated 16 July from the chairman of the Cambridgeshire education committee. It recommends the introduction of pendulum arbitration and a more precise contract for teachers linking pay with other conditions of employment.

School Buildings

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to issue guidance to local education authorities about the level of resources devoted to the maintenance and repair of school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's plans for 1985-86, published in Cmnd. 9428, allow for improved levels of expenditure per pupil on repairs and maintenace in many authorities. In addition, the Department's design note 40 on "Maintenance and Renewal in Education Buildings: Needs and Priorities" published earlier this year, provides guidelines to LEAs for determining maintenance priorities and setting up cost-effective maintenance programmes. My right hon. Friend has no plans to issue further guidance.

66. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will conduct a survey of the condition of school buildings in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so. School buildings in other parts of the United Kingdom are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Adult Education

27. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial support has been given to adult education in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Sir Keith Joseph: Expenditure in England by local education authorities on adult education centres and by central government on adult education grants and programmes has been £69 million, £77 million, £88 million, £102 million and £104 million respectively for the financial years in question. The figure for 1984-85 is the estimated outturn expenditure.

Church and Independent Schools

28. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to encourage the growth of church and independent schools.

Mr. Dunn: No encouragement is needed. The Government welcome the diversity such schools bring to our education system subject, in the case of voluntary church schools, to the efficient use of public money.

Teaching Profession

29. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many people left the teaching profession other than through retirement during 1984-85.

Sir Keith Joseph: The latest figures available are for 1983-84 when 20,260 teachers left maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales prior to age 60 on grounds other than premature retirement. This figure represents 4·9 per cent. of the teaching force, a proportion which has remained fairly steady since 1982-83 after falling gradually from a level of 6·3 per cent. in 1979-80.

16 to 19-year-olds

31. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision is planned for the financial support of 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education.

64. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about financial provision for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Sir Keith Joseph: Young people in non-advanced full-time education have traditionally been regarded as primarily dependent on their parents for financial support until their 19th birthday. Parents receive child benefit in respect of such children, and in addition local education authorities have discretionary powers to pay grants and allowances to those in need.

Education Budget

32. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science in what areas of the education budget he is seeking to make economies.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am concerned that the resources available for education generally should be used economically and effectively throughout the service. For example, the Government's plans for education expenditure by LEAs in 1985-86 assume economies in the provision of the school meals service, in caretaking and cleaning and through continuing progress in the removal of surplus school places, so as to target resources to best educational effect. These and other opportunities for efficiency savings will be no less crucial in later years for which provision for education, like other aspects of public spending, is currently under review as part of the annual survey.

Grammar Schools

33. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he yet has figures for the number of maintained grammar schools in England in January 1985.

Mr. Dunn: There were 171 maintained grammar schools in England in January 1985.

18 to 19-year-olds

36. **Mr. Powley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of 18 to 19-year-olds in the United Kingdom entered higher education in 1978 and in 1984.

Mr. Brooke: Information is not readily available in the form requested. The Department's usual way of monitoring participation in higher education is the age participation index. This is defined as the number of full-time and sandwich home initial entrants to higher education aged under 21 expressed as a percentage of the average population of 18 and 19-year-olds. Initial entrants are those entering a higher education course for the first time and excludes those entering a second such course. The index for Great Britain in 1978 was 12·3 (excluding entrants to teacher training courses with less than 2 A levels); the provisional estimate for 1984 is 13·7.

Oxford and Cambridge Universities

37. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost to public funds of college fees paid in respect of students at Oxford and Cambridge universities.

Mr. Brooke: An estimate based on average college fees and numbers of home students (not all of whom will have their fees paid from public funds) suggests that the cost to public funds of college fees in the academic year 1984-85 is approximately £19·5 million for students at the University of Oxford and approximately £17 million for students at the University of Cambridge.

General Teachers Council

38. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received towards the establishment of a General Teachers Council.

Sir Keith Joseph: In 1982 I received requests from the Campaign for a General Teaching Council, the Joint Council of Heads and the Professional Association of Teachers for an inquiry into the possible establishment of a council. Right hon. and hon. Members and others have inquired from time to time about my views on the case for a council. I have replied that I would need to be convinced that such proposals commanded wide support and safeguarded the interests of producers and consumers alike, before the Government could consider whether to support the establishment of a council.

Church Schools

39. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future capital funding of church schools.

Mr. Dunn: We shall continue to ensure that an equitable share of the total resources available for education capital expenditure is used to grant aid approved capital expenditure by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools.

Community Education

40. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the development of community education.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities to decide on the pattern of educational provision locally, including the extent to which educational buildings might be used for community purposes. My right hon. Friend does, however, encourage local authorities to promote the shared use of school premises so far as resources permit.

Burnham Committee

41. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met members of the Burnham committee; and what was discussed.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is not my practice to meet members of the Burnham committee in their capacity as members of that committee. I have, however, had meetings recently with a number of the organisations represented on the committee, including the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and three teachers' associations. Most of the discussion concerned teachers' pay, pay structure and related matters.

Agricultural Research Budget

42. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further representations he has received about the proposed cuts in the agricultural research budget.

Mr. Brooke: On 22 January 1985 my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced at column 401 a proposed reduction in the public expenditure provision for research, development and advisory services funded by the Agriculture Departments in 1986-87 and 1987-88. These reductions reflect the Government's aim that those who benefit from such work should contribute in greater measure to its costs.

Following the announcement we have received representations from the chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC) concerning the possible consequences for the AFRC and particularly for the research it conducts using funds from the Department's science budget. The Department has also received 22 letters from hon. Members and other interested parties directly, or via the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

16-plus Examination

43. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the first merit and distinction certificates at 16-plus to be awarded.

Mr. Dunn: The Department issued a consultation paper on GCSE distinction and merit certificates in December 1984. Responses to that document are now being considered, and my right hon. Friend will make an announcement as soon as he is in a position to do so.

School Governing Bodies

44. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the legislative proposals for changing the composition of school governing bodies.

Mr. Dunn: At the first opportunity permitted by the Government's legislative programme.

Higher Education

45. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the approximate number of students in higher education engaged on *(a)* arts and humanities courses and *(b)* on courses in science, engineering and technology.

Mr. Brooke: The numbers of home students enrolled on higher education courses in 1983-84, the latest year for which information is available, was as follows:

Great Britain

Subjects	*Full-time and sandwich*	*Part-time**
Arts and humanities	303,500	101,400
Science, engineering and technology	216,300	134,000

* Excluding 76,000 Open University students of whom approximately half were following arts and humanities courses.

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the Green Paper, The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Although my right hon. Friend is beginning to receive representations on the issues raised in Cmnd. 9524, the majority are not expected until later in the year. Such representations will be taken into account in the further formulation of policy for the future development of higher education: the Government hope to be able to make a further statement of their intentions in 1986.

Education Costs

46. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current public expenditure on education per child; and what was the figure in 1983, 1981 and 1979, all at current prices.

Sir Keith Joseph: Local education authorities spent £915 per pupil in 1983-84, the latest period for which actual figures are available. The corresponding figures for 1981-82 and 1979-80, both in 1983-84 real prices, are £865 and £790. Real terms are the cash terms for each year adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator at market prices with 1983-84=100.

Teacher Training

48. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications were received from students for places in teacher training colleges last year; and how many places were available.

Mr. Dunn: The total number of applications received by the Clearing House Registry and the Graduate Teacher Training Registry for entry in September 1984 to courses of initial teacher training in England and Wales was 33,296. This figure excludes applications for entry to undergraduate courses of initial teacher training in universities, which are made through the Universities' Central Council on Admission, and for which figures are not collected separately. The target number of intakes for initial teacher training courses for 1984-85 was 16,735, including 500 intakes to undergraduate courses in universities.

Truancy

49. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to seek to reduce the truancy rate.

Mr. Dunn: As my right hon. Friend said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond

and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 22 March at column 626, a draft circular on school attendance and education welfare services was sent on 21 March to local authority and teacher associations and to other relevant organisations. Copies of the document have been placed in the Library. Comments were sought by 1 July and are now being considered with a view to the circular being issued as soon as possible.

Independent Schools (Public Facilities)

54. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he has given to local education authorities on the use of public facilities for children attending independent schools.

Mr. Dunn: None as such, but my hon. Friend will be hearing shortly from my right hon. Friend in respect of certain decisions taken by Nottinghamshire county council.

University Places

55. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the supply of and demand for university places during the next academic year.

Mr. Brooke: The provisional estimate of home initial entrants to universities in Great Britain in autumn 1984 is 71,000. The number of entrants is not expected to change significantly in 1985. By March 1985 the Universities Central Council on Admissions received 154,000 applications from home candidates for admission to universities in 1985. Of these very roughly 40 per cent. are likely either not to qualify or otherwise not to maintain their application. Although all qualified applicants are not able to find a place in a university those who are unsuccessful should be able to find a place elsewhere in higher education.

In-service Education and Training

59. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, following the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education provision in England 1984, he will meet local education authorities to discuss future development of in-service education and training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has already had preliminary discussions with representatives of the local authority associations on the Government's plans set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) to introduce a new specific grant for in-service training. It is the Government's intention, through the proposed new grant arrangements, to bring about more effective planning and management of in-service training, including improved procedures for identifying teachers' needs for training and for matching those needs with suitable training activities.

Comprehensive Schools

61. **Mr. Tracey** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the minimum size for comprehensive schools since publication of the White Paper, "Better Schools", Cmnd. 9469.

Mr. Dunn: No representations have been received but, as indicated in "Better Schools", we are arranging to consult the local authority associations, the voluntary bodies and the other partners in the education service on the principles proposed in Cmnd. 9469 about the minimum size of schools of certain types.

Youth Training Scheme

63. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has had on the educational content of the two-year youth training scheme.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien).

Primary and Secondary Education

65. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary and secondary places there are now in the maintained education system in England; and what is the full cost of maintaining these places.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1984 there were estimated to be 4·85 million primary places and 4·16 million secondary places maintained in use by local education authorities in England. The cost of maintaining these places in the financial year 1983-84 was £571·8 million in primary schools and £741·4 million in secondary schools.

Overseas Students

67. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many overseas students were in higher education in the United Kingdom in 1979-80 and in 1984-85.

Mr. Brooke: About 58,600 full-time and sandwich students domiciled abroad enrolled on higher education courses in Great Britain in 1979-80. The provisional estimate for 1984-85 is 47,600. Figures for the United Kingdom are not readily available.

Universities (Research Grants)

69. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will conduct a review of the criteria employed by research councils for the allocation of research grants to universities.

Mr. Brooke: No. The research councils are responsible for making scientific judgments within their fields. My right hon. Friend looks to the Advisory Board for the Research Councils for advice on the balance of councils' scientific programmes. I understand that, in forming a view on this, the board explores the basis on which councils reach judgments, particularly the criteria they apply and the general procedures for determining priorities. The board is currently pursuing these matters in the context of discussing councils' corporate plans.

Clinical Academics (Pay)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what reply he is sending to

the letter of 18 June from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals expounding its view that it is unable to undertake discussions on clinical academics' pay until it knows the outcome of the earlier approaches that it made to his Department on funding;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter of 18 June to him from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on the subject of clinical academics' pay;

(3) if he will make a statement on Government funding policy as it affects the clinical academic staff salaries Committee's remit to ensure the continuance of comparability between clinical academic staff and their National Health Service counterparts.

Mr. Peter Brooke: Following is the text of the letter of 18 June to my right hon. Friend from the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals about funding arrangements for the salaries of clinical academic staff. My right hon. Friend will reply to that letter as soon as possible. In the meantime he has no plans to make a statement.

From the Chairman: Maurice Shock, MA

18 June 1985

Dear Keith,

You will be aware of my Committee's continuing and increasing concern during the past three years over the funding arrangements for the payment of the salaries of clinical academic staff in universities in the light of the increases promulgated by the Government for doctors and dentists in the National Health Service. The recent decision to implement the recommendations of the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration has made the position acute, and I am writing to seek your assistance in resolving the matter.

My Committee was in correspondence with you and your officials last year and this led to a useful exchange with the Permanent Secretaries of both the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health and Social Security. We are still awaiting the Government's response to the representations which we made on that occasion, and are now additionally faced with the most serious implications of the recent announcement by the Government.

Our situation is becoming impossible. The machinery of the Clinical Academic Staff Salaries Committee (CASSC) was established in November 1979, with the agreement of the Government, the University Grants Committee, the universities and the staff associations, to provide for the direct translation to clinical academic staff of any salary settlement approved by the Government for doctors and dentists in the NHS. It was not set up as a negotiating body. In circumstances where the Government has again approved an award for NHS staff which is over 6 per cent while allowing only 3 per cent. for pay increases for staff in universities the CASSC machinery is virtually inoperable.

The situation is quite different from that for non-clinical staff, where we negotiate directly with the Association of University Teachers and have achieved through our machinery settlements nearer the Government's pay norms than has the Government itself.

In the context of the severe and increasing financial restraints on universities there is no realistic possibility of finding the necessary funds for these increases in NHS levels of clinical pay from within our present resources. This is not the occasion for going into the details of a case which we have already made but I would wish to stress that the reintroduction of pay differentials between academic and NHS clinical staff would have the most serious implications for the contribution which university medical education and training, research and patient care make to the NHS.

At the CASSC held last week, we told the staff side that the universities were unable to undertake discussions on the translation of the new NHS salary levels to clinical academic salaries until we knew the outcome of the approaches made to your Department and the DHSS earlier in the year for funding to enable universities to meet their obligations both in this current financial year and in future years.

We await your response as a matter of urgency.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security.

Sincerely,

Maurice

University Students (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total number of students attending each Scottish university in the academic years 1983-84 and 1984-85; what were the numbers of full-time academic staff at each university in both years; and what were the staff-student ratios in each case in each year.

Mr. Brooke: Statistics for 1984-85 are not yet available. The information for 1983-84 is:

University	*Full-time equivalent student load* (1)	*Full-time departmental academic staff wholly university financed* (2)	*Staff-students ratios* (1):(2)
Aberdeen	5,535	583	9·5
Dundee	3,211	346	9·3
Edinburgh	10,438	1,087	9·6
Glasgow	10,901	1,025	10·6
Heriot-Watt	2,991	271	11·0
St. Andrews	3,532	318	11·1
Stirling	2,606	247	10·6
Strathclyde	7,298	668	10·9

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will require the chairman of the Advisory Board for Research Councils to re-examine the corporate plan of the Natural Environment Research Council and the role within it of the British geological survey.

Mr. Brooke: No, but as I indicated on 19 July a separate review of geological surveying will shortly take place.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from hon. Members and others about the role within the Natural Environment Research Council of the British geological survey.

Mr. Brooke: I have received 25 letters from hon. Members and nine from others.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representation his Department has provided on the committee of the Natural Environment Research Council meeting to choose a new director of Earth sciences; and what are the roles of the two assessors on that committee.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the following people have been invited by the Natural Environment Research Council to act as the selection committee for the post of director of Earth sciences. There are no assessors on the committee.

Mr. H. Fish—Chairman, NERC
Dr. J. C. Bowman—Secretary

Lord Cranbrook—NERC Council Member
Professor I. G. Gass—The Open University
Professor E. R. Oxburgh—University of Cambridge
Mr. D. W. Tanner—Department of Education and Science
Mr. D. J. Trevelyan—Civil Service Commission
Dr. E. Buttle—Establishment Officer, NERC (Secretary)

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has issued any guidance to local education authorities regarding Her Majesty's Government's policy towards compliance by them with the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on corporal punishment pending a final decision by Parliament on the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Until there is a change in the law, the legal right to use corporal punishment in schools is not affected by the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Campbell and Cosans. As regards the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer earlier today to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett).

School Meals

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if Her Majesty's Government plans to introduce legislation which will affect the discretionary power of local authorities to provide free or reduced cost school meals.

Mr. Dunn: Under the proposals in the Social Security Green Paper pupils with parents on income support (which would succeed supplementary benefit) would continue to be entitled to free school meals, but pupils with parents on family credit (which would succeed family income supplement) would not be entitled to free school meals and the rates of family credit would be enhanced instead.

Local education authorities would still be able to charge whatever price they liked for an item, subject to the same constraints as now, but they would not be empowered as they are now to charge a differentially lower price for the same item to a particular group or category of pupils, nor to remit the whole price, other than to pupils of parents on income support.

Technology in Schools

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for the further development of new technology in schools when the microelectronics education programme ends in March 1986.

Sir Keith Joseph: I propose to set up a new body, to be called the microelectronics support unit, which will provide support to local education authorities in a number of clearly defined areas, namely, the provision of a central information service; the training of trainers; and the development of relevant curricular materials for use in schools. The Government will also support, through the new unit and the existing regional network for special education, the further development of microelectronics in this field. The provision of inservice teacher training and the supply and dissemination of local and regional information will be the responsibility of local education authorities in the course of their normal provision of educational services. These decisions have been taken after consultation with a wide range of bodies.

The Government have allocated £2·2 million in 1986-87 to support the new body. The unit will run for five years with a review after three. This sum will be additional to those allocated by the Department of Trade and Industry for educational software as announced today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The microelectronics support unit will support work in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and will be centrally located. It will be under the control of a management board which a representative of the local education authorities will be invited to chair. Representatives of the Secondary Examinations Council, the Schools Curriculum Development Committee, the Council for Educational Technology, higher education, the IT industry and employers will be asked to make up the remainder of the board, together with HMI and departmental officials. Other details relating to the responsibilities and operation of the unit and its management board will be decided in consultation with local education authorities and others.

The new unit will follow and build upon the work of the microelectronics education programme which has made a significant contribution to the use of computers and microelectronic devices in schools in recent years.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Committees of Inquiry

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many departmental committees of inquiry he and his predecessors, including Commonwealth Secretaries, Colonial Secretaries and Ministers of Overseas Development have commissioned since 1955; and what are the subjects, the date of commissioning, the name of the chairman, the dates they commenced and the dates of publication.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to appendices B and C of "Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees in Britain — a Case-Study in Institutional Adaptiveness and Public Participation in Government" by T. J. Cartwright, a copy of which is held by the House Library. These appendices list major post-war Royal Commissions and Departmental committees between 1945 and 1974, the reports of which were published as command papers. I regret that a separate listing for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to include any such committees the reports of which were not published as command papers and to extend the list beyond 1974, could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of recent East-West co-operation on terrorism, he will ask the Soviet Union to show a commitment to the elimination of groups such as the Red Army Faction and the Action Directe.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her answer to my hon. Friend on 22 July, we believe the Soviet Union has a role to play in

combatting international terrorism. We will take every suitable opportunity to urge them to join with others in the common fight against terrorism.

Falklands War

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his statement of 14 March, *Official Report*, column 497, whether any documents have subsequently come to light which were relevant to the deliberations of the committee chaired by Lord Franks into the events surrounding the Falklands war which were not available to that committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None.

Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Guatemala concerning the resumptions of consular relations; what conditions the United Kingdom Government have made before consular relations can be resumed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stretford on 13 November 1984. Talks have been held at official level but nothing has been decided. It is not normal international practice to impose preconditions on the establishment of consular relations.

Uganda

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any recent reports from the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Uganda about the Ugandan Government's investigation of allegations of human rights violations in that country; if he intends to ask for further reports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We receive regular reports from the British High Commission in Kampala about the human rights situation in Uganda and about the action being taken by the Ugandan Government in this regard.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he proposes to take to monitor the implementation by the Ugandan Government of an impartial investigation into the allegations of human rights violations in Uganda; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We have urged the Ugandan government to implement the recommendations of the recent report by Amnesty International; and we understand that arrangements for a visit to Uganda by an Amnesty delegation are being discussed with the Ugandan authorities. We look forward to hearing the outcome of the visit.

Diplomatic Missions (London)

Mr. Howard asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the guidance he has recently issued to members of diplomatic missions in London on how they should behave.

Mr. Renton: In April this year my department prepared a memorandum for all new diplomats in London drawing attention to various matters of public concern and giving guidance about their behaviour. It is now being issued to all members of diplomatic missions on arrival. In addition, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs circulated it to all heads of diplomatic missions on 22 April asking them to ensure that it was seen by all members of their staff and their dependents who were entitled to diplomatic immunity. The text of the memorandum is as follows:

"MEMORANDUM FOR ALL NEW DIPLOMATS IN LONDON DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY.

This memorandum is intended to be of assistance to all persons entitled to diplomatic privileges and immunities and particularly to those newly appointed to London. It draws attention to a number of matters of public concern.

It would be helpful if you could make sure that members of your family who are with you in London are aware of its contents, since they also apply to all those in a position to claim immunity. Your co-operation and that of your family in maintaining the high standards of conduct expected of the Diplomatic Corps, and in ensuring friendly relations between the corps and the residents of London, will be greatly appreciated.

Diplomats and their families are expected to respect the laws and regulations of the United Kingdom, in accordance with article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Diplomatic immunity in no way absolves diplomats from their duty to obey the law. All allegations of breach of the law which come to the attention of the police are thoroughly investigated and the results reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office draw these to the attention of the Head of Mission (or sometimes a senior official) in the expectation of disciplinary action.

In serious cases additional action will be taken. Where a waiver of immunity is not granted to permit trial in this country, violent crime, incitement to or advocacy of violence, espionage and drug trafficking will, as a general rule, result in the offender being declared persona non grata. In addition the following categories of offence normally lead to a request for the transfer from post of the offender in the absence of a waiver:

(a) Firearms offences: A firearm or shotgun certificate from the police is required for all firearms, whether acquired in the United Kingdom or imported. In no circumstances will certificates be granted for firearms or shotguns use for personal protection. Any breach of firearms regulations will result in a request for withdrawal of the offender. This is almost always an automatic consequence of an offence of this kind. It should be noted that the possession of other types of weapon, including gas canisters, is also illegal in this country;

(b) Drink-driving offences: Driving while under the influence of alcohol (or drugs) is a very serious offence. Even a first offence of this kind could lead to a request for withdrawal, particularly if aggravated by violence or injury to a third party. For a second offence this would be automatic;

(c) Other serious traffic offences: These include incidents involving death or serious injury or driving without third party insurance. Drivers must not only hold a valid driving licence but also be covered by third party insurance. A failure by a diplomat to hold third party insurance for himself or any member of his family who drives a car is likely to lead to a request for his transfer from the United Kingdom. Cars must be kept in roadworthy condition; if they are more than three years old, they have to have an annual MOT test of their roadworthiness. Drivers are required to stop if they are involved in an accident and to report the accident to the

police within 24 hours, unless no personal injury was caused and they provide details of driving licence and insurance to the other driver at the scene of the accident. Exceeding the speed limit can also be regarded as a serious offence;

(d) Theft including shoplifting: Customers found outside shop premises with goods which they have taken and intentionally not paid for are normally prosecuted for theft. If a diplomat or a member of his family should be found in this position with no satisfactory explanation, the police will be called and the facts reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This type of offence may lead to a request for the transfer of the diplomat from the United Kingdom and will certainly do so if repeated;

(e) Other serious breaches of criminal law: These include fraud and serious sexual offences as well as any other offence normally carrying a prison sentence of more than 12 months;

(f) Civil claims: A serious view is taken of any reliance on diplomatic immunity from civil jurisdiction to evade a legal obligation. Such conduct could call into question a diplomat's continued acceptability in the United Kingdom.

The criteria for dealing with alleged offences are applied with both firmness and discretion, but not automatically. Full account is taken of the nature and seriousness of the offence and any inadequacies in the evidence.

Parking: Diplomats are required to comply with local parking regulations and to pay any charges for parking meters and residents' parking spaces. Illegal parking is a matter of considerable public concern in London. It can cause traffic congestion as well as great inconvenience to local residents and traders. The very large number of cases involving cars with diplomatic number plates brings the Diplomatic Corps into disrepute. Cars are liable to be towed away if they cause obstruction or danger. Detailed records are kept of unpaid parking tickets by both individual diplomats and official cars. Persistent failure by individual diplomats to respect parking regulations and pay fixed penalty notices will call into question their continued acceptability as members of diplomatic missions in London.

Finally, diplomats are expected to show consideration towards their neighbours. Inconsiderate behaviour, such as the holding of noisy parties late at night, can bring the name of the mission of the sending state and of the Diplomatic Corps as a whole into disrepute. It can in some cases also constitute a breach of the law.

Whatever action the British Government may decide to take following an incident involving a diplomat or a member of his family will of course depend on a most careful consideration of the nature of that incident. The purpose of this memorandum is to explain informally the possible consequences of breaches of British law. It cannot be taken as determining any particular course of action in any particular case.

More detailed guidance and information on many of these subjects has been communicated in separate notices to diplomatic missions. Protocol Department will be glad to provide further information or answer specific queries.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Free Prescriptions and Treatment

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which people, by reason of their occupation, are entitled to free prescriptions, dental or optical treatment or reimbursement of such charges.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A person's occupation has no bearing on his or her entitlement to exemption or remission from National Health Service charges. If any employer reimburses the charges to its employees, that is entirely the responsibility of that employer.

Nuclear Radiation

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the typical latent periods before diagnosis of different types of cancer and leukaemia following exposure to nuclear radiation above background levels; and if he will make a statement on the consequences for reliable epidemiological studies.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Latent periods are considered to vary depending on the dose received, the age at which it is received and the organ or tissue exposed or irradiated with a mean of between 12 and 25 years. The subject is considered at greater length in the National Radiological Protection Board's report NRPB-R171—"The Risks of Leukaemia and other Cancers in Seascale from Radiation Exposure".

Such variations are taken into account when epidemiological studies are undertaken, and mean that the period of follow-up necessary before firm conclusions can be drawn on possible effects will vary according to the cancer-type under consideration.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reliable epidemiological data are available to him on the incidence of health effects, including cancers, caused by exposure to small amounts of nuclear radiation; and if he will publish a list of the relevant studies, stating in each case *(a)* the period of time covered by the data and *(b)* whether dose rates of radiation exposure were accurately known.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This is an extremely complex subject. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation report regularly on this topic to the General Assembly. Their 1977 and 1982 reports* and annexes include data and references on small doses of radiation from pre-natal, occupational and nuclear fall-out exposures.

* Sources and Effects of Ionising Radiation — 1977 UNSCEAR report; Ionising Radiation: Sources and Biological Effects—1982 UNSCEAR report.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what epidemiological studies have been undertaken to investigate the relative incidence of cancers in areas of the United Kingdom with differing levels of background nuclear radiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are not aware of any such studies. There is, however, a study under way at present which will compare the geographical variations of medical and non-medical radiation exposures within the United Kingdom and the rates of cancer in children.

Appeals Tribunals

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements are made by the president of

the social security appeal tribunals to provide appellants at those tribunals with addresses of local agencies offering advice and representation at the appeal hearing.

Mr. Whitney: The content of standard forms issued by the office of the president of social security appeal tribunals is a matter for the president to determine. However, I understand that form AT38, which acknowledges receipt of an appeal and form AT6, which notifies an appellant of the date of a tribunal hearing, include the following paragraph:

"WOULD YOU LIKE HELP WITH THIS APPEAL?

WOULD YOU LIKE SOMEONE TO SPEAK FOR YOU AT THE TRIBUNAL?

If so contract your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, independent advice centre, or Law Centre. They can give you free advice and sometimes they will go along with you to the tribunal. You can get their addresses from the phone book, or the Library, or from your local council."

Departmental forms and those used by the Department of Employment for unemployment benefit are being revised to include similar information.

Low-wage Households

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions will be made in the proposed reform of social security for low-wage households expecting their first baby who will lose their current entitlement to maternity grant, free milk and vitamins; and whether any special arrangements are proposed to help ensure a health pregnancy and to meet the costs of a new baby.

Mr. Newton: Special arrangements will be considered under the social fund for the maternity expenses of low income families expecting their first child.

Income Support Scheme

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government's proposals to abolish the distinction between householders and non-householders in the proposed income support scheme includes the abolition of the addition paid for housing costs to non-householders.

Mr. Newton: Yes. The rate of personal allowance in the income support scheme would be determined by the claimant's age and marital status rather than by his housing circumstances.

Family Credit

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has consulted any employers' organisations, especially those representing small businesses about the implications for employers of paying family credit through the pay packet.

Mr. Newton: When the Green Paper was published, we wrote to the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses to let them know about the proposals in which employers had a major interest, and that there would be detailed discussions with them about those proposals. Arrangements for these discussions are in hand.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the numbers paying class 1 and class 2 national insurance contributions and the proportion contracted out of the state pension scheme.

Mr. Whitney: In the 1982-83 tax year the numbers of people who paid class 1 and class 2 national insurance contributions are estimated to be 22,006,400 and 1,296,900 respectively. These figures are based on a 1 per cent sample. The proportion of class 1 contributors contracted-out of the state earnings-related pension scheme is about 46 per cent.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of males and females paying national insurance on a full-time and on a part-time basis at the present time compared with 1979 and 1973; and if he will provide similar figures for manufacturing.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of males and females paying class 1 employed earners contributions for the years in question are:

	Year ending		
	April 1973	*April 1979*	*April 1983*
Males	14,219,000	14,730,000	13,236,900
Females	3,980,000	9,412,450	8,770,100

Notes:

(1) The figures are derived from a 1 per cent. sample.
(2) 1983 figures are the latest available.
(3) The figures also include the numbers of contributors paying a mixture of Class 1 and Class 2 (self-employed) contributions.
(4) Separate figures are not available for manufacturing.
(5) The figures cannot be broken down into full-time and part-time contributors.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of married women and widows paying the reduced rate contribution.

Mr. Whitney: The latest estimates of the numbers of married women and widows paying the reduced-rate contribution are:

	Number
Married women	*2,236,900
Widows	†24,200
Total	2,261,100

*Includes 54,000 paying a mixture of standard and reduced-rate contributions.

†Includes 100 paying a mixture of standard and reduced-rate contributions.

These figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of contributions paid in the year ending 5 April 1983.

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce his detailed requirements of employers for such information on national insurance contributions in so far as such requirements are altered by the provisions of the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Whitney: The Social Security Act provides for employers to be compensated for their share of national insurance contributions payable on statutory sick pay.

Employers will deduct the appropriate compensation from their monthly payments of national insurance contributions to the Collector of Taxes and will be required to show on their end-of-year returns the total of amounts so deducted. Details of the new procedure will be sent next month to employers with the tables of the national insurance contributions applicable from 6 October. No other provisions in the Act give rise to changes in the information required from employers about national insurance contributions.

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to obtain the views of manufacturers and suppliers of payroll packages on the effects of the provisions of the Social Security Bill in relation to multiple-rate national insurance contributions, and the consequent changed requirements for year-end information.

Mr. Whitney: The changes in national insurance contributions were discussed by our officials with the British Computer Society on 28 March and subsequent discussions have been held with various individual companies. The only change in end-of-year information is a requirement for employers to state the total amount of compensation for contributions on statutory sick pay which they have deducted from payments to the Collector of Taxes.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost for 1985-86 of the £10 Christmas bonus for pensioners; and if he will publish a table of the additional cost of increasing the bonus by *(a)* 25 per cent., *(b)* 50 per cent., *(c)* 75 per cent. and *(d)* 100 per cent.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

1985-86 estimated benefit cost—£111 million

Estimated costs of	*£ million*
25 per cent. increase	27·75
50 per cent. increase	55·50
75 per cent. increase	83·25
100 per cent. increase	111·00

Sick Pay

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether receipt of statutory sick pay will count towards the 28-week qualifying period for the premium payable to sick and disabled people proposed in the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Child Allowances

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a table showing the combined value of child tax allowance after clawback and family allowance or child benefit for each year since 1955 expressed at 1985 prices, using the annual rate of inflation to May for the years 1985 and 1984, for the first, second, third and each subsequent child aged under 11 years, 11 to 16 years and over 16 years, in standard rate taxpaying families.

Mr. Whitney: Comparison of values at dates other than upratings can be misleading and unhelpful. The figures up to the last uprating date of November 1984 are given in the table. They will be updated when the movement in the retail price index over the 12 months to November 1985 is known.

Value of Child Support for each child in standard rate tax-paying families expressed at November 1984† prices*

Date‡	*Children under age 11*			*Children aged 11-15*			*Children aged 16 and over*		
	1st child	*2nd child*	*3rd§*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd§*	*1st child*	*2nd child*	*3rd§*
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
April 1955	6·93	9·21	9·21	6·93	9·21	9·21	6·93	9·21	9·21
April 1956	6·46	8·50	8·50	6·46	8·50	8·50	6·46	8·50	8·50
April 1957	6·54	8·56	8·98	7·89	9·98	10·45	9·52	11·53	12·07
April 1958	6·05	7·97	8·56	7·53	9·52	9·96	9·08	10·99	11·51
April 1959	5·94	7·53	8·05	6·87	8·93	9·45	8·27	10·26	10·83
April 1960	5·50	7·48	8·06	6·82	8·87	9·36	8·21	10·19	10·78
April 1961	5·35	7·28	7·85	6·64	8·64	9·14	7·99	9·92	10·49
April 1962	5·06	6·99	7·63	6·28	8·17	8·64	7·56	9·39	9·93
April 1963	5·09	7·08	8·01	6·89	8·90	9·20	8·14	9·90	10·46
April 1964	5·38	7·33	7·95	6·75	8·63	9·02	7·98	9·79	10·25
April 1965	5·39	7·31	7·94	6·82	8·68	8·91	8·05	9·71	10·14
April 1966	5·40	7·06	7·42	6·59	8·19	8·60	7·77	9·37	9·79
April 1967	5·24	6·85	7·20	6·39	7·95	8·35	7·54	9·10	9·50
April 1968	5·02	6·29	6·67	6·12	7·59	7·72	7·22	8·44	8·82
April 1969	4·75	6·22	6·58	5·80	7·26	7·63	6·84	8·31	8·62
April 1970	4·50	5·89	6·23	5·49	6·88	7·22	6·48	7·87	8·16
April 1971	5·25	6·65	6·96	6·06	7·51	7·82	6·92	8·32	8·64
April 1972	4·95	6·25	6·55	5·70	7·06	7·36	6·51	7·83	8·12
April 1973	4·48	5·61	5·88	5·30	6·59	6·86	5·96	7·05	7·32
April 1974	5·14	6·09	6·32	5·92	6·80	7·07	6·56	7·44	7·71
April 1975	4·50	6·23	6·23	5·14	6·86	6·86	5·70	7·45	7·45
April 1976	4·72	6·19	6·19	5·26	6·73	6·73	5·75	7·20	7·20
April 1977	4·54	5·19	5·19	4·99	5·65	5·65	5·39	6·03	6·03
April 1978	5·40	5·40	5·40	5·83	5·83	5·83	6·18	6·19	6·18
April 1979‖	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70	6·70
November 1980	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22	6·22
November 1981	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·14

Date†	Children under age 11			Children aged 11-15			Children aged 16 and over		
	1st child £	2nd child £	3rd £	1st child £	2nd child £	3rd £	1st child £	2nd child £	3rd £
November 1982	0·44	0·44	0·44	0·44	0·44	0·44	0·44	0·44	0·44
November 1983	0·82	0·82	0·82	0·82	0·82	0·82	0·82	0·82	0·82
November 1984	0·85	0·85	0·85	0·85	0·85	0·85	0·85	0·85	0·85

* The combined value of child tax allowances after clawback and family allowance/child benefit.
† Based on the movement in the General Index of Retail Prices at November 1984.
‡ Child tax allowance created after the 1979-80 tax year and uprating dates are shown from 1979 onwards and subsequent children.

Social Security Review

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether under 18-year-olds who are pregnant will be entitled to free milk and vitamins during pregnancy if the proposals in the Green Paper on the reform of social security are implemented.

Mr. Newton: Entitlement would continue for those whose families are entitled to income support.

Severely Handicapped Children (Care)

Mr. Thornham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total annual cost of caring for a severely handicapped child *(a)* in a specialist institution and *(b)* in foster care (i) in England and Wales and (ii) in the London area; and what are the total numbers of children involved in each category.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. Information about services for children and handicapped people in different local authority areas, and their costs, is to be found in the Personal Social Services Statistics compiled by the Chartered Institution of Public Finance and Accountancy, copies of which are in the Library.

NHS (Dispensing Contracts)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in introducing the arrangements to regulate entry to National Health Service dispensing contracts, as agreed between the Government and the profession.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am glad to say that we are making very good progress. The new arrangements we intend to introduce will safeguard and improve the NHS pharmaceutical service while ensuring NHS funds are used to best effect. We are now consulting the representatives of the pharmaceutical profession on the content of the regulations and guidance which will be needed to implement our agreement. Family Practitioner Committees (FPCs) will decide on applications for both new openings and moves of existing pharmacies solely by reference to the NHS needs of local people. The governing principle will be to ensure each local population has reasonable access to the full range of NHS pharmaceutical services but that no locality has an expensive and unnecessary surplus of dispensaries. We have no Government target for NHS pharmacy numbers, nationally or locally. The needs of the public and patients will determine the number of new pharmacies gaining NHS contracts.

In outline the regulations would require each FPC to establish a pharmacy practices sub-Committee (PPSC) to exercise its powers to control entry. Each PPSC would consist of three pharmacists and three non-pharmacists plus a lay chairman. The pharmacist members would be appointed from a list drawn up by each FPC's local pharmaceutical committee and there would be the normal rules governing declaration of interest. There would always be a majority of non-pharmacists taking part in any determination of an application. Minor changes of location such as a move to better premises or a move which reflects changes in patients needs would normally be approved by a quicker procedure. Other more significant changes would be considered in detail by the PPSC.

After any oral hearing or site visit it considered necessary, the PPSC would decide whether the proposed change in NHS patient services was necessary or desirable. In other words whether the NHS pharmaceutical service to the public would be improved to a worthwhile extent if the application were approved. Where there was more than one application for any particular location, applications would be considered in the order in which they were lodged.

We would recommend firmly that PPSC's should not adopt norms or rules constraining local judgments, but PPSCs would have available to them FPC strategies for primary care services plus a very wide range of other information. This would cover both NHS service patterns and such local data as for example, census data and population projections. Community health councils, local medical and pharmaceutical committees and other pharmaceutical contractors in the locality would also be offered a chance to comment, within 30 days of notice of the application being sent out. There would be provision for applicants and anyone who commented to the PPSC to appeal against its decision. Such appeals would be heard by locally convened appeals panels.

Their composition would parallel that of the PPSCs, but the members for any particular appeal would be drawn from lists prepared by FPCs who had not been involved in that application. The appeal panel's decision would be binding on the FPC concerned. There would be no further appeal. The existing rules governing the opening of pharmacies in rural areas would remain in operation. Applicants in rural areas successful under the new scheme would be referred as at present to the Rural Dispensing Committee and would require its consent also. Unless successful applicants provided NHS pharmaceutical services as specified in their application within a defined period, their permission to do so would lapse.

Contractors who, before this new scheme was announced, had entered into binding financial commitments will be protected by short-term transitional arrangements. I intend this new scheme, which offers considerable benefits to patients and the NHS to come into operation at as early a date as possible. The consultation

should be completed in two or three weeks. The regulations will then be laid and the guidance document will be placed in the Library.

Academic Medical Staff

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effect he expects the reduction in the number of academic posts in university medical schools to have upon the availability and willingness of academic medical staff to carry out consultancy sessions in the relevant National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am reluctant to speculate but I can report a steady rise in the number and whole-time equivalent of honorary consultants in the National Health Service in England and Wales. These are usually academic medical staff. The figures are given in the table. Academic medical staff have an interest in honorary work for the National Health Service, for example, in maintaining their clinical skills as a practical basis for teaching.

Honorary consultants at 30 September: England and Wales
Number and whole-time equivalent

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Number	1,423	1,457	1,475	1,525	1,536
wte	753·9	768·9	794·9	817·6	828·2

Consultants (Contracts)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the reasons for regional health authorities continuing to keep the contracts for consultants working in a district health authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 17 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) at column 53.

Immigrants (Benefits)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the eligibility of *(a)* immigrants with various categories of limited leave to stay, in the United Kingdom, *(b)* immigrants who are settled in the United Kingdom with indefinite leave to stay, *(c)* immigrants who enter under the special voucher system and *(d)* sponsored immigrants to the following benefits: supplementary benefit, family income supplement, attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance and housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: The following rules apply: Supplementary benefit is in principle available to anyone who is present in Great Britain and who satisfies the normal conditions governing eligibility, but the restrictions which apply to immigrants are broadly:

(a) people who are given limited leave to enter the country and are here temporarily on the understanding that they will be self-supporting and will have no recourse to public funds cannot normally get benefit. In certain circumstances, urgent needs payments may be made to these people.

(b) in the case of "sponsored" immigrants payment may be subject to recovery from the sponsor.

People from abroad admitted for settlement here, including those admitted under the special voucher system, are entitled to benefit in the normal way.

Family income supplement, attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance (which has replaced non-contributory invalidity pension) and housing benefit are available to immigrants who satisfy the normal rules, including those relating to residence or presence, except that students with limited leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom are not entitled to housing benefit. This exclusion does not apply if the student qualifies for supplementary benefit.

Benefits

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what tests of *(a)* residence and *(b)* presence are applied to those claiming each of the following benefits: supplementary benefit, family income supplement, attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance, invalid care allowance and housing benefit; in what ways he envisages the Government's proposals for reform of the social security system altering the current positions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The basic rules relating to residence and presence are as follows:

Supplementary Benefit

There is no residence test for supplementary benefit, but the claimant must be present in Great Britain.

Family Income Supplement

Family Income Supplement is payable to families present in Great Britain, provided that, at the date of claim, the family is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and at least one adult member is resident in Great Britain.

Attendance and Invalid Care Allowance

For these benefits, the claimant must be:

(a) ordinarily resident in Great Britain

(b) present in Great Britain on the day for which benefit is claimed and any day thereafter and previously present for a period or periods amounting to 26 weeks in the 12 months preceding that day.

Mobility Allowance

The claimant must be:

(a) ordinarily resident in Great Britain

(b) present in Great Britain on the day for which benefit is claimed and previously present for a period or periods amounting to 52 weeks in the 18 months preceding that day.

Invalidity Benefit

There are no residence or presence tests but the benefit follows on from sickness benefit for which the relevant contribution conditions have to be satisfied. Invalidity benefit is paid to someone abroad only in defined circumstances and remains subject to the submission of medical evidence of incapacity for work.

Severe Disablement Allowance

The claimant must:

(a) have been ordinarily resident in Great Britain for at least 10 years in the 20 years preceding the claim, or if under age 20, at least 10 years since birth.

(b) be present in Great Britain on the day for which benefit is claimed and any day thereafter and previously present for not less than 168 days out of the 196-day qualifying period of incapacity for work.

Housing Benefit

There are no presence rules for housing benefit. Claimants are eligible for benefit if they occupy a dwelling in Great Britain as their home.

We are looking at ways in which differences between such rules can be reduced or eliminated so as to help both staff and claimants. The precise form of the presence test to be used in connection with the proposed income support scheme is also under consideration.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what figures are available to indicate

the number of people by convenient district unit in England who are in receipt of (a) housing benefit, (b) housing benefit and supplementary benefit and (c) housing benefit supplement;

(2) what figures are available to indicate the number of people by convenient district unit in Wales who are in receipt of (a) housing benefit, (b) housing benefit and supplementary benefit and (c) housing benefit supplement.

Mr. Whitney: I have placed tables giving the numbers of recipients of rent rebates, rent allowances and rate rebates, in England and in Wales, in the Library. Housing benefit recipients who also receive supplementary benefit are identified as "certificated cases" in these tables. Information relating to housing benefit supplement is only available for 1983-84 and I have placed a copy of tables containing this information for England and for Wales in the Library. I have also sent a copy of these tables and the tables referred to above for 1985-86 direct to the hon. Member. All the information in the tables has been obtained from local authority subsidy claims.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further plans he has for ensuring that children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals are moved out of hospitals.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Leaflets (Gaelic)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the result of his Department's experimentation in producing leaflets, SB1 and "Which Benefit" in the Gaelic language; and if he plans to issue any further leaflets in Gaelic.

Mr. Whitney: Leaflet SB1 was translated into Gaelic and published in April 1984 and evaluated in June of that year. It was found that there had been very little public interest in it (much of that was to assist in the teaching of school children). It was felt doubtful that more publicity would have increased take-up. Another evaluation will take place shortly in order to determine whether the publication should continue. Leaflet FB2 "Which Benefit" has not been translated into Gaelic.

Health Authorities (Chairmen)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy in relation to the appointment of district health authority chairmen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We regard the chairmanship of a district health authority as an important post. As such it demands people of the highest calibre. Although there is no statutory duty to do so, we seek nominations for these posts from a number of sources, including from hon. Members. In that respect, I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 18 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage, (Mr. Wood) at column 277.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people in Burnley were receiving board and lodging allowances at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) how many people under 25 years were receiving board and lodging allowances at the latest date for which figures are available in Burnley.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the analyses of board and lodging in all local offices including Burnley, following the 29 April changes, have not yet been completed. Prior to this date, information on the number of supplementary benefit claimants receiving board and lodging allowances was not available separately.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services within what timescale he expects appeals against rejection of applications for exemption under the new board and lodgings regulations to be heard normally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: When an appeal is lodged at a local office, the decision appealed against is immediately examined to ensure that the decision is correct. For supplementary benefit decisions, over half of all appeals are either withdrawn or superseded following this re-examination. In the first quarter of 1984, the latest period for which information is available, the average length of time from lodgement of a supplementary benefit appeal to initial hearing by a social security appeal tribunal was ten and a half weeks. Separate information about appeals on exemption under the 1985 board and lodging regulations is not available.

NHS (In Vitro Fertilisation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to increase the provision of resources for in vitro fertilisation facilities within the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is for individual health authorities to determine the level of provision of infertility services, including in vitro fertilisation treatment.

Housing Benefits

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been submitted by retirement pensioners to his Department for housing benefits in each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

World Mental Health Congress

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which officials from his Department were present at the recent World Mental Health Congress in Brighton in which the effects of powerful tranquillisers were discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Nine administrative and professional staff from our Department attended some part of the congress at which a wide range of issues were discussed.

Largactil

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the safety of the drug Largactil is currently under review by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Largactil has been reviewed by the Committee on the Review of Medicines under the Medicines Act along with other major tranquillisers. On the basis of the committee's advice, we consider the safety of this product acceptable in view of its substantial benefits.

Drug Safety (Guidance)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines his Department issues to doctors and patients about the use of drugs whose safety is under review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The safety of all medicines is continuously under review by the Committee on the Safety of Medicines. Advice on the safety of particular medicines is issued to all prescribers in product data sheets issued by manufacturers of prescription only medicines and in the British National Formulary, which is issued twice yearly. Where a serious safety problem arises it is mentioned in the Committee on Safety of Medicines' fact sheet "Current Problems" which is issued, normally four times a year, to all doctors and pharmacists in the United Kingdom. In certain urgent cases the committee will issue a special warning letter to the professions.

Tranquillisers

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of prescriptions issued by doctors for powerful tranquillisers in each single year since 1979, giving a breakdown of their categories.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The estimated number of prescriptions issued by general practitioners and dispensed by retail chemists in England for sedatives and tranquillisers each year since 1979 was as follows:

	Million
1979	21·8
1980	19·9
1981	19·5
1982	19·0
1983	17·6

This group includes all of those drugs likely to be considered powerful tranquillisers. It is not our practice to publish prescribing figures for individual proprietary drugs since these are of commercial value.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many cases have been referred to him for investigation as to whether a local authority is in breach of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; in how many cases he found that a prima facie case existed where an authority was in breach of that Act; in how many cases he made an order under section 36 of the National Assistance Act of 1948 declaring an authority to be in default; and what action he took in those cases where a prima facie case existed and in which he made no order under the National Assistance Act 1948 to ensure compliance;

(2) what steps will he take to monitor authorities which have previously been investigated and found to be in default of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Newton: Investigations of this nature are carried out only where there is prima facie evidence that a local authority may be in breach of its statutory duty. Since May 1979 we have made formal inquiries into 33 complaints of alleged default. On no occasion has default action proved necessary or appropriate in the light of these inquiries. One case is still under consideration.

Family Credit

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advantages he expects to accrue to to employers from the proposals for family credit set out in paragraph 4.50 of the Green Paper on social security.

Mr. Newton: More employees, or potential employees, for whom it is more clearly worthwhile to work rather than not to work; and fewer employees for whom extra effort produces a negative return.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce his decisions following consultation on the National Health Service scrutiny report on residential accommodation.

Mr. Fowler: The Health Service is one of the biggest landlords in this country. Altogether health authorities own over 100,000 flats bedsitters and houses. But, unlike other landlords, some health authorities have up to a fifth of their accommodation standing empty and most have more accommodation than they really need. It cannot make sense for the Health Service to have so much money tied up in property when it could be used to provide better services.

Clearly the Health Service must continue to provide accommodation for some staff — particularly young student nurses and junior doctors. Where accommodation is provided it must be brought up to standard—and we will expect health authorities to do this. In other cases, accommodation can be sold to the staff who live in it, often at a substantial discount. That is to their advantage as well as freeing health service resources.

After consulting all the interested parties in the Health Service, we have decided to ask health authorities to look again at their holdings of accommodation, to sell vacant stock quickly and to make plans which will mean that they keep in the long term only the property they really need.

A circular is being issued to health authorities shortly explaining the procedures they should follow and the criteria they should apply in working out local plans. I shall be asking the NHS Management Board to make sure that this process is followed through.

I hope that the new guidelines on the provision of accommodation in the National Health Service will be of benefit both to staff and the health service itself. Many Health Service staff will be able to buy the homes they now live in at a discount, and the Health Service, by selling accommodation which it no longer really needs,

will have extra cash available both to improve the quality of the accommodation that it keeps and to invest in improving services to patients. This should mean that the Health Service will have many millions of pounds extra to spend over the next few years instead of being tied up in surplus property.

Health Authority (South-East Staffordshire)

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the years 1978, 1982 and 1984 the number of doctors, nurses, ancillary and administrative staff employed by the South East Staffordshire District Health Authority.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. *137-8*]: Information at district level is not centrally available for 1978. Figures for the remaining years requested are shown in the table. Since such information as is centrally available does not cover all the years requested, or all categories of staff (see footnote ‡), my hon. Friend may care to seek further information from the chairman of the district health authority.

National Health Service staff directly employed in South East Staffordshire District Health Authority—in post at 30 September

	*Whole-time equivalents**	
	1982	*1984 (provisional)*
Medical staff†‡ in the hospital and community health service	70	70
Nursing and midwifery‖ staff	1,400	1,480
Ancillary staff	630	550
Administrative and clerical staff	340	360

* All figures rounded to nearest 10.

† In accordance with usual conventions, Medical and Dental staff figures exclude Hospital Practitioners. Part-time medical officers (clinical assistants) and occasional sessional staff in the community health service, but include locums.

‡ The figures do not include consultants and senior registrars, who are employed by the regional health authority.

‖ Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff.

Source: SR7 Annual Censuses of Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

Doctors and Nurses (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the contributions which have been made by his Department in each year since 1979 towards doctors' and nurses' annual pay awards.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: Between 1979-80 and 1981-82 no adjustments were made during the financial year in regional health authorities' cash limit provision for the funding of pay awards. Estimated shortfalls were restored in the following year's cash limit. Figures by staff group are not readily available.

From 1982 onwards, the initial cash limits of health authorities did not include full provision for pay increases. The table shows the additions made to health authorities' initial cash limit provision in the years 1982-83 to 1984-85. The additions made in 1982-83 to 1984-85 were carried forward to the following years.

	Nurses and Midwives £ million	*Doctors and Dentists £ million*
1982-83	*45	13
1983-84	†—	29
1984-85	100	12

* Includes Professions Supplementary to Medicine.

† Initial cash limit provision for 1983-84 included full funding for the second stage of the 1982 settlement.

For 1985-86, we abandoned this system of mid-year adjustments to cash limits and set a cash limit to finance all the costs of providing services, including the cost of pay awards, within the year.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 24 July 1985

PRIME MINISTER

Community Service

Mr. Irving asked the Prime Minister (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the provision and promotion of community service;

(2) what has been the total value of Government funds allocated for the provision of community service in each of the last five years; and if she will give a departmental breakdown of the allocation of such funds in each year;

(3) if she will list in the *Official Report* the different types of community service in which each Government Department is currently involved; whether there are any plans to extend Government activity in these areas; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is to encourage and promote the provision of a wide range of opportunities for service to the community; and several Government Departments make funds available for this purpose. Because the concept of "community service" is such a wide one, it is not possible to provide a definitive list of every type of community service for which support is provided from Government funds. Nor can grant paid to support or encourage community service be separately identified in the available information relating to grants paid by Government Departments to voluntary organisations. But it is a characteristic of voluntary organisations that they exist to serve the needs of the community, and some indication of the increasing support which the Government have given to the development of community service can therefore be taken from those figures. Information relating to the five year period 1979-80 to 1983-84 is provided in the table. Figures for 1984-85 are not yet available, but they are likely to show a further increase. Within available resources, the Government will continue to look for ways of enabling more people to provide a service to the wider community.

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	50,024	69,500	92,350	90,000	99,400
Defence	1,361,000	2,004,000	2,637,000	2,361,000	2,643,990
Education and Science*	12,400,000	11,454,000	12,381,000	11,175,000	14,317,606
Employment†	18,147,000	21,391,000	23,207,000	26,380,000	27,720,000
Energy	—	—	91,000	134,000	91,000
Environment					
Direct Grants	679,464	682,914	762,560	975,666	1,219,888
Urban Programme‡	13,500,000	22,000,000	27,000,000	37,500,000	46,500,000
FCO including ODA‖	FCO 448,357 ODA 4,797,000	FCO 523,694 ODA 5,709,000	FCO 584,411 ODA 6,393,486		
	5,245,557	6,232,694	6,977,897	9,030,548	11,519,397
Health and Social Security	10,089,772	12,247,052	13,775,245	15,462,000	23,122,709
Home Office	10,875,216	14,466,315	15,396,295	15,800,136	16,890,250
Lord Chancellor's Department	399,885	469,302	528,673	583,000	604,160
Northern Ireland Department	11,564,476	16,884,666	20,397,823	9,480,597	12,091,327
Scottish Office					
Direct Grants¶	3,531,415	4,740,515	5,515,032	6,499,630	6,823,494
Urban Programme	544,361	1,007,000	3,188,897	4,897,000	6,750,000
Trade and Industry•	2,514,500	4,563,856	5,444,000	6,260,322	6,221,000
Transport	370,180	423,217	451,000	440,000	509,000
Welsh Office					
Direct Grants	1,679,397	1,929,053	2,447,789	3,280,396	3,821,203
Urban Programme	170,261	243,562	690,000	861,613	1,325,000
Total	93,122,508	120,808,646	140,983,541	151,211,808	182,269,624

* The 1979-80 figure for Department of Education and Science grants to voluntary organisations included £3,736,000 of grants paid to certain adult education bodies, in later years, excluded from the figures as not being, strictly speaking voluntary organisations. Responsibility for grants to village halls and community centres amounting to £2,067,000 transferred to local government in 1980-81.

† Does not include estimated payments made by the Manpower Services Commission to voluntary bodies for work under its training and other programme, that is:

	1982-83	*1983-84*
Youth opportunities programme/Youth training scheme	86,700,000	81,000,000
Community enterprise programme/Community programme	51,130,000	200,000,000
Voluntary projects programme	980,000	4,300,000
	138,810,000	285,300,000

‡ The urban programme total includes contributions from Department of Education and Science, Department of Health and Social Security, and Department of Transport.

‖ Overseas Development Administration total grants to British voluntary organisations only.

¶ Scottish Office 1982-83 and 1983-84 figures are estimates only.

• Department of Trade and Industry made grants totalling £1,306,000 in 1983-84 to English regional development organisations for promotional activities in the United Kingdom and overseas to attract investment projects into their areas. Although these grants were included in previous years they have now been omitted on the grounds that the bodies concerned are not appropriately described as voluntary organisations.

Ethiopia (Hercules Aircraft)

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister when she intends to reply to the representations made by Church leaders for the Hercules aircraft food mission to be extended into 1986; whether she intends to accede to this request; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I replied to the Archbishop of Canterbury and his colleagues on 19 July, that a decision on the future of the airlift must await a report by the Minister for Overseas Development on his return from Ethiopia. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development told the House on 22 July, at columns 722-23, we have concluded that the Hercules detachment will be needed beyond the end of September. We have therefore offered the Ethiopian Government an extension of the airlift until the latter part of December.

Top Salaries

Mr. William Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will state the monthly increase of take-home salary for the categories of persons covered by the eighth report on top salaries at 1 April 1986 where the individual is married and receives only basic tax allowances.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Royal Commission on Legal Services

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Attorney-General how many of the recommendations for change made by the last Royal Commission on legal services in England have been implemented to date.

The Attorney-General: The White Paper "The Government Response to the Report of the Royal Commission on Legal Services" (Cmnd. 9077) published in November 1983 set out how matters then stood on the recommendations for which the Government are responsible. Of the matters then still under consideration, recommendation 9.3, which advocated access to a solicitor by persons taken into custody, will be implemented when section 58 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 comes into force on 1 January 1986, and recommendation 9.11, which pressed for legal representation to be available to prisoners in certain disciplinary proceedings, was implemented in April 1984. The Administration of Justice Bill presently before Parliament will, in the context of the extension of the right to undertake conveyancing for reward to properly qualified non-solicitors, implement recommendation 21.3 in part by extending the restrictions on conveyancing for reward to the preparation of the contract and will implement recommendation 21.4 by empowering local authority trading standards departments to institute proceedings for breach of the conveyancing restrictions. The Bill will also implement recommendation 16.4*(a)*, by empowering the Lord Chancellor to reimburse from public funds costs thrown away by the death or incapacity of a judge, and recommendation 25.13, by transferring the jurisdiction of the legal aid complaints tribunals to the profession's disciplinary tribunals.

Northern Ireland (Plastic Bullets)

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General how many cases in 1985 involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland have been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; and what action was taken in each case.

The Attorney-General: Figures for cases considered between 1 January 1985 and 30 June 1985 by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland involving persons killed or injured by the alleged use of baton rounds are as follows:

	Number
Cases	7
Persons injured	13
Persons killed	1
Prosecution directed	1
No prosecution directed	4

In two cases a final direction pends the outcome of other proceedings or the submission to the Director of additional evidence.

TRANSPORT

Air Travel Reserve Fund

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached following the consultations on the future of the air travel reserve fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am grateful to all those who commented on the proposals for strengthening the present arrangements for protecting air package holiday makers. There was virtually unanimous support for the proposal that the Air Travel Reserve Fund Agency should be wound up, including from the agency itself, and the fund transferred to the Civil Aviation Authority to administer on a trustee basis. Some of those consulted were, however, concerned about questions of accountability under the new arrangements and, in particular, that the advisory committee which is to be set up under the new arrangements should be able to play a strong and independent role.

In the light of the consultations, I can confirm that the agency is to be wound up. But we are amending the new arrangements in some respects to meet the concerns which have been expressed.

The trustees of the fund will be members and officers of the CAA. My Department will draw up a trust deed. Amongst other matters, the deed will define what payments can be made from the fund. I would expect that in deciding what payments to make, the trustees' discretion would be no narrower than the discretion which bond administrators have in administering payments from tour operators' bonds. The trustees will have power to obtain banking, accountancy and other services; to delegate the settlement of eligible claims to bond

administrators; and to decide on whether an on what terms top-up insurance should be arranged. The trust deed will be drawn up in a way which ensures flexible and speedy settlement of claims from holiday makers. The deed will also require the trustees to publish and submit to my right hon. Friend an annual report and accounts.

I received several suggestions that the trustees of the fund and the proposed advisory committee should be merged into a single body. I have not been able to accept this. The committee will include commercial interests and I have concluded that it would not be right for any trustee of the fund to be a person representative of a commercial interest in the travel trade.

But I am persuaded that the committee should enjoy greater stature and independence than was envisaged in my original proposals. To this end, it will be appointed by my right hon. Friend, and not by the CAA, for at least the first two or three years of its existence. It will have an independent chairman and its members will be drawn from the travel trade, the air transport users' committee, the trustees of the fund and independent representatives. I am pleased to say that Sir Peter Lane has agreed to serve as its first chairman, and we would expect to appoint members of the Air Travel Reserve Fund Agency to the committee.

The committee will exercise an important role in relation to the new arrangements for protecting holiday makers. Its terms of reference, which my right hon. Friend will draw up, will require it to advise on the operation of the fund and bonding arrangements; to guide the trustees of the fund on the use of their discretion when making payments, including the mechanisms for handling claims; and to seek a uniform approach from bond administrators when making payments from bonds. One of its early tasks will be to consider with the trustees the question of top-up insurance. My Department will also consult the committee on the principles of the trust deed to be drawn up.

The committee will be required to report annually to my right hon. Friend on its activities, at the same time as the annual report which the trustees must make. I would expect the committee, either in its report or at any other time, to draw attention to any problem areas where action is required. My right hon. Friend will ensure that copies of the annual reports from the trustees and the committee are available to Parliament when published.

An order to wind up the Air Travel Reserve Fund Agency and transfer the fund to the CAA will be laid early in the next Session. I would expect the committee to be appointed in good time to advise on the transition to the new arrangements, including the principles of a trust deed. Subject to the committee's views on the transitional arrangements, the agency will probably be wound up at the end of February next year. Sir Kenneth Selby will remain chairman of the agency until then.

My right hon. Friend and I wish to place on record our gratitude for, and appreciation of, the vital role played by the agency over the last 10 years in bringing peace of mind to holiday makers. Sir Kenneth Selby, as chairman, and members of the agency past and present have devoted many hours of unpaid service to ensuring that holiday makers do not suffer financially from the collapse of a tour operator.

I believe that the new arrangements will build on the agency's pioneering work and will give air package holiday makers an even better and more flexible system of financial protection. The Government will in due course seek powers whereby the CAA can replenish the fund, once it has taken it over, by means of a levy on ATOL holders. With the improvements which are being made to the system, however, I can see no reason at present why the CAA should need to impose a fresh levy for the foreseeable future.

A1 (Hatfield)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on upgrading the A1 to motorway status at Hatfield, on the resolving of difficulties for local residents relating to construction work, and on the expected environmental impact of the completed project.

Mrs. Chalker: This complex scheme is on schedule for completion in April 1987. A noise barrier has been erected along the eastern boundary of the tunnel section to screen adjacent houses during construction work.

Regular bulletins are issued to keep local residents informed, especially of traffic diversions, and the resident engineer's office is there to try to resolve any difficulties. On completion the cut-and-cover tunnel will reduce the environmental impact of the new motorway.

Departmental Committees of Inquiry

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, column 396, if he will now take steps to provide information on departmental committees of inquiry established from 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Ridley: The following is a list of committees of inquiry whose reports were published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office between 1974 and 1979 compiled from the annual catalogues of Her Majesty's Stationery Office publications. It would not be possible, except at disproportionate cost, to verify that this list is comprehensive.

Subject of investigation	*Chairman*	*Date established*	*Date of report*
Channel Tunnel and Alternative Cross Channel Services	Sir Alec Cairncross	April 1974	1975
Trunk Road Assessment	Sir George Leitch	December 1976	1977
Motorway Service Areas	Peter J. Prior	November 1977	1978
Road Haulage Operators' Licensing	Christopher D. Foster	December 1977	1978

Manchester-Blackpool Railway Line

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he last met the chairman of British Rail, he raised with him the electrification of the Manchester-Blackpool line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. British Rail sees no financial case under its normal investment criteria for electrifying this route. But Lancashire county council and the Greater Manchester council believe they can justify the additional costs by taking other benefits into account. Exploratory discussions have been held and the councils will be supplying further information about their proposals.

Manchester Airport

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in negotiating the basis upon which United States airlines may operate direct scheduled services to Manchester as referred to in paragraph 6.31 in the airports policy White Paper.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Immediately after publication of the White Paper, arrangements were made with the United States Government for consultations to take place at the beginning of August.

Driving Instructors

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those organisations representing the interests of driving instructors which were consulted by his Department about the trainee licensing system during the passage of the Road Traffic (Driving Instruction) Act 1984; and, in the case of each of these organisations, whether they were broadly in favour of the abolition of the trainee licensing system;

(2) if he will list those organisations representing the interests of driving instructors that have made representations to his Department favouring *(a)* the retention of the trainee licensing system and *(b)* against the retention of the trainee licensing system.

Mrs. Chalker: Six national driving instructor organisations were consulted, along with other interested bodies, prior to the introduction of the Bill which became the Road Traffic (Driving Instruction) Act 1984, on proposals for changes in the trainee driving instructor licensing system. There was no consultation with the organisations during the passage of the Bill.

Representations against retention of the trainee licensing system were made by the following driving instructor organisations:

National Joint Council of Approved Driving Instructors Organisations
National Association of Approved Driving Instructors
Royal Automobile Club Register of Instructors

The following driving instructor organisations generally accepted retention of the trainee licensing system, with the changes provided for in the Act:

Driving Instructors' Association
Motor Schools Association
Driving Instructors' Scottish Council

Seat Belts

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the mandatory fitting of rear seat belts in the light of the recommendation in the Transport Committee report on road safety.

Mrs. Chalker: I welcome this recommendation from the Select Committee. Rear seat belts have great potential for saving lives and reducing injuries, and it is right that they should be fitted to new cars to provide rear seat passengers with the opportunity to protect themselves. It is also most important that parents should be encouraged to provide child restraints for younger children. The Department is therefore circulating draft regulations which would make rear seat belts or child restraints a legal requirement for all new cars manufactured from October 1986, and first registered from April 1987. The draft regulations provide for different types of belt or restraint to be fitted so as to meet European Community obligations and to allow individuals to choose the most suitable type of belt for themselves or restraints for their children. The regulations also require a seat belt to be fitted in the centre front seat of cars and light vehicles where such a seat is provided.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement updating the information contained in his reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, *Official Report* 21 December, column *363*, concerning grain supplies and supplementary food and edible oil requirements in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: The total cereal requirement for famine relief in Ethiopia in 1985 has been estimated at 1·5 million tonnes. So far some 780,000 have been delivered.

Supplementary food needs (skimmed milk powder and high protein biscuits) are estimated at about 106,000 tonnes; 53,000 tonnes have been pledged and nearly 36,000 tonnes delivered.

Edible oil requirements are not known; 36,500 tonnes have been pledged and 30,200 tonnes have been delivered.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the work of the RAF Hercules on famine relief in Ethiopia; and for how long that work will continue.

Mr. Raison: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made in the House on 22 July at columns 722-23.

Crown Agents

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the 1984 report and accounts of the Crown Agents holding and realisation board will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Raison: The 1984 report and accounts are being laid before Parliament today. As soon as they are available, published copies of the report and accounts will be placed in the Library of both Houses.

ODA Report

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to publish the next annual review of the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Raison: The third annual review of the work of the Overseas Development Administration, entitled "British Overseas Aid 1984", is published today price £6·95, and will be available from HMSO bookshops. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and are available on request from the Vote Office.

EMPLOYMENT

Chemical Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of employees and the number of operatives in the chemical industry to match the table in column 369 of the *Official Report*, 9 March 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives, annually from 1973 to 1981, the estimated number of employees in employment in Great Britain in the chemical industry (Order V of the 1968 standard industrial classification). It also gives the numbers of operatives included in the totals. Quarterly figures are not available for the number of operatives.

Chemical industry—Great Britain (thousands)

	Total employees in employment	*Operatives included in total*
October 1973	425	255
October 1974	444	272
October 1975	424	251
October 1976	429	262
October 1977	434	263
October 1978	433	263
October 1979	432	257
October 1980	416	244
September 1981	392	239

Cider

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of people employed directly in cider making during each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department's employment estimates are analysed according to the 1980 standard industrial classification which does not separately distinguish cider making.

Football Grounds

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now make a statement on the conclusions of his discussions about extending community programme support for work on football league grounds.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government are awaiting receipt of the interim report from Mr. Justice Popplewell before deciding what role the community programme can play in improving the safety of football league grounds.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Southampton, Itchen on 7 June were resident in that constituency.

Mr. Alan Clark: This information is not available in the form requested. The only information available relates to the total numbers registered at a particular jobcentre.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the 1985 increases in job release scheme allowances.

Mr. Alan Clark: Some 200 Members of Parliament and others have written to my right hon. Friend about the 1985 increase in allowances.

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to provide additional equipment grants and help with staff salaries to enable information technology centres to continue to work.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985, c. *297-98*]: The Manpower Services Commission has made available extra funds to enable those information technology centres exhausting their entitlement to the Department of Trade and Industry's financial support to sustain staff salaries at the levels previously paid. This transitional funding by the Commission will be available until the end of October 1985 when each centre completing its first three years of operation should be in a position to operate without further pump-priming funding from the Department of Trade and Industry.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Transport and Meals)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount spent by local authorities on *(a)* school transport and *(b)* schools meals in the latest year for which figures are available, the forecast for 1985 and the amount in 1978-79—all at 1985 prices.

Mr. Dunn: Actual expenditure by local education authorities in England on home to school transport and on school meals, in 1978-79 and 1983-84, the latest year for which firm information is available, is given in the following table, together with the Government's plans for spending on these areas, as set out in Cmnd. 9428. All figures are at 1985-86 prices.

£ million (1985-86 prices)

	1978-79	*1983-84*	*1985-86*
Home to School transport*	205	194	198
School Meals†	726	468	280

* The figures cover maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. Expenditure on transport other than home to school—eg.—travelling expenses for educational visits, sports etc.—is not included. Income from parental contributions, if any, has been deducted from expenditure to arrive at a net figure.

† The fall in expenditure in real terms reflects the effects of the changes to the school meals service following the Education Act 1980 under which the duty of LEAs to provide free school meals for pupils other than those whose parents are in receipt of Supplementary Benefit and Family Income Supplement was removed. The Act also gave authorities the power to set their own charge for meals. The

Government's plans for spending on school meals in 1985-86 and for later years assume that all authorities will take steps to curb overspending on school meals provision.

Open University

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage of disabled students who registered with the Open University in 1971 who have now graduated; if he will list the total number of disabled students who have graduated from the Open University; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: In answer to the first part of the question, about 80 per cent.; the second, over 1,400. The Open University has a notable record in providing for disabled students, and the visiting committee recommended in January that it should continue to ensure that, as far as practicable, such students should be able to study on equal terms with other students. I am happy to endorse that recommendation.

Free School Meals

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number receiving free school meals in Burnley at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: Figures are collected annually in October in the school meals census from each local education authority as a whole. Burnley is not a local education authority but forms part of Lancashire local education authority and separate figures for Burnley are not available centrally. Copies of the latest school meals census for Autumn 1984 are available in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children have a current statutory entitlement to free school meals in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available centrally. The Department's annual school meals census collects data from each LEA on the number of children who actually take a free meal on the October census day. Copies of the census are available in the Library.

Educational Maintenance Allowance

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost per academic year of providing an educational maintenance allowance to every pupil aged between 16 and 19 years in full-time education at the weekly rate of *(a)* £26·25 and *(b)* £27·30 for 40 weeks and subjecting the allowance to tax as part of the parental income and part of the income sum in calculations for family eligibility to social security.

Sir Keith Joseph: Approximately *(a)* £460 million and *(b)* £480 million after allowing for deductions in respect of child benefit and existing education maintenance allowances and grants to 16 to 19-year-olds in non-advanced further education. Tax and social security benefits are dependent on individual circumstances and it is not therefore possible to make generalised assumptions in relation to them.

Inner London Education Authority (Teachers' Salaries)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are current salary rates for all teaching grades employed by the Inner London education authority for each grade, what is the inner London weighting allowance; if he will estimate the consequences of a 6·9 per cent. increase in salary rates, giving the revised pay scales; and if there are any proposals to increase the London weighting allowance.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Further Education (Court Decision)

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he proposes to take in response to the judgment of the divisional court that his decision not to change the formula for the pooling of advanced further education expenditure for 1985-86 was an unlawful decision.

Sir Keith Joseph: In the light of the court's judgment I have decided to make proposals for a new formula for the determination of the appropriate contributions of local education authorities to the advanced further education (AFE) pools in 1985-86 and subsequent financial years. These proposals are based upon the number of AFE students resident in each authority's area. I am under a duty to consult the local authority associations about them and the Department has now begun this process. Following that consultation I shall make and lay before the House regulations incorporating a new formula.

Social Background

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make available the results of the research commissioned by his Department and undertaken by the University of Leeds in the area of social background and educational achievement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. Copies of a summary report of the project are now available from DES on request. Copies are also being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations who were consulted about the 60 per cent. requirement in relation to children entering the assisted places scheme from the maintained sector; and whether he will give details of the form of the consultative process.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985 c. 349]: The minimum proportion of entrants from the maintained sector was one of the matters covered in the general consultative document issued in July 1979 to the local authority associations, voluntary bodies, teachers' associations and representatives of the independent schools.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will state the number of pupils who, at the time of selection for an assisted place, were

choirboys; what proportion of the relevant age group entering the scheme this represents; and what proportion of all assisted places pupils entering the scheme from the private sector this represents.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985, c. 350]: Information on individual pupils taking part in the assisted places scheme is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* a breakdown by age group of the pupils entering the assisted places scheme who attended a private school at the time of their selection for the scheme; and how many and what proportion of each group attended the same school before and after their entry to the scheme.

Mr Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985, c. 350]: Of the pupils admitted to assisted places in the school year 1984-85, 1,129 at ages 11-15 and 609 sixth formers came from other than publicly maintained schools. Information on whether this involved a change of school is not collected by the Department.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Refreshment Facilities (Visitors)

Mr. Proctor asked the Lord Privy Seal if the Services Committee will consider making refreshment facilities available in the House for large parties of Members' constituents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: It is unlikely that accommodation could be provided within the Palace for this purpose; but I understand that the Catering Sub-Committee is already investigating the possibility that, in the context of phase 1 of the Bridge street re-development, the Refreshment Department might make use of the upper floors of St. Stephen's Tavern to provide such a service on a commercial basis. I will refer my hon. Friend's question to the Sub-Committee.

ENERGY

Productivity

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Energy by how much productivity has increased in *(a)* the coal mining industry, *(b)* the electricity industry and *(c)* the gas industry since the end of 1980; and how these figures compare with the economy as a whole.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No specific productivity indices comparable with those compiled and published for the economy as a whole are readily available for the coal mining, electricity and gas industies. However, figures of coal output per man-shift at NCB mines are published monthly in *Energy Trends*, copies of which are available in the Library.

International Energy Agency

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting in Paris on 9 July of the Governing Board of the International Energy Agency at ministerial level.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The governing board of the International Energy Agency met at ministerial level in Paris on Tuesday 9 July under the chairmanship of Dr. Van Aardenne of the Netherlands. I represented the United Kingdom. Copies of the communiqué are available in the Libraries of the House.

IEA Ministers reaffirmed their belief that a risk of renewed dependence on oil could arise in the 1990s with a projected tightening of the world energy supply/demand situation. They welcomed the structural adjustments of the past decade and stressed the need to maintain progress towards the more efficient use of energy and enhanced collaboration in research and development.

New refineries in countries outside the IEA (particularly in the Middle East and North Africa) will be adding to the world supply of refined products over the next few years. Ministers took the view that it should be possible for these additional quantities to find markets without causing disruption, provided the impact was not concentrated in particular regions. They therefore agreed on a common approach to maintain or create conditions to permit this. The IEA will continue to monitor developments in this area.

National Coal Board

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the National Coal Board's financial limits for the current year.

Mr. Peter Walker: After the NUM dispute the National Coal Board reviewed thoroughly its financial forecasts for the present year. These forecasts have been discussed between my Department and the Board, and I have now set the following financial limits for 1985-86.

The National Coal Board's EFL for 1985-86 has been revised from the provisional figure of £723 million to £929 million. The board's capital approval is £725 million. In setting the deficit grant limit of £306 million in respect of 1985-86 I have taken into account inclusion in the board's deficit for 1984-85 of a provision of £342 million for directly strike-related losses which are expected to arise in the present year.

ENVIRONMENT

Anti-fouling Paint

Mr. Ward asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has completed his consideration of the responses to the consultation paper and proposals to control the supply and use of anti-fouling paint containing organotin compounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received about 1,000 responses to our consultation paper and draft regulations to control the supply of these paints for use on small boats, which we issued last February. Despite many objections to the proposals, no serious challenge to the scientific evidence has been made.

The Government remain convinced that measures must be taken urgently to protect shellfish, plants and other marine life from dangerous concentrations of this poison. The paint industry needs a reasonable time to develop improved and alternative products which are acceptable to boat owners and thereby ensure that any controls which are introduced are effective. We have, therefore, decided on an approach which it is intended will lead to an environmental improvement and which will include an

assessment of the effects on the environment whilst allowing the paint industry and its customers time to adjust.

The Government intend to ban the supply of "free association" organotin-based paints to small boat owners. In addition, maximum levels will be set for the organotin content of "copolymer" paints and of other anti-fouling paints using organotin compounds to boost their performance. These will be based on the lowest levels of organotin present in such paints generally available to boat owners at present. These levels will be reviewed in time for the 1987 painting season with a view to reducing them in line with advances in paint technology.

With effect from 1 January 1986 we intend to introduce controls to prevent the supply of the following types of anti-fouling paint to chandlers and other retailers.

(a) those copolymer formulations containing more than 7·5 per cent. organotin (measured as tin in the dry paint film); and

(b) those paints based on copper or other anti-fouling systems containing more than 2·5 per cent. organotin (measured in the same way).

In effect *(b)* will ban the supply of existing "free association" paints while allowing the minimum use of organotin compounds as a performance booster in other anti-fouling systems.

To aid our consideration of future action, the Government propose to consult the water authorities as soon as possible on the establishment of an ambient water quality target. The existing monitoring programme at the Fisheries Laboratory, Burnham-on-Crouch will be supplemented and my Department will set up machinery to co-ordinate this and related work being carried out by other agencies. I would welcome co-ordination of this programme with work commissioned by the Royal Yachting Association and by the paint industry.

In order to avoid repetition of the serious problems which have arisen in this case, the Government will invite the paint industry to co-operate with the Government in a screening procedure for all proposed anti-fouling agents in future so that these can be assessed for environmental safety before they are introduced into use.

Finally, to minimise the impact on water quality in sensitive areas of scraping down and repainting, I will be seeking the co-operation of boating interests, the paint industry and others in preparing authoritative guidance on these operations, giving particular attention to the proper disposal of residues.

The effectiveness of these actions and the progress made towards achieving the water quality target will be reviewed before the end of 1987 to determine the extent to which further controls are needed. The Commission of the European Communities has informed the Government that it intends bringing forward a proposal for Community action. The Government welcome this and will support appropriate action through the European Community which would complement action taken nationally.

Sports Council Grants

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much per head was paid out in the last five years in Sports Council grants *(a)* in England and *(b)* in each of the Sports Council's regions;

(2) how much has been expended in Sports Council grants in each of the last five years broken down by region and county;

(3) what major projects in the last five years have received Sports Council grants in *(a)* the east of England and *(b)* Suffolk.

Mr. Macfarlane: Sports Council grant expenditure over the past five years, total and per capita, nationally and broken down by Sports Council regions, is shown in the table. A breakdown by county is not available.

Regional capital grant and loan expenditure 1980-85

Region	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*Expenditure per capita 1980-85* £p
Northern	426,050	563,711	511,437	467,385	552,888	0·81
North West	874,520	915,208	864,657	876,421	845,081	0·68
Yorks and Humberside	661,256	841,901	659,654	742,878	698,236	0·74
East Midland	503,568	515,835	480,495	554,320	499,516	0·67
West Midlands	578,421	624,437	459,934	551,958	575,388	0·54
Eastern	391,878	643,092	473,520	540,045	417,518	0·51
Greater London and South East	1,054,980	1,618,091	1,272,476	1,237,352	1,154,988	0·60
Southern	297,559	391,304	348,031	398,695	297,366	0·52
South West	398,626	430,209	548,440	403,770	634,079	0·56
England	5,186,858	6,543,788	5,598,644	5,781,824	5,675,680	0·62

Twelve major projects, that is those costing more than £0·75 million, have been grant-aided by the Sports Council in the eastern region since 1980. Details, highlighting those in Suffolk, are as follows:

Eastern Region: Major capital projects grant-aided since 1980

Facility	*Location*	*County*	*Cost £*	*Grant £*
Sports centre extension	Lowestoft	Suffolk	823,000	15,000
Leisure complex	Hunstanton	Norfolk	1,420,000	15,000
Crown pools	Ipswich	Suffolk	2,250,000	15,000
Indoor tennis centre	Peterborough	Cambridgeshire	1,105,000	20,000
Swimming pools	Chesham	Buckinghamshire	1,675,000	20,000
Leisure pool	Felixstowe	Suffolk	3,000,000	20,000
Leisure centre (ice rink, sports hall, pool)	Chelmsford	Essex	4,000,000	20,000
Lord Butler leisure centre	Saffron Walden	Essex	1,155,000	100,000
Leisure pool	Sudbury	Suffolk	3,350,000	25,000
Swimming pool	Stowmarket	Suffolk	1,300,000	25,000
Joint-provision pool	St. Neots	Cambridgeshire	750,000	40,000
Sports hall	Clacton	Essex	880,000	45,000

Litter Act 1983

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received requesting the implementation of section 4 of the Litter Act 1983; when he plans to implement that section; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have had representations from six individuals or bodies requesting implementation of this section, which requires local authorities to prepare litter abatement plans. There are no proposals at the moment to implement this section, in view of the need for restraint in public expenditure.

Housing Defects (Manchester)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the recent report on housing defects in Manchester, a copy of which has been sent to him; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: I have read this report with interest. Together with Manchester city council's response to my Department's inquiry into the repair and improvement needs of local authority housing, it provides valuable information on the condition of the council's housing stock and will be relevant to the consideration, this autumn, of Manchester's housing investment programme for 1986-87.

The city council places great emphasis on spending more public money, as the solution to the problems which it has identified. I urge the council to consider alternative options, especially the potential for involving the private sector in refurbishment schemes.

Departmental Committees of Inquiry

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 2 May, *Official Report*, column 183, if he will now take steps to provide the information on departmental committees of inquiry established since 1974.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The information is set out in the following table. As central records were not maintained throughout the period I cannot guarantee that the list is complete.

Subject of Investigation	*Chairman*	*Date established*	*Date of Report*
Local Government Finance	F. Layfield QC	June 1974	May 1976
Remuneration of Members of Local Authorities	D. Robinson	November 1976	December 1977
Disposal of Radioactive Waste in North East Atlantic (in conjunction with MAFF and the TUC)	Professor F. G. T. Holliday	April 1984	November 1984
Conduct of Local Authority Business	D. Widdicombe QC	February 1985	—
Handling of Geographic Information	Lord Chorley	April 1985	—

The list excludes standing advisory committees and planning inquiries.

Ordnance Survey (Archival Material)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove, *Official Report*, 10 June, column 315, what value he places on the archival material used in the Ordnance Survey's commercial ventures; and how this valuation is calculated.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ordnance Survey's commercial ventures draw upon the whole range of its mappings. This archive has been built up over decades and cannot be strictly valued in monetary terms.

Waterfowl (Lead Fishing Weights)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of wildfowl other than swans that have died as a result of eating lead fishing weights; and as to the trend in such deaths in recent years.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is little existing evidence to suggest that waterfowl other than swans are affected by ingesting lead from fishing weights.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many swans are estimated to have died as a result of eating lead fishing weights in each of the last five years; what were the comparable figures for the years 1970 to 1975 and 1960 to 1965; and to what factors the variations are attributed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Nature Conservancy Council's report on lead poisoning in swans, produced in 1981, estimated that 3,000-3,500 swan deaths annually were due to lead poisoning. A report to the Nature Conservancy Council working party on swans in January 1985 estimated the number of deaths annually to be between 3,370 and 4,190. The later figure is higher because the increased number of post-mortem examinations carried out since 1981 suggest a higher death rate should be used in the calculations. I regret that there are no comparable figures for earlier years.

Houses (Multi-occupation)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to bring forward changes in legislation concerning houses in multi-occupation.

Sir George Young: None at present. My Department is carrying out research which involves an examination of the condition of houses in multiple-occupation and local authorities' use of existing legislation. I wish to see the outcome of this research before deciding whether further measures are necessary. The timetable for this research was set out in the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 3 June, at columns 33-34.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any recent representations regarding legislation on houses in multi-occupation.

Sir George Young: Yes. I have received several representations from Members of Parliament, professional bodies, interested organisations and the general public. They have been reminded of the wide range of powers available to local authorities for securing improved conditions in houses in multiple-occupation and of the action which the Government has already taken to strengthen some of these powers.

Housing (Public Expenditure)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage reduction in real terms on net public expenditure on housing since 1979.

Sir George Young: The years from 1979 have seen a major shift in the balance between housing provision in the public and private sectors. Between 1979-80 and 1984-85 net public expenditure on housing fell by 54 per cent. in real terms. Between December 1979 and December 1984, home ownership in England rose by 1·5 million to a total of 11·691 million owner-occupiers.

Water Industry (Productivity)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much productivity has increased in the water industry since the end of 1980; and how that figure compares with the economy as a whole.

Mr. Macfarlane: Regional water authority manpower has reduced by 18 per cent. since the end of 1980, and the authorities taken together have met demanding performance aims for operating costs while improving levels of service, but no precise productivity measure for the industry is available. Output per person employed in the economy as a whole, seasonally adjusted, increased by about 13 per cent. to the end of March.

Housing Association Schemes (GLC)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangement he proposes to make, following abolition, for dealing with housing association schemes originally funded by the Greater London council, and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Proposals for dealing with these schemes were set out in the October 1983 housing consultation paper, a copy of which was placed in the Library. Following consideration of the representations received, my right hon. Friend has decided that on abolition of the GLC, these proposals should be broadly maintained. Thus the councils of the London boroughs will become responsible for funding ex-GLC housing association schemes in their areas still in progress on abolition day. They will also assume responsibility for the GLC-funded schemes where work has been completed but where final grant payments are still under consideration by the Department. They will also become the lending authority for any completed schemes previously funded by the GLC but where new involvement by a lending authority is required, for example in respect of major repairs, including those GLC-financed schemes which up to 31 March 1968 received funds from the Housing Corporation.

The Housing Corporation normally looks to local authorities to fund housing associations in respect of schemes which were originally funded by local authorities but where further funding is now required. They have already announced that their funding of major repairs to a small number of schemes originally funded by the GLC will cease on 31 March 1986. They will, however, continue to fund certain re-improvements to ex-GLC schemes.

After abolition, loan repayments on completed housing association schemes which would have been made to the GLC will be paid to the London Residuary Body, who will be responsible for servicing the outstanding debt on such schemes.

The GLC has also funded housing association schemes of a London-wide significance, for example in providing for the single homeless. It will be for the London boroughs to decide either individually or collectively, in conjunction with the Housing Corporation, how best to continue this initiative.

In addition, the GLC are also at present providing rate fund contributions to offset revenue losses incurred by some housing associations. While we do not intend to make any special arrangements in respect of such funding, individual cases will be considered on their merits within the normal rules for revenue deficit grant.

The London boroughs have been invited to bid for housing investment programme allocations in respect of schemes hitherto funded by the GLC. They have been assured that the resources which would have been available to the GLC will after abolition be distributed amongst the boroughs.

Departmental Management Information System

Dr. Blackburn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will release the latest statement from his Department's management information system for Ministers (MINIS).

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: As in previous years, I am placing a set of MINIS 6 statements for the Department of the Environment and the Property Services Agency in the Library. They describe the organisation and work of the Department during 1984-85, and show suggested plans for 1985-86. They are also on sale to the public.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now received the annual report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Yes. The sixth annual report of RWMAC will be published shortly, and I will then place copies in the Library of the House. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and I are grateful to the chairman, Professor Paul Matthews FRS, and to the members of the committee, for their valuable work over the past year in advancing thinking on this vital subject, and we shall continue to take full account of their views in developing and implementing the national strategy for waste management.

Severn-Trent Water Authority

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any changes to the Severn-Trent water authority's external financing limit for 1985-86.

Mr. Gow: The Severn-Trent regional water authority's external financing limit for 1985-86 has been increased from £22 million to £55·2 million. This covers the cost of refinancing £202·5 million of the authority's outstanding National Loans Fund debt. The authority will benefit from future lower interest payments and external financing requirements as a result of the refinancing. The increase has been charged to the reserve and does not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Council House Sales

Mr. Michael Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table giving information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England which was referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 3 April, *Official Report*, columns 669-70.

Mr. Gow: I have today placed in the Library the latest figures, to which my hon. Friend refers, giving information reported by each local authority in England on the progress of council house sales to the end of March 1985.

GLC (Town Development Agreements)

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes to make for the allocation, following abolition of the Greater London council's rights and liabilities, under agreements under the Town Development Act 1952.

Sir George Young: As I indicated in my written answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 23 November 1984, at column 315, the London Residuary Body will assume the GLC's liabilities under existing town development agreements. The GLC's tenancy nomination rights under those agreements will be transferred to the Secretary of State. It is his intention to exercise those nomination rights through the National Mobility Steering Committee. Any other GLC rights under the town development agreements will pass to the London Residuary Body.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of houses on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land *(a)* represent transfers to households which were previously on other London Docklands Development Corporation-owned sites and *(b)* are owned by the second or subsequent purchasers of the house.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The information is not collected.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the London Docklands Development Corporation requires clauses in its contracts of employment to specify that racial and sexual harassment at work is a disciplinary issue.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: Yes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements exist for advertising posts in the London Docklands Development Corporation; and which newspapers, including black and ethnic minority newspapers, are used to place adverts.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The corporation advertises vacancies both internally and externally. The following newspapers and journals are used:

Accountancy Age
Architects Journal
Barking and Dagenham Express
Building Design
Campaign
Caribbean Times
Chartered Surveyor Weekly
Computing
East London Advertiser
Essex Gazette
Financial Decision
Financial Times
The Guardian
Local Government Chronicle
Marketing
Newham Recorder
Opportunities
Planning
South London Press
The Sunday Times
The Telegraph
The Times

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many advisers the London Docklands Development Corporation employs with a specific knowledge of relevant employment and equal opportunity legislation.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The corporation employs one personnel consultant

and draws on the services of two other consultants who have a specific knowledge of employment and equal opportunity legislation.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people with disabilities are employed by the London Docklands Development Corporation; and at what grades.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The corporation employs two registered disabled people, both in APTC grades.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many women are employed by the London Docklands Development Corporation; and at what grades.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The corporation employs 35 permanent female staff; 10 in professional posts and 25 in administrative, professional, technical and clerical (APTC) grades. In addition, the corporation also employs 26 females on fixed term contracts; five at professional level and 21 in APTC grades.

Rosehill Estate, Willenhall

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now make a statement arising from the deputation seen by officials on 18 July on what action is to be taken to ensure that the Walsall council has sufficient resources to undertake the modernisation of Rosehill estate, Willenhall.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1985]: My officials have given me a full account of the points made by the hon. Member and tenants from the Rosehill estate at their meeting on 18 July. I have now written to the hon. Member on the matter.

I understand the strong wishes of many of the tenants that something should be done to improve conditions on the estate. However, it is for Walsall district council to decide what action to take within the context of its housing programme as a whole. In addition to the HIP allocation of £9·5 million for 1985-86, Walsall has received a supplementary capital allocation of £627,000. Apart from some further small amounts to be allocated among authorities with difficulties in meeting their obligations under the Housing Defects Act, there are no further resources available for distribution this year. Before the HIP allocations for 1986-87 are made, Walsall will have an opportunity to explain its needs and the points which the hon. Member and the tenants from the Rosehill estate have made will also be taken into account.

SCOTLAND

Broadleaved Woodlands

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet in a position to announce the outcome of the Forestry Commission's review of policy for broadleaved woodlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The Forestry Commission has now completed its review after wide consultations covering a period of some two and a half years, and my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have agreed new policy initiatives designed to maintain and enhance the value of Britain's broadleaved woodlands for timber production, landscape, recreation and nature conservation.

The new policy will have a number of complementary aims. It is the Government's wish to ensure that the broadleaved character of the well-wooded parts of the country is maintained and improved and to see broadleaved woodlands established in areas where they are scarce, including areas on the periphery of towns and cities. The maintenance and greater use of broadleaves in the uplands will also be encouraged, particularly where they will add to the beauty of the landscape and the wildlife interest; this will apply equally to the extensive conifer plantations which have been established in the uplands in response to our continuing policy of expanding home timber supplies. Encouragement will also be given to the greater use of broadleaved woodlands generally for conservation, recreation, sport and landscape, as well as for wood production. In particular, steps will be taken to ensure that the special interest of the ancient semi-natural woodlands is recognised and maintained. Essential to these objectives is the need to increase the quality and value of timber produced by broadleaved woodlands. We also consider it important to the success of these new policy aims that they are pursued with a reasonable degree of flexibility and within the framework of an essentially voluntary approach which harnesses the interest and goodwill of landowners, farmers and foresters.

A number of new measures will be introduced to achieve these policy aims, both for the long term and to afford more immediate protection for existing woodlands; they will apply equally to woodlands under the direct management of the Forestry Commission and to those in private or other ownership. These measures are outlined below. Full details will be given in a Foresty Commission booklet to be published shortly.

Among the long-term measures, the Forestry Commission will be designating a senior officer in each of its seven Conservancies who will be responsible for co-ordinating the advice already available from a wide variety of Government and non-Government sources on the establishment and management of broadleaved woodlands; for stimulating new planting in poorly-wooded areas and the better management of existing woods, by means of promotional activities and practical demonstrations; and for assembling and disseminating information on the marketing of produce and the encouragement of co-operative marketing ventures. These officers will be supported by the Commission's 70 Forest District Managers and their staffs in each locality. The Commission will also be arranging training—both for its own staff and for advisers in other Government departments and agencies and in the voluntary movement — in the various aspects of broadleaved woodland management, including landscape design, wildlife conservation and the provision of recreation and will be promoting further research into the measures required to enhance the conservation value of broadleaved woodlands and the development of less costly establishment techniques.

A new Forestry Commission grant scheme, to be known as the broadleaved woodland grant scheme, will be introduced on 1 October 1985. It is designed to assist in bringing neglected woodlands back into use for a variety

of purposes, to help meet the cost of creating new multi-purpose woodlands; and has particular relevance to farm woodlands, especially in the lowlands. Significantly higher rates of grant will be offered under this new scheme, as shown in table 1, for the use of broadleaved species on their own and the rate of grant will be determined by the area planted and not by the size of the wood in which planting takes place. Details of the new scheme, which will be closely monitored and funded within the Forestry Commission's planned expenditure, will be published shortly by the Commission. Broadleaves in mixture with conifers will be grant-aided under the forestry grant scheme, which will continue as a separate scheme.

In addition to the Forestry Commission's grant-aid schemes, which all have wood production as one of their aims, there are other sources of finance available for planting broadleaved trees for other purposes, notably those administered by the Countryside Commissions and local authorities for amenity planting, which are designed to dovetail with the Forestry Commission's grants.

At this point, it would be appropriate to inform the House that the levels of grant available under the Commission's Basis II and III Dedication Schemes and the Forestry Grant Scheme have recently been reviewed by the Forestry Commissioners under the agreed biennial review arrangements, and my right hon. Friends and I have endorsed their proposal that the planting grants under those schemes should be increased from 1 October 1984.

Management grants, available only under the dedication schemes, will remain at the present levels. The revised rates of planting grant are shown in tables 2 and 3. These will give rise to an increase in expenditure of about 5 per cent. in a full year.

Before the start of the broadleaved woodland grant scheme, the Forestry Commission also plans to publish, after further discussions with the Environment Departments, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commissions and appropriate non-Government bodies, general guidance on the management considerations appropriate to various types of broadleaved woodlands. The Forestry Commission will have regard to this guidance, both in its own operations and in considering applications for grant aid or felling permission. This should make the Commission's consultations with other interested authorities easier and lead in time to a reduced requirement for consultation where the proposed management is in accordance with the guidelines, although it is intended that local authorities would continue to be informed of proposals of particular interest to them. It is recognised that there is a growing public interest in broadleaved woodlands. The Forestry Commission will be taking this into account in considering ways and means of making the proceedings of its regional advisory committees more open when they are dealing with disputed applications for grant aid or felling permission, as announced by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secrtary of State for the Environment, in his response to the Countryside Commission's report "A Better Future for the Uplands" on 31 January 1985 at column 287.

Finally, while we do not think there is a case for any change in the tax law, we will consider whether, within the existing rules, ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodlands should be able to qualify for exemption from capital taxation in recognition of their heritage value.

To afford more immediate protection against the depletion of existing woodlands, my right hon. Friends and I have endorsed the Forestry Commission's proposal to reduce the volume of timber—both broadleaved and conifer—which may be felled without a licence from 30 cubic metres to 5 cubic metres per quarter, with a reduction in the volume of such timber that may be sold from 5·5 cubic metres to 2 cubic metres. The Forestry Commissioners will be introducing an order shortly to give effect to this under their powers contained in section 9(5)(c) of the Forestry Act 1967. For similar reasons, I have also decided not to proceed with the proposal I announced in my statement to the House on 27 May 1982 to exempt silvicultural thinnings from felling controls. Allied to these changes, the Forestry Commission will continue, in its administration of the statutory felling controls, to operate a general presumption against the granting of clear-felling permissions where the intention is to convert woodland to other uses, and to prosecute those responsible for unauthorised felling. Full details of these changes will be published in a revised version of the Commission's leaflet "Control of Tree Felling".

The successful establishment of broadleaved woodlands is often frustrated by the damage done by grey squirrels, and the Forestry Commission intends to set up local squirrel control groups with the co-operation of the private sector to control such damage in vulnerable broadleaved woodlands through the effective application of known methods. Further details will be published in due course in a Forestry Commission leaflet.

Among other initiatives directed at the protection of existing woodlands, the register of ancient woodland now being compiled on a provisional basis by the Nature Conservancy Council will be completed as soon as possible. This will show where positive management in the interests of conservation is particularly required. The Tree Council is preparing a leaflet which will give advice on ways of ensuring the good management of trees and woodlands which are subject to tree preservation orders. Such orders are seen as a last resort for the protection of broadleaved woodland, and local authorities are encouraged to continue to seek management agreements with landowners for the proper management of their broadleaved woodlands in appropriate circumstances.

Broadleaved woodlands form a significant part of our national heritage. The Government are firmly committed, through the initiatives I have announced, to stemming their depletion—particularly that of the ancient woodlands—to making good the years of neglect from which many small, but important broadleaved woods have suffered, and to encouraging the formation of new ones. We have asked the Forestry Commission to report regularly on the operation and effectiveness of the new measures and we shall review them after some three years.

Now that our policy has been determined, we look to the many interests concerned—including the Forestry Commission, woodland owners, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commissions and voluntary bodies—to work together in a spirit of co-operation to make it a success.

Table 1
Broadleaved Woodland Grant Scheme: Grant Rates Effective from 1 October 1985

£/hectare

Band / Area of planting or regeneration	Planting 1 70 per cent.	2 15 per cent.	3 15 per cent.	Total	Natural Regeneration 1 50 per cent.	2 30 per cent.	3 20 per cent.	Total
0·25 ha–0·9 ha	840	180	180	1,200	600	360	240	1,200
1·0 ha–2·9 ha	700	150	150	1,000	500	300	200	1,000
3·0 ha–9·9 ha	560	120	120	800	400	240	160	800
10·0 ha and over	420	90	90	600	300	180	120	600

(i) The grant bands will be linked to the area of planting (including restocking) or natural regeneration.
(ii) The second and third instalments of grant will be paid as a percentage of the rate current at the time they are due.
(iii) in the case of planting, the first instalment will be paid on completion of planting and the second and third instalments at five-yearly intervals thereafter, subject to satisfactory establishment and maintenance of the trees. In the case of natural regeneration, the first instalment will be paid on completion of approved work designed to lead to regeneration, the second instalment when an adequate stocking has been achieved and the third instalment five years after subject to satisfactory establishment and maintenance.

Table 2
Forestry Grant Scheme: Grant rates effective from 1 October 1984
£/hectare

Area of Wood	Conifers	Broadleaves
0·25 ha—0·9 ha	630	890
1·0 ha—2·9 ha	505	735
3·0 ha—9·9 ha	420	630
10·0 ha and over	240	470

Payments of these amounts will be made in two instalments—80 per cent. on completion of planting, the remainder five years later subject to satisfactory establishment.

Table 3
Basis II and III dedication schemes: Grant rates effective from 1 October 1984

	£/hectare
Basis II dedication	
Planting grant	110·00
Management grant (per annum)—	
first 40 hectares	4·60
second 40 hectares	3·25
balance	2·00
Basis III dedication	
Planting grant—	
Conifers	145·00
Broadleaves	330·00
Management grant (per annum)	4·20

Re-Chem International (Lenihan Report)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the detailed studies called for in the Lenihan report on Re-Chem International Ltd. will be finalised.

Mr. John MacKay: The only detailed study which the Lenihan review group recommended should be pursued is the further investigation of the problem of microphthalmos in the Forth Valley health board area and elsewhere. Work on this is proceeding, but it is not possible to say when it will be completed.

Agricultural Research Institutes

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the implications for animal welfare of the 16 per cent. cut in research into animal diseases proposed in the agriculture and food research service report, "A Long Term View"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The Agricultural and Food Research Council's recent paper "A Long Term View" is concerned with management roles and structures and makes no recommendations about levels of research activity.

The council's corporate plan for 1985-1990 proposes a 16 per cent. reduction in research in animal diseases but I would not expect this to affect work on animal welfare which is funded under a separate heading.

Reprocessing Plant (Dounreay)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many objections have been lodged up to 18 July against the planning application for the proposed European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay *(a)* by persons or bodies based in Scotland, *(b)* by persons or bodies in the rest of the United Kingdom and *(c)* by persons or bodies outwith the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Number
(a)	310
(b)	124
(c)	4
Total	438

In addition, there have been 672 representations in support of the proposed development, all from persons or bodies based in Scotland.

MacBrayne Haulage

Mr. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will report on progress on the sale of MacBrayne Haulage.

Mr. George Younger: I have approved a proposal by the Scottish Transport Group to sell MacBrayne Haulage to the owners of Kildonan Transport Ltd., who operate existing road haulage services in north-east Scotland. The sale price is £450,000.

Mr. J. F. Mitchell BDS

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether a decision has yet been reached on the

representation made by the Lothian health board to the National Health Service tribunal in respect of Mr. J. F. Mitchell BDS.

Mr. Younger: In relation to the Appeal by Mr. J. F. Mitchell BDS, Whitehouse, Whitehouse Road, Barnton, Edinburgh against a direction of the National Health Service tribunal dated 24 October 1984 following a representation to the tribunal by Lothian health board, I have decided to accept the recommendation of the reporter, Mr. W. D. Prosser QC, dean of the Faculty of Advocates, that the direction should be confirmed without modification. I have therefore confirmed the direction whereby Mr. Mitchell's name shall be removed from the list maintained by Lothian health board of the names of dental practitioners who undertake to provide general dental services under the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 and his name shall be removed from or not included in any corresponding list kept by any other health board under Part II of the 1978 Act.

I am arranging for a copy of the letter which is being sent today from the Scottish Home and Health Department conveying this decision to Mr. Mitchell to be placed in the Library.

In its statement containing the foregoing direction, the NHS tribunal suggested that consideration should be given to the existing procedures under the 1978 Act and the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) (Scotland) Regulations 1974 for dealing with issues of this kind and I shall consider this matter in the light of the tribunal's comments.

Assistance to Newspapers

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much financial assistance the Highlands and Islands development board has provided from public funds in support of newspapers; and if he will list the newspapers and the amounts involved in each case.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 July 1985, c. *554*]: Since its establishment the board has approved assistance totalling £223,222 grant and £304,950 loan to 10 newspapers published in various parts of the board's area.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office (Postal Business)

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will announce financial objectives and performance aims for the postal business of the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: Over the last several months the Post Office has moved to greater separation of the mails and counter businesses operationally, managerially and financially. I have therefore decided that this is the right time to discontinue the setting of postal business targets and to move, from 1985-86, to setting targets separately for each of royal mail and counters. National Girobank is already targeted separately.

The postal business was set the performance aim in February 1982 of reducing its real unit costs by 5 per cent. in the three years to 1984-85 taking 1981-82 as a base, with a provision for a reduction of 2 per cent. in 1982-83. I congratulate the management and work force of the Post Office for having bettered that target.

I have decided that the royal mails business should be set the target of further reducing its real unit costs by 2·2 per cent. in 1985-86 compared with 1984-85 and that the counters business should be targeted for a reduction of 1·5 per cent. compared with 1984-85.

The Government have no doubt that it is vital to the future of both businesses and to the future of jobs in both businesses that the Post Office should strive to make further significant improvements in efficiency in order to retain its existing customers and to attract new work. I believe that these targets are demanding but I am confident that the Post Office is capable of reaching them.

The move to separate targets raises certain problems in attempting to set financial objectives. It will be a little time yet before sufficiently robust figures are available on which separate profit targets for the two businesses could be determined.

I have therefore decided to review the financial objectives for mails and counters and to delay setting medium-term financial objectives until later this year. As an interim measure, therefore, I have decided that each of royal mails and counters businesses should be required to secure a 4·5 per cent. return on turnover, on the current cost accounting convention, before tax but after interest, for the financial year 1985-86.

Argentina

80. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received following the lifting of import restrictions on the Argentine.

Mr. Channon: None.

Car Exhaust Emissions

81. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to conclude negotiations with the European Economic Community over car exhaust emissions.

Mr. Channon: The proposed directive on car exhaust emissions will be discussed in the next Environment Council, scheduled for November. I hope that the important outstanding technical points will by then have been satisfactorily resolved.

Tourist Grants

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much per head in tourism grants was paid out in the last five years *(a)* throughout England and *(b)* in each of the English Tourist Board regions.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is as follows:

Payments of Grant under Section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969: 1980-81 to 1984-85

Regional Tourist Board Area	*Total Grant Paid per Head** £
Cumbria	6·18
East Anglia†	0·22

Regional Tourist Board Area	Total Grant Paid per Head* £
East Midlands†	0·42
Heart of England†	0·20
London†	0·14
Northumbria	0·68
North West	0·57
South East England†	0·25
Southern†	1·07
Thames and Chilterns†	0·13
West Country†	1·73
Yorkshire and Humberside	1·05
England	0·59

* The population figures used for making these calculations are drawn from the estimates in the 1981 census.

† All or parts of these areas only became eligible for Section 4 assistance on 1 August 1982 when the scheme was extended to non-Assisted Areas.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been expended in tourist grants in each of the five years, broken down by region and county.

Mr. Trippier: Details of grants made by the English tourist board under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 are not held on a county basis and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Payments of grant to projects in the regions covered by the non-statutory regional tourist boards are as follows:

Payments of Grant under Section 4 of the Development of Tourist Act 1969: 1980-81—1984-85

Payments Made £'000*

Regional Tourist Board Area	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	Total
Cumbria	727	780	623	351	467	2,948
East Anglia†	—	—	59	316	380	755
East Midlands†	180	246	171	450	514	1,561
Heart of England†	50	56	92	317	598	1,113
London†	—	—	—	401	549	950
Northumbria	418	356	456	329	224	1,783
North West	664	744	703	808	846	3,765
South East England†	—	—	51	170	746	967
Southern†	—	—	128	1,247	878	2,253
Thames & Chilterns†	—	—	—	179	258	437
West Country†	996	789	785	1,094	2,107	5,771
Yorkshire & Humberside	1,173	1,042	1,431	642	871	5,159
England Total	4,209	4,013	4,499	6,303	8,438	27,462

* All figures are drawn from the English Tourist Board's Annual Reports for the years 1980-81 to 1984-85 rounded to the nearest £1,000. The sum of component figures may not add to the totals due to rounding.

† All parts of these areas become eligible for Section 4 assistance only on 1 August 1982 when the scheme was extended to non-Assisted Areas.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what major projects in the last five years received tourism grants in *(a)* the east of England and *(b)* Suffolk;

(2) what tourism grants in connection with the heritage coast in Suffolk have been given in the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: For reasons of commercial confidentiality details of individual grant offers made by the English tourist board are not published without the consent of the applicants. From 1980-81 to date 43 grants totalling approximately £2 million have been offered to projects with capital costs of more than £100,000 in the areas covered the East Anglia and East Midlands tourist boards. Of these, five offers worth £312,000 in total were to projects in Suffolk. In the period three projects (whose capital costs were all less than £100,000) on the Suffolk heritage coast received offers of grant totalling £22,440. East Anglia and most of the East Midlands region were excluded from the scheme under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 until August 1982.

Tourism (Bed-nights)

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures on the number of bed-nights for visitors by tourist region and by county.

Mr. Trippier: The latest information on nights spent away from home by British tourists by region is on page 12 of *British Home Tourist Survey 1983* published by the British tourist authority, a copy of which is in the Library. More detailed information is not available. Information on nights spent by overseas visitors by region and county is on pages 8 to 10 of the report "The regional spread of overseas visitors to the UK 1983 International Passenger Survey" produced by the British tourist authority, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Manufactures (Germany)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the United Kingdom deficit on trade in manufactures with Germany since September 1981 at an annual rate, and how this compares with 1970.

Mr. Channon: The crude deficit in manufactures with Germany in the period September 1984 to May 1985 at an annual rate was £5·5 billion. This compares with £0·1 billion in the year 1970. Annualised figures may be unreliable as a guide to the outcome of a 12-month period.

Teletext Services

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to encourage British industry to make use of the enabling legislation in the Cable and Broadcasting Act to market British-developed enhanced teletext services overseas.

Mr. Butcher: We have ensured that United Kingdom broadcasters have a technical specification to support subscription user group services in this country and in

overseas countries using United Kingdom teletext technology; but its application in other countries depends on broadcasters and regulatory bodies in those countries.

Departmental Committees of Inquiry

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, column *314*, if he will now take steps to provide the information on departmental committees of inquiry established from 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Butcher: Following is a list of committees of inquiry which were reported between 1974 and 1979 on topics within the present scope of my Department.

Departmental Committees of Inquiry between 1974 and 1979

1. COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE BRITISH TRADE MARK LAW AND PRACTICE
(Chairman: H R Mathys Esq TD)

Set up	July 1972
Reported	20 December 1973
Published	May 1974
Title	British Trade Mark Law and Practice: Report of the Committee Cmnd 5601 HMSO 1984

2. BRITISH LEYLAND TEAM OF INQUIRY
(Chairman: Sir Don Ryder)

Set up	December 1974
Reported	March 1975
Published	April 1975
Title	British Leyland: the next decade: an abridged version of a Report presented to the Secretary of State for Industry HC 342 (1974-75) HMSO 1975

3. INFLATION ACCOUNTING COMMITTEE
(Chairman: F E P Sandilands CBE)

Set up	January 1974 (reaffirmed March 1974)
Reported	June 1975
Published	September 1975
Title	Inflation accounting: report of the Committee Cmnd 6255 HMSO 1975

4. QUEEN'S AWARD TO INDUSTRY REVIEW COMMITTEE
(Chairman: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh)

Set up	November 1974
Reported	September 1975
Title	The Queen's Award to Industry: report of the 1975 Review Committee HMSO 1975

5. BANKRUPTCY CONVENTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
(Chairman: Kenneth Cork FCA FICM)

Set up	July 1973
Reported	January 1976
Published	July 1976
Title	EEC Preliminary Draft Convention on Bankruptcy, winding-up, arrangements, compositions and similar proceedings Cmnd 6602 HMSO 1976

6. COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY
(Chairman: Lord Bullock)

Set up	August 1975
Reported	January 1977
Title	Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy Cmnd 6706 HMSO 1977

7. COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER THE LAW ON COPYRIGHT AND DESIGNS
(Chairman: The Honourable Mr Justice Whitford)

Set up	August 1973
Reported	March 1977
Title	Copyright and designs law: report of the Committee Cmnd 6732 HMSO 1977

8. INTERIM ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE FILM INDUSTRY
(Chairman: Rt Hon Sir Harold Wilson KG, OBE, FRS, MP)

Set up	April 1977
Reported	1st Report 1977
Title	Proposals for setting up a British Film Authority Cmnd 7071 HMSO 1978

Vosper Shiprepairers

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made over the sale of Vosper Shiprepairers by British Shipbuilders; and when he expects the negotiations to be completed.

Mr. Butcher: British Shipbuilders is continuing to discuss the sale of Vosper Shiprepairers with potential purchasers. I cannot forecast when the negotiations will be completed.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made over the sale of Vosper Shipbuilders by British Shipbuilders; and when he expects the negotiations to be completed.

Mr. Butcher: Sales documents for Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. were issued on 14 June. Initial bids have been requested by 16 August. I cannot at this stage say when negotiations for the sale are likely to be completed.

Large Multiples (Discounts)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Office of Fair Trading conclusion that discounts available to the larger multiples are helpful; and what assessment he makes of the impact of these arrangements on competitive influence from these markets.

Mr. Fletcher: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on 28 June at column *510*.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the value of discounts enjoyed by the larger grocery multiples; and how this compares with the position five years ago.

Mr. Fletcher: This issue is discussed in chapter 4 of the Director General's report. Table 27 provides statistical information on the value of special terms negotiated by manufacturers with customers of different size and compares these statistics with corresponding figures in the MMC report published in 1981. In addition, customers will receive discounts related to cost savings on the part of manufacturers.

Small Retail Grocers

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he will take to seek to ensure that small retail grocers survive in sufficient numbers to maintain competition and to serve the needs of local customers.

Mr. Fletcher: The Director General's report concludes that, despite some increase in concentration, competition in grocery retailing remains very strong. While small independent grocers are at a price disadvantage compared with the large multiples, they have the potential for competitive advantage in other ways, such as increased specialisation, greater flexibility and scope for more personalised service. The Government do not consider that intervention to prevent or mitigate the changes resulting from competitive forces would be justified.

Grocery Trade (Large Multiples)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the share of the grocery trade now commanded by the large multiples; and how this compares with the position 10 years ago.

Mr. Fletcher: Table 10 of the Director General's report gives figures, by region, of the market shares of the multiples for packaged groceries for the years 1980 and 1984; and these are discussed in paragraphs 2.11 to 2.18 of the report. Figures for the years 1974-1980 are contained in Table 11 of Appendix 1 to the MMC report on discounts to retailers. Comparisons between the two sets of figures need to take into account the fact that the MMC figures cover groceries sold through grocers, while the OFT figures cover in addition sales through non-grocery outlets.

Current Cost Returns

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how current cost returns compare in industry generally, and in food manufacture in particular in the case of the largest food retailing companies.

Mr. Fletcher: The relevant figures are set out in tables 14 and 15 of the Director General's report.

Rotherham

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further action he proposes to take to stimulate industrial growth and development in the metropolitan borough of Rotherham.

Mr. Trippier: The metropolitan borough of Rotherham is mostly situated in a development area and thus already enjoys the highest level of regional incentives as well as having access to the national schemes of support outlined in the booklet "Support for Business", a copy of which is available in the Library. I have no plans to modify these arrangements.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the terms of trade and relative volume of imports and exports in May 1985 on *(a)* 1975 base and *(b)* 1970 base.

Mr. Channon: This information is not available.

North-West (Tourism)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the major projects that have received tourism grants in the north-west in the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: For reasons of commercial confidentiality details of individual grant offers made by the English tourist board under section 4 of the Development of Tourist Act 1969 are not published without consent of the applicants. From 1980-81 to date 55 grants totalling approximately £2·75 million have been offered to projects with capital costs of more than £100,000 in the area covered by the North-West tourist board.

Ford Motor Company

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals his Department has received from Ford to increase the United Kingdom manufactured percentage of its share of the United Kingdom car market.

Mr. Butcher: Ford has recently reconfirmed its commitment to raise the British-built share of its car sales here but much depends on the company's success in improving the performance of its car plants in Britain.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has reached his conclusions on the Export Credits Guarantee Department management review.

Mr. Channon: Yes. I welcome the proposals in the management review for internal reorganisation and radical changes in ECGD's methods of operation which will now be put into effect. These will lead to improved efficiency and a better service for exporters. I also agree with the review's conclusion that ECGD needs an injection of commercial experience from the private sector. I am not, however, convinced that the proposed board represents the best way of achieving this. I intend to strengthen the top management during the implementation period by the filling of a fifth Under-Secretary post, bringing the Department back to its previous level, and to fill, over a period of time, three Under-Secretary posts at ECGD by secondments from the private sector.

Information Technology (Skills Shortages)

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the committee examining the problem of skills shortages in the information technology industry will issue its final report.

Mr. Butcher: The third and final report of the Information Technology Skills Shortages Committee, which I have been chairing, will be published on Thursday 25 July, and I shall place a copy in the Library of the House. The report will sum up initiatives taken following the committee's previous reports, and will make recommendations for future action. Its publication will complete the committee's work and the report will incorporate a further set of ideas which can be followed up by the newly formed IT skills agency which has been set up by the CBI Education Foundation.

Co-operatives

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will detail the provision being made for providing help and advice for co-operatives and for people wishing to set up co-operatives in 1986-87; and what provision is being made for the future funding of co-operative development agencies in the Greater London area presently funded by the Greater London Council.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The national Co-operative Development Agency, which is funded by my Department, will continue to provide help and advice to co-operatives and people wishing to set up co-operatives in 1986-87. In addition, co-operatives will be entitled to whatever DTI assistance is available to

business generally since no distinction is made in schemes of assistance between co-operatives and other small businesses.

We have no plans to fund local co-operative development agencies in the Greater London area or elsewhere.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hennessy Report

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the implementation of the recommendations of the Hennessy report.

Mr. Hurd: Since my predecessor reported to the House last July on the progress made in implementing the Hennessy recommendations a further 20 recommendations have been implemented.

These include the strengthening of the security of the communications room in each H block, the relocation of a number of alarm buttons, the revision of the prison segment system whereby the prison can in an emergency be quickly and efficiently divided into smaller more easily manageable units, the reorganisation of the prison security department, and the strengthening of the management structure both of the prison and of the headquarters department.

Following consultation with representatives of the legal profession and others I have decided not to introduce closed visits for professional visitors. I am confident that improved procedures for searching prisoners and their visitors make the implementation of this particular recommendation unnecessary.

Sixty-four of the 73 recommendations have thus been dealt with. Of the remainder a number include major construction or installation work which will inevitably take some time to complete. I believe that the security of Her Majesty's prison, Maze, has been substantially improved. Work to complete the implementation of the outstanding recommendations will continue.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the manpower strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Northern Ireland on 30 June, giving details of the number of operatives in each year for the following categories: Royal Ulster Constabulary full-time, Royal Ulster Constabulary full-time reserve and, Royal Ulster Constabulary part-time reserve.

Mr. Scott: The combined strength of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its full and part-time reserves on 30 June 1985 was 12,661: 8,205 were members of the regular force, 2,643 full-time reserve officers and 1,813 part-time reserve officers.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 8 February at column *713* for the figures at the end of each year between 1969 and 1984.

Fair Employment Agency (Discrimination Cases)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of individual discrimination have been found by the Fair Employment Agency in 1985; and how many of these were against *(a)* Roman Catholics and *(b)* Protestants.

Dr. Boyson: Four up to 30 June. One against a Roman Catholic and three against Protestants.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the current year and in what circumstances; in what location the bullets were fired; and how many, if any, persons were injured as a result of the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Prison Population

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the size of the present prison population in Northern Ireland divided into terrorist type offenders and other offenders categorised by age and by sex in the following groups; under 18 years old, 18 to 25 years, 25 years to 30 years, 30 years to 40 years, 40 years to 50 years, 50 years to 60 years and over 60 years giving a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by percentage of the total prison population.

Mr. Scott: The latest date for which the information requested is available is 16 June 1985. On that date the total prison population—including unconvicted inmates and persons detained under sentence in young offenders' centres and under section 73 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968—was 2,138. The details requested in respect of sentenced inmates are set out in the following table.

Sentence length

	Age																
	Under 18 years		*18 years and under 25 years*		*25 years and under 30 years*		*30 years and under 40 years*		*40 years and under 50 years*		*50 years and under 60 years*		*60 years and over*		*Totals*		*Percentage of total sentenced population*
Up to 3 months																	
A	—	—	5	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	0·4
B	1	—	26	(2)	6	—	10	—	3	—	1	—	—	—	47	(2)	2·7
Over 3 months and up to 6 months																	
A	1	—	12	—	3	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	18	—	1·0
B	5	—	71	(1)	14	—	12	(1)	5	—	2	—	—	—	109	(2)	6·1

	Age															
	Under 18 years	*18 years and under 25 years*	*25 years and under 30 years*	*30 years and under 40 years*	*40 years and under 50 years*	*50 years and under 60 years*	*60 years and over*	*Totals*	*Percentage of total sentenced population*
Over 6 months and up to 12 months									
A	1 —	18 —	4 —	2 —	1 —	— —	— —	26 —	1·4
B	17 (1)	73 (1)	19 (3)	16 —	7 —	— —	1 —	133 (5)	7·6
Over 12 months and up to 18 months									
A	— —	18 —	6 (1)	1 (1)	2 —	— —	— —	27 (2)	1·6
B	— —	26 —	6 —	10 (1)	5 —	1 —	2 —	50 (1)	2·8
Over 18 months and up to 4 years									
A	5 —	91 —	30 —	15 —	4 —	— —	— —	145 —	8·0
B	2 —	64 —	18 —	18 —(1)	5 (1)	4 —	— —	111 (2)	6·2
Over 4 years and up to 8 years									
A	— —	85 (4)	56 —	48 (2)	14 —	— —	— —	203 (6)	11·6
B	— —	8 —	17 —	13 —	4 —	— —	— —	42 —	2·3
Over 8 years									
A	1 —	72 —	184 (9)	134 (3)	18 —	1 —	— —	410 (12)	23·3
B	— —	1 —	5 —	— —	1 —	2 —	1 —	10 —	0·6
Life									
A	1 —	22 (1)	180 (1)	195 —	32 (1)	4 —	2 —	436 (3)	24·3
B	— —	— —	— —	— —	1 —	— —	— —	1 —	0·1
Total									
A	9 —	323 (5)	465 (11)	395 (6)	74 (1)	5 —	2 —	1,273 (23)	71·6
B	25 (1)	269 (4)	85 (3)	79 (3)	31 (1)	10 —	4 —	503 (12)	28·4
Grand total	34 (1)	592 (9)	550 (14)	474 (9)	105 (2)	15 (—)	6 (—)	1,776 (35)	100·0

Notes

1. The figures in lines A relate to those serving sentences for scheduled offences and those in lines B to all other offences.
2. The figures without brackets relate to male inmates and those in brackets to female inmates.
3. The figures include those detained in Young Offenders Centres.
4. Person detained at Secretary of State's pleasure are included with life sentence figures.

Security Statistics

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the first six months of 1985 are now available together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the number of arrests so far in the current year concerning the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 *(a)* what was the yearly total of arrests made under the Act, *(b)* how many persons arrested under the Act were detained for the following periods (i) up to 12 hours, (ii) 12 to 24 hours, (iii) 24 to 36 hours, (iv) 36 to 48 hours, (v) 48 to 60 hours and (vi) 60 to 72 hours, indicating those numbers (1) not ultimately charged under the Act and released, (2) those charged under the Act and, (3) those charged with an offence but not under the Acts indicating which offences and (4) those charged under the Act but not initially detained under the Act;

(2) if he will state the current number of people who were detained so far in the current year under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and charged with scheduled offences under the Act and other Acts, separately; and with which offences they have been charged.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many formal complaints have been made about incidents of police use of plastic baton rounds so far in 1985; in how many cases the complaints have been upheld; and in how many cases disciplinary action has been taken against the officers involved.

Mr. Scott: One. This complaint is still under investigation.

Orange Demonstrations

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many arrests were made for disorderly or riotous behaviour at the venue of each Orange demonstration on *(a)* 12 July 1984 and *(b)* 12 July 1985 during the period from the start of the procession to the departure of those taking part from the point where the procession terminated; and in each case how many of those arrested were taking part in the demonstration.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the police operation to stop the parade through the Gortalowry estate in Cookstown on 28 June.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of policing the Orange procession through the Gortalowry estate in Cookstown on 12 July; what was the cost in 1984, and how many incidents there were which required police action on either occasion.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible

Civil Servants (Removal Expenses)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in each of the last three years, how many persons have received from the Department of Health and Social Services payments to assist them in their removal expenses to Northern Ireland from *(a)* the rest of the United Kingdom and *(b)* the Irish Republic; and if he will give, if currently available, the largest sum, the smallest sum and the average sum paid for such a purpose in each year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I regret that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Travelling People (Newry Town)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses in the Newry town area have had the tenancy awarded to travelling people; and if he will list the estates concerned and the number of tenancies in each estate.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, however I understand from the chairman that nine houses have been allocated as follows:

Number of tenancies awarded

Estate	*Number*
Fathom Park	2
Loanda Crescent	2
Parkhead Crescent	3
Mourneview Park	2

Mivan Construction Company, Crumlin

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much grant and subsidy has been paid from public funds to the Mivan Construction Company of Crumlin, County Antrim and its subsidiaries in each of the past three years; and what is the anticipated amount of such grant and subsidy in the current financial year.

Mr. Boyson: Grants paid in the past three years totalled £15,023:

	£
1982-83	548
1983-84	7,964
1984-85	6,511

It is estimated that in the current financial year £28,054 will be paid.

No known subsidiaries have received any assistance.

Potatoes

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the average retail price of potatoes in Northern Ireland in each of the last six weeks.

Dr. Boyson: The Department of Agriculture does not collect information which would enable the average weekly retail price of potatoes to be calculated.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the tonnage of potatoes imported into Northern Ireland for each of the last six weeks.

Dr. Boyson: The information for the three weeks ending 29 June is as follows:

Week ending	*Tonnes*
15 June 1985	2,005
22 June 1985	1,607
29 June 1985	2,539

These imports came in the main from Cyprus and Holland; some were re-exported to the Republic of Ireland.

Full information is not yet available for the first three weeks of July; however, there were no imports from Cyprus or Holland in that period.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the average price received by farmers in Northern Ireland in each of the last six weeks for potatoes.

Dr. Boyson: Average growers prices for home grown potatoes were as follows:

Week ending	*£ per tonne*
15 June 1985	20·14
22 June 1985	24·06
29 June 1985	No returns
6 July 1985	40·33
13 July 1985	35·53
20 July 1985	32·02

Prices up to the end of June relate to potatoes from the 1984 crop thereafter prices relate to the 1985 crop.

Grain Prices

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the average price of (i) whole barley, (ii) whole wheat and (iii) maize to Northern Ireland farmers.

Dr. Boyson: During 1984, the average retail prices were as follows:

	£ per tonne
(i) Whole barley	145·44
(ii) Whole wheat	147·67
(iii) Maize	190·08

Processions

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the processions that took place in Northern Ireland between 1 March 1985 and 30 April 1985 in respect of which the prescribed notice was not received by the police; if he will indicate in each case whether *(a)* masked men or *(b)* armed men were observed by the police or of whose presence the police have

photographic evidence; and if he will state in each case how many persons have been charged in connection with such a procession;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to those processions involving bands in connection with the local government elections in May which took place in the local government districts of Londonderry, Limavady, Coleraine, Magherafelt, Cookstown and Strabane and which necessitated a police presence and as to the total cost of policing each procession; and whether the prescribed notice was received by the police in each case;

(3) what representations he has received and from what sources requesting a ban on the Apprentice Boys' 12 August demonstration in Londonderry city; whether, in deciding whether to impose a ban on demonstrations of this type, he seeks the advice of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regarding the practicality of re-routing the procession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Fertilisers

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the tonnage of fertilisers for agricultural use imported into Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Dr. Boyson: It is not possible to provide this information.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the tonnage of fertilisers manufactured in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

Dr. Boyson: It is not possible to provide this information.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the average price of fertilisers for agricultural use in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	£ per tonne
1980	112·39
1981	116·94
1982	118·77
1983	121·69
1984	128·43

Grain Imports

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the tonnage of grain imported into Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

Dr. Boyson: It is not possible to provide this information. Estimates of net imports of grain are given in the annual statistical review of Northern Ireland Agriculture.

Animal Feedstuffs

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated difference in the price of animal feedstuffs between Northern Ireland and other regions of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Boyson: £6·48 more per tonne in 1984 in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain. (Information is not available on the price difference between Northern Ireland and other separate regions of the United Kingdom).

District Heating

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will instruct the Housing Executive to investigate ways of providing tenants who do not wish, or cannot afford, to use the district heating system, with an electric immersion heater.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1985, c. *45*]: I understand from the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the introduction of electric immersion heaters into a metered hot-water system would create practical difficulties. Moreover the voluntary disconnection of tenants from district heating systems on a wide scale would threaten the viability of the remaining schemes. The Housing Executive is however currently undertaking a programme of consultation with its tenants on the basis that its preferred option is the removal of district heating systems and their replacement with individual heating systems which may include electric immersion heaters.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

USSR (Human Rights)

14. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any new commitments relating to the implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki final act were given by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the recent conference on security and co-operation in Europe, in Ottawa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The meeting was unable to agree any conclusions or recommendations. Accordingly the Soviet Union gave no new human rights commitments. Its attitude at Ottawa gave no reason for hope that its policies were about to change for the better.

Stockholm Talks

15. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress at the Stockholm talks on confidence building measures.

Mr. Luce: In the sixth session, which ended on 5 July, we and our allies made every effort to persuade all participants to focus on the important measures proposed by the Western Alliance. These measures are designed to enhance confidence and build trust between all sides.

BBC External Services

16. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other eastern European countries about the jamming of the British Broadcasting Corporation external services.

57. **Mr. Bendall** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Soviet authorities concerning the jamming of British Broadcasting Corporation external services programmes to the Soviet Union and eastern bloc countries, against the principles of the Helsinki final act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We continue to take suitable opportunities to remind the Soviet Union of its commitments under the various international agreements which cover this issue, and my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) intends to raise this matter again with the Soviet authorities during his current visit to the USSR. No other east European country is currently jamming BBC services.

27. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will increase the funds available to the British Broadcasting Corporation external services to enable it to meet not only its current commitments but also to compete more favourably with other international broadcasting stations.

Mr. Renton: There has been a real increase of over 30 per cent. in the total grants-in-aid to the British Broadcasting Corporation external services since 1979. During this period broadcasting levels have risen from 711½ to 727½ hours per week and considerable improvements are being made to British Broadcasting Corporation audibility overseas under the £100 million programme agreed in 1981. Although in terms of broadcasting hours the British Broadcasting Corporation rank only fifth, the quality of British broadcasting output has won them an estimated 120 million listeners worldwide making the British Broadcasting Corporation the most popular overseas broadcasting service.

65. **Mr. Greville Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make compensation available to the British Broadcasting Corporation external services for losses incurred due to sterling imbalances earlier in the year.

Mr. Renton: Overseas expenditure of the BBC external services represented only about 6 per cent. of their total grants-in-aid in 1984-85. The effect of exchange rate movements on the total expenditure of the external services, which can result in gains as well as losses, is therefore relatively small. But this issue will remain under discussion.

Afghanistan

17. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Afghanistan.

Mr. Renton: We have no substantive dealings with the Karmal regime, which depends on an occupying army of over 115,000 Soviet Troops. We and our Community partners have repeatly condemned that occupation, which has brought untold suffering. Since 1980 we have given over £25 million in humanitarian aid for the 4 million Afghan refugees who have fled abroad.

72. **Mr. Richard Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps his Department has taken to publicise and protest against the continuing abuses of human rights in Afghanistan.

Mr. Renton: We take every opportunity to make clear our grave concern over the gross violations of human rights in Afghanistan, a situation clearly documented by the United Nations Special Rapporteur. That situation continues to deteriorate, with the evident Soviet determination to deploy massive forces without thought for the suffering of the local population.

Ottawa Conference (Human Rights)

19. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom delegation to the conference on co-operation and security in Europe in Ottawa raised the issue of the freedom of individuals to practise their chosen profession without being subjected to religious or racial discrimination.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This was indeed one of the points that was strongly pressed by the United Kingdom delegation with particular reference to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

36. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the proceedings and recent human rights conference at Ottawa indicating the progress made in the implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki final act in the Union of Soviet Social Republics.

Mr. Luce: The Meeting took place from 7 May to 17 June. We regret that it was unable to fulfil its mandate to produce conclusions and recommendations. However, United Kingdom representatives were able to make clear to the Soviet Union and other eastern European countries our concerns about their implementation of the Helsinki and Madrid human rights provisions.

Contadora Initiative

20. **Mr. George** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussion he has held with the Government of Mexico concerning the Contadora initiative.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed the Contadora initiative with the Mexican Foreign Minister on 11 June in London on the occasion of the state visit of the President of Mexico.

Soviet SS20 Missiles

21. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the consequences for arms control of recent new deployments of Soviet SS20 missiles.

43. **Mr. Patrick Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of recent increases in the deployment of Soviet SS20 missiles.

Mr. Luce: The new figure of 423 SS20 missiles shows continued deployment by the Russians in spite of the moratorium announced by Mr. Gorbachev in April, when the SS20 figure was 414. The deployment highlights the need for the Soviet Union to negotiate seriously to reach a balanced agreement at Geneva. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation maintains its decision to halt, reverse or modify its intermediate nuclear force deployments in accordance with the terms of a negotiated agreement.

Sudan

22. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current relations with the Sudan.

Mr. Luce: Our relations with Sudan are close and based on a long tradition of friendship. Her Majesty's ambassador in Khartoum enjoys good access to the Sudanese authorities and maintains a regular dialogue with them. We warmly support the efforts of the Sudanese Government to return Sudan to prosperity and democracy, and are making a major contribution to the relief of Sudan's drought and refugee problems.

Botswana

23. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to express to the South African Government the Government's view of the recent incursion of South African troops into Botswana.

Mr. Renton: We have repeatedly made clear to the South African Government our serious view of this indefensible attack. We have also joined separately with the Ten, the Commonwealth and the Security Council in strong public condemnation of it.

Central America

24. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the promotion of human rights in Central America.

Mr. Renton: We support all efforts to bring about an improvement in the human rights situation in the region. Central American Governments are well aware of our concern over human rights abuses.

76. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with representatives of the Organisation of American States regarding the situation in Central America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None.

International Airports (Sanctions)

25. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, when considering imposing sanctions against Beirut international airport, Her Majesty's Government will at the same time consider imposing such sanctions against Syria, Iran and Libya.

Mr. Luce: We are considering, with other countries, how best to ensure that Beirut airport is not again used as a safe haven by hijackers. Should security standards at other airports fall below adequate levels, we shall be ready to take appropriate action with the rest of the international community.

29. **Mr. Campbell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to discuss with his European Economic Community partners concrete measures against terrorism, including state sponsored terrorism; and if he will seek their agreement to take joint action in respect of Beirut airport.

Mr. Renton: The Ten member countries of the European Community adopted a set of measures on terrorism and abuse of diplomatic immunity last year. The United Kingdom proposed the drawing up of these measures with the aim of combatting state sponsored terrorism. We circulated proposals at the Milan Council to counter terrorism against aircraft. These include suggestions for joint action by the Ten regarding Beirut International Airport.

USSR (Strategic Defence)

26. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' research into strategic defence is being taken into consideration in current disarmament negotiations.

Mr. Luce: Yes Soviet space and Ballistic Missile defence programmes are being fully taken into account at the negotiations in Geneva on nuclear and space arms. As my right hon. Friend, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. J. Stanley) told my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 11 July, Soviet activities in this field are extensive and long established.

European Community (Structure)

28. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with European Community Foreign Ministers concerning the preparations for the forthcoming intergovernmental conference on the future structure of the Community.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I discussed the issues raised by the intergovernmental conference at separate meetings on 21 July with the Foreign Ministers of the Federal Republic of Germany and Luxembourg and with other European Community Foreign Ministers in the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 July.

European Community (Council of Ministers)

30. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his European Economic Community counterparts in the Council of Ministers to discuss the consequences of the discussions held at the recent Milan summit meeting of the European Council.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Follow-up to the Milan European Council was discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 and 23 July, which I attended.

49. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on further progress towards majority voting in the Council of Ministers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is generally accepted that if decisions are not to be unduly delayed in the enlarged Community greater use will need to be made of the voting provisions of the European Community treaty. This will be one of the issues to be discussed at the proposed inter-governmental conference.

Famine

31. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has proposed any new initiatives in the United Nations to seek to prevent further outbreaks of mass famine in the Third world.

Mr. Renton: We have urged the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to increase its programme of aid to rehabilitate agriculture in Africa, and called on the Agency to sponsor more research into drought-resistant traditional crops, for example sorghum and millet, and into making them more acceptable to consumers. We have taken the initiative in supporting actions within the United Nations system to improve the international response to the long-term problems of food shortages, in particular those relating to up-grading the monitoring activities of FAO and to enhancing co-ordination between agencies.

Strategic Defence Initiative

32. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the Government's response to the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from many quarters. Most of these have been in support of the Government's policy towards the Strategic Defence Initiative, which remains as set out in the four points agreed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David in December 1984.

Vice-President George Bush

33. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's recent discussions with Vice-President George Bush.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Vice-President Bush visited London from 2 to 3 July. His purpose was to discuss follow-up to the Bonn Economic Summit and the Lisbon meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, as well as action to combat international terrorism. His meeting with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which I attended, concentrated on the terrorism issue and led to the joint communique which was issued after the meeting.

Belize

34. **Mr. Mark Robinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Belizean relations in the light of the forthcoming visit of the Prime Minister of Belize.

Mr. Renton: We are delighted that Mr. Esquivel felt able to accept my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's invitation to visit the United Kingdom. His visit will provide an opportunity to further the already close and warm relations which have traditionally existed between our two countries.

Terrorism

35. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the light of the hijacking of the Trans World Airlines airliner, Her Majesty's Government will ask the Soviet Union to co-operate in combating terrorism.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 22 July, we believe the Soviet Union has a role to play in combating international terrorism and we will take every suitable opportunity to join with others in the common fight against terrorism.

Nicaragua

38. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Nicaragua of the damage done to the economy by the attacks of the Contra force.

Mr. Renton: Reports from Her Majesty's ambassadors in Central America confirm that the problems of the region can only be solved by a comprehensive negotiated settlement of regional tensions.

Mozambique

40. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the prospects for stability in Mozambique.

Mr. Renton: Despite the Nkomati Accord the Mozambique Government is still faced by serious security problems. The prospects of stability depend on a number of factors, including the degree of cooperation afforded by the international community. The assistance given by us and other Western Governments should hasten the restoration of peace in Mozambique to the benefit of the people of that country, its Commonwealth neighbours and the region as a whole.

Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference

41. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report progress on Her Majesty's Government's preparations for the forthcoming non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Luce: We are working constructively for a positive outcome to the review conference. Our preparations have included full and active participation in the three sessions of the preparatory committee, and close and continuing consultation with the Governments of other depositary states, the United States and the USSR. We are also actively lobbying non-parties to the treaty in search of increased membership to strengthen it further. In the last year nine states have adhered.

As I said in my speech to the House during the adjournment debate on 6 June, at columns 545-48, we think that, if the review conference is to strengthen this vital arms control agreement, it must conduct its review in a balanced and sensible manner. We ourselves will shortly be providing to other parties to the treaty a United Kingdom report about the implementation of the treaty to date.

Cyprus

42. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek the assistance of the United States Government to persuade Turkey to conclude an agreement setting up the Federal Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Renton: We remain in close touch with the United States Government, which shares our concern about the situation in Cyprus. Like us, they actively support the United Nations Secretary-General's current initiative.

Brazil

44. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Brazil.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I paid an official visit to Brazil from 8 to 10 July. I had two sessions of talks with the Foreign Minister Dr. Setubal covering bilateral relations, including the opportunities for increasing trade, international questions and Brazil's economic position. I also called on President Sarney, the Finance Minister and the President of Central Bank and paid short visits to Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo. I met groups of businessmen in both cities, and addressed the British Chamber of Commerce in Sao Paolo. Relations between the United Kingdom and Brazil are excellent: I found everywhere on my visit a wish to develop them still further.

Falkland Islands

45. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to pay an official visit to the Falkland Islands.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no present plans to do so.

Costa Rica (United States Advisers)

46. **Mr. Faulds** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any recent discussions with the United States Government within the framework of the Contadora initiative concerning its supply of military advisers to Costa Rica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Neither the United Kingdom nor the United States is a direct participant in the Contadora process.

Lebanon

47. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the Lebanon.

Mr. Luce: We support the restoration of the authority and sovereignty of the Lebanese Government and commend all efforts to improve security and national reconciliation. We have regular contacts with leading members of the Government and of the different communities.

77. **Mr. Robert C. Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in Lebanon.

Mr. Luce: We deplore the continuing violence in Lebanon. A lasting improvement in security requires the cooperation and agreement of all the Lebanese communities.

Soviet Foreign Minister

48. **Mr. Key** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether an invitation to visit London has been extended to the new Soviet Foreign Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes.

52. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will meet the new Foreign Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

62. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the new Foreign Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expect to meet Mr. Shevardnadze in Helsinki on 1 August.

European Community (Intergovernmental Conference)

50. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the intergovernmental conference arising from the majority vote at Milan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The intergovernmental conference will have its first meeting in Luxembourg on 9 September. It will take place at Foreign Minister level.

79. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Minister from his Department will attend the EEC intergovernmental conference on amendments to the treaty of Rome.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I plan to do so.

Argentina

51. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Argentina.

60. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the prospects for Anglo-Argentine relations in the light of Her Majesty's Government's decision to re-open trade with Argentina.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison).

56. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now seek to renew diplomatic relations with Argentina.

71. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now seek to renew diplomatic relations with Argentina.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have taken a number of initiatives with the objective of restoring more normal relations with Argentina. Argentina has so far failed to

respond constructively. We believe that practical measures of benefit to both sides offer the best way of improving relations.

63. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to when normal trading and diplomatic relations will be restored between the United Kingdom and the Argentine.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) and to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon).

Lebanon (Terrorist Activity)

53. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Syria about terrorist activities in the Lebanon.

Mr. Luce: The Syrian Government is fully aware of our views about acts of terrorism wherever committed. We continue to urge all those who have influence in Lebanon to do everything possible to combat terrorist activities there.

Spain (Extradition Treaty)

54. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet concluded an extradition treaty with Spain.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 22 July 1985.

Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order

55. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many individuals have been granted awards under the Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982.

Mr. Renton: There were 2,204 claims received by the Foreign Compensation Commission under the Foreign Compensation (Czechoslovakia) Order 1982. The commission has so far reviewed 443 of these claims and granted awards in 133 cases.

Chile

58. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions during the last year Her Majesty's Government have raised at the United Nations the subject of human rights in Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Chile's human rights record is a regular item on the agenda of a number of United Nations bodies including the General Assembly, the Commission on human Rights and the Economic and Social Council. We participate fully in such discussions.

European Union (Treaty)

59. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a White Paper setting out the implications for the United Kingdom of the proposals to establish a treaty on European union which are now to be considered by a special meeting of the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The intergovernmental conference has been called "for the purpose of determining by common accord the amendments to be made to the European Economic Community treaty". We shall consider proposals for change carefully. Our attitude will depend on whether they help achieve the practical changes necessary to improve the way the Community works. I have no plans to publish a White Paper.

President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev (Meeting)

61. **Mr. Bright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the likely results of the planned meeting in Geneva between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev.

66. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the prospects for East-West relations in the light of the forthcoming meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We welcome the prospect of a meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev. Contact at the highest level can make a valuable contribution to the process of creating better understanding and greater confidence between East and West, and to generating a better political atmosphere for arms control negotiations, in Geneva and elsewhere.

Test Ban Treaty

64. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest proposals for progress on a comprehensive test ban treaty before the third review conference of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Luce: Our position on a comprehensive test ban was explained in my speech in the adjournment debate on 7 June at columns 619-23. We firmly believe that progress on negotiation of such a treaty cannot be made until key technical problems, including those of verification and compliance, are resolved. We believe these should be discussed by the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, where we tabled on 12 July a new paper on seismic monitoring of a comprehensive test ban.

Arms Control

67. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with representatives of the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the current prospects for arms control.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend discusses the prospects for arms control regularly with colleagues in other European allied countries, both bilaterally and in the wider fora provided by the North Atlantic Council, the Western European Union and European Political Cooperation. The last Ministerial meeting of the North

Atlantic Council, on 6 and 7 June, provided the occasion for a particularly thorough exchange of views with both his European and North American colleagues.

Cypriot Refugees

68. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed with the Secretary General of the United Nations the problem of Cypriot refugees.

Mr. Renton: We remain in close and frequent contact with the United Nations Secretary-General over the Cyprus problem. A settlement of it would necessarily deal with the difficult and distressing problem of refugees.

Indonesia

69. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to pay an official visit to Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so. As I told the hon. Member on the 17 April (columns *204-5*) and 26 June (column *418*) the United Kingdom enjoys good relations with Indonesia. These were strengthened by the visit to Indonesia in April 1985 by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the visit to London this month by two Indonesian Ministers, General Surono and Dr. Habibie.

Persian Gulf (Attacks on Ships)

70. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are currently being taken by Her Majesty's Government in the United Nations to seek to ensure that Iran and Iraq cease their attacks on ships in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he is having with the United Nations and in the international community about attacks by Iraq and Iran on shipping in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Luce: We remain in close contact with interested parties, both at the United Nations in New York and elsewhere, concerning all aspects of the tragic and wasteful conflict between Iran and Iraq, including attacks on shipping in the gulf. We deplore such attacks and fully supported Security Council Resolution 552 which stressed the importance of freedom of navigation in international waters.

Nicaragua and Chile

73. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussion he has had with the United States Secretary of State concerning policy towards Nicaragua and Chile.

Mr. Renton: We remain in close touch with the US Administration at all levels over issues of common concern. The US Government is well aware of our views on Nicaragua and Chile.

Nicaragua

74. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussion he has had with the United States Government within the framework of the Contadora initiative about a resolution of the conflict in Nicaragua.

Mr. Renton: The Contadora Group, comprising Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, is attempting to negotiate a comprehensive settlement of regional problems with the five Central American states of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. No other states participate in their discussions.

Zimbabwe

75. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the Government of Zimbabwe about the statement by the Prime Minister that the country intends to break the terms of the Lancaster House Agreement; if Her Majesty's Government have received any representations thereon; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. I think my hon. Friend's interpretation of Mr. Mugabe's reported remarks goes too far. We naturally have a close interest in Zimbabwe's development, and this is fully reflected in our contacts with the authorities there, but it was clearly understood at the Lancaster House conference that the operation of the Zimbabwean constitution would be a matter for the Zimbabwean Government and courts. That constitution established Zimbabwe as an independent country and gave us no right to interfere in its internal affairs.

COMECON (Mutual Co-operation)

78. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given by the Council of Ministers of the European Economic Community to the communication received from COMECON concerning mutual co-operation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Milan European Council on 28-29 June held an exchange of views on the recent letter from the council for Mutual Economic Assistance to the Commission, which proposed the resumption of mutual relations. The European Council noted that an exploratory mandate had been given to the Commission, and considered that the results of these contacts should now be awaited.

Middle East.

18. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the progress in implementing proposals for peace in the middle east made separately by King Hussein and Prime Minister Peres.

37. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in securing agreement on King Hussein's middle east peace initiative

39. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of the Arab states bordering on Israel about the prospects for peace in the region.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave earlier to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short).

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent developments there have been towards peace in the middle east.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had a useful discussion on 19 July with King Hussein of Jordan about his courageous initiative to move towards negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute. In Lebanon tension continues in the Southern border area, but a new security plan is being implemented with the participation of Syrian observers in West Beirut. There have been no recent moves towards a solution of the tragic and wasteful conflict in the Gulf, but we support the continuing efforts of the United Nations Secretary General to reach a settlement.

Arms Control

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives the Government have planned in arms control and disarmament.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 27 June at column *439*. We will continue to work with our allies to further the objectives of balanced, verifiable arms control and disarmament.

Salvadorean Military Personnel (Training)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many letters and representations Her Majesty's Government have received on the subject of training in Britain for Salvadorean military officers.

Mr. Renton: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has received about 700 letters and representations on this subject.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government propose to find out whether Salvadorean military personnel sent for training in Britain have been involved in human rights violations.

Mr. Renton: I have nothing to add to the answer given on 28 March by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Lee) to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds).

British Council

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received the British Council's annual report for 1984-85; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend's letter of acknowledgement to Sir David Orr expressed congratulations to all council staff on their achievements over the year.

General Belgrano

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he now intends to take as a result of the Foreign Affairs Committee report on the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the General Belgrano on 1-2 May 1982.

Mr. Renton: We will respond in the normal way to this report. It would be wrong to anticipate that reply. The House will meanwhile be aware that the Report concludes that the attack on the General Belgrano was authorised for legitimate military reasons.

GCHQ

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has conveniently available statistics for the number of former Government communications headquarters' employees doing contract work for Government communications headquarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is not our practice to give details of the operations of intelligence and security agencies.

Nicaragua

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with other European Economic Community countries concerning a European military presence in Nicaragua; whether he would support such a presence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None. The San Jose conference last September agreed on the need for adequate verification and control of a Contadora Act. This would require a peacekeeping force in the region but this matter has not been raised with us by the Central American participants.

Disarmament

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the sixth session of the conference on confidence and security-building measures and disarmament in Europe; and what response was made to the Soviet draft treaty on the non-use of force tabled at the fifth session on 29 January.

Mr. Luce: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) earlier today, we and our allies worked during the sixth session to keep attention focused on the practical measures contained in our package. As for a treaty on the non-use of force, we have consistently said that we are willing to consider an appropriate reaffirmation of that principle in the context of agreement on practical confidence and security-building measures.

Non-proliferation Treaty (Review Conference)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the United Kingdom ministerial representation at the non-proliferation treaty review conference in Geneva in September; and whether the United Kingdom will be submitting any substantive proposals to that conference.

Mr. Luce: I shall lead our delegation to the conference, which I expect to address on 29 August. We

shall urge the parties to reaffirm the success of the non-proliferation treaty in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and its consequent importance to the security of all states. We shall also stress our view that the treaty should be reviewed in a balanced and constructive manner and that it would be strengthened further if membership were universal.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by the Turbanski ad hoc committee, and its three working groups, at the conference on disarmament; and what part has been played by United Kingdom negotiators in the discussions.

Mr. Luce: The United Kingdom delegation to the Conference on Disarmament is participating actively in the work of the ad hoc committee on chemical weapons chaired by Ambassador Turbanski. Progress has not been as rapid as we should like. But encouraging consensus seems to be emerging on some issues in the working group: in particular on definitions of certain key chemical precursors, initial declaration of chemical weapons stocks and the prohibition of use.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response there has been at the conference on disarmament in Geneva to working paper CD/575, tabled by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) on 12 March, relating to inspection of civilian chemical plants; and what action has been taken on papers CD/353 and CD/431, previously tabled by United Kingdom Ministers.

Mr. Luce: The details of CD/575 are still being considered, although most responses have been generally favourable. There are already signs that some delegations intend to build on this paper. CD/575 rested heavily on the encouraging response to CD/353 which is therefore now substantially overtaken. CD/431 remains on the table at the Conference on Disarmament. We are still waiting for a constructive Soviet response to the vital issue of challenge inspection.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the 36th round of mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna.

Mr. Luce: There is no significant progress to report from the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna. During the 36th round, which ended on 11 July, we together with our allies, continued our probing of Eastern positions related to their proposal of 14 February.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the western reponse to the eastern bloc proposals tabled on 14 February at the 35th round of the mutual and balanced force reduction talks in Vienna.

Mr. Luce: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 26 June at column *411*, we are continuing to study carefully the Eastern proposal of 14 February, the East having rejected our previous efforts to break the longstanding deadlock in the talks.

Israeli Exports

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position regarding the negotiations within the European Community relating to Israeli agricultural exports to Europe after the accession of Spain to the Community.

Mr. Luce: Following the Foreign Affairs Council declaration of 30 March on the European Community's Mediterranean policy, the Commission have recently made proposals on maintaining agricultural trade access for the Community's Mediterranean partners after enlargement. These proposals have now to be considered within the Community before the Council can decide on a mandate for negotiations. We hope the process will be complete in time for the Community to begin negotiations with the Mediterranean partners before the end of the year.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been made by the Warsaw pact powers to the working documents tabled in working groups A and B at the fifth session of the Stockholm conference on confidence and security-building measures.

Mr. Luce: During the fifth session, we and our allies circulated six working documents amplifying our original proposals, as part of our effort to keep such practical measures at the heart of the conference's discussions. To that end we were successful, though the Warsaw Pact has yet to show a willingness to move towards agreement on that basis.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent discussions with European Economic Community Foreign Ministers concerning relations with central America.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I last discussed this subject with my colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 July. We dealt in particular with the negotiating mandate for the European Community/Central America cooperation agreement.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, at the latest available date, what is his best estimate of the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women receiving supplementary benefit as unemployed in the following age bands: 16 to 17, 18 to 20, 21 to 24, and 25 to 59 years, respectively; and for each age group *(a)* how many had a dependent partner (i) and dependent children and (ii) without dependent children and *(b)* how many did not have a dependent partner and were paid benefit (y) as a single householder and (z) as a single non-householder, or the nearest available figures.

Mr. Whitney: The provisional information for December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, is as follows:

(thousands)

	(a) Men				(b) Women			
	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-59	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-59
Receiving benefit as unemployed	94	226	224	860	68	146	62	136
(a) (i) with dependent partner and children	1	11	51	393	*	*	*	*
(ii) with dependent partner without dependent children	1	7	17	117	*	*	*	*
(b) (y) Without dependent partner and paid benefit as a householder†‡	2	18	38	187	3	18	19	100
(z) Without dependent partner and paid benefit as a non-householder‡	87	181	107	121	62	124	41	32

* Less than 500.
† Includes joint householders.
‡ Includes single parents signing on as unemployed.
Note: The figures shown from *(a)*(i) to *(b)*(z) do not add up to the number shown as receiving benefit as unemployed because claimants without a partner who are paid benefit as boarders etc. are excluded.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry 1983.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the breakdown from 1980 to the latest available date for the category of supplementary benefit claimants classified as living in local authority part III accommodation and other comparable homes into those who were *(a)* in local authority part III accommodation and *(b)* comparable homes for (i) all claimants and (ii) claimants classified as being sick and disabled.

Mr. Whitney: The reply is as follows:

(thousands)

	Number of claimants in local authority Part III accommodation*		Number of claimants in comparable homes†	
	All claimants	Sick and disabled‡	All claimants	Sick and disabled‡
December 1980	39	14	13	1
December 1981	39	17	13	1
December 1982	34	17	16	2
December 1983 (provisional)	30	15	26	2

* The figures given include claimants both in homes owned and run by local authorities and in private and voluntary homes who are sponsored by local authorities; separate figures for the two types of homes are not available.
† The figures given include claimants in both residential care homes and nursing homes; separate figures for the two types of homes are not available.
‡ People claiming supplementary benefit because of sickness and disability.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit claimants were classified as being sick and disabled from 1983 until the latest available date; and of these how many were (i) receiving an additional requirement of some kind, (ii) in receipt of a contributory benefit, (iii) in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit, (iv) living in local authority part III accommodation or other comparable homes and (v) had been in receipt of supplementary benefit for less than six months.

Mr. Newton: Provisional information for December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, is as follows:

*Number of supplementary benefit claimants classified as being sick and disabled**

	Thousands
Total number	242
(i) receiving an additional requirement	150
(ii) in receipt of a contributory benefit†	76
(iii) In receipt of long-term rate of supplementary benefit	169
(iv) living in local authority Part III accommodation or other comparable homes‡	17
(v) in receipt of supplementary benefit for less than 6 months	49

* People claiming supplementary benefit because of sickness and disablement.
† Sickness and invalidity benefit.
‡ Includes claimants in private and voluntary nursing homes; separate figures for claimants in residential care homes and claimants in nursing homes are not available.
Source: "Annual Statistical Enquiry 1983".

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many supplementary benefit claimants in 1983 and in each subsequent year were receiving amounts of additional requirements that were *(a)* more than £3·50 a week, *(b)* more than £5·00 a week, *(c)* more than £7·00 a week and *(d)* more than £10·00 a week.

Mr. Whitney: Provisional estimates for December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, are as follows:

	Number (thousands)
(a) more than £3·50 a week	1,210
(b) more than £5·00 a week	605
(c) more than £7·00 a week	117
(d) more than £10·00 a week	17

NB: The amounts are those included for additional requirements in the assessment of supplementary benefit. The amount of additional requirements paid could be less than the figures shown because of the effect of the available scale margin for those on the long-term rate of benefit and because of claimants' other income.
Source: "Annual Statistical Enquiry 1983".

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average disregard for work expenses for people working and claiming supplementary benefit in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the implications for the interaction between the payment of family credit and housing benefit, with reference to the number of weeks' pay slips on which housing benefit applications will be based.

Mr. Newton: We shall consider the length of the period over which average earnings will normally be estimated for housing benefit once the main structure is settled. The arrangements for family credit will be one of the factors we shall take into account.

Unemployment (Bonus Payment)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the cost of paying unemployed persons a bonus of four weeks' benefit for each complete year of unemployment in respect of up to three complete years' unemployment and the number of persons in each year group.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table. The number of unemployed persons represents those who were in receipt of unemployment or supplementary benefit in Great Britain in November 1984, the latest date for which figures are available.

Duration of Unemployment	*Unemployed Persons*	*Number of Weeks bonus per person*	*Cost £ million*
Between 1 and 2 years	425,100	4	65·4
Between 2 and 3 years	244,800	8	75·3
Over 3 years	346,400	12	159·8
TOTAL	1,016,300		300·5

Family Income

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish estimates for 1985 of the information on family incomes provided in the reply of 3 July to the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, (Mr. Forman) *Official Report*, columns *177-78*.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible at present to make reliable estimates for any year later than 1981.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average time taken to process an application for family income supplement.

Mr. Whitney: Three weeks.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Galley: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of dental treatments, carried out by the general dental service and examined by the dental reference service of his Department, were found to be satisfactory for the latest year for which figures are available; what is his estimate of the percentage of treatment in the general dental service which is unnecessary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1984 93·3 per cent. of dental treatments examined by our Department's Dental Reference Service were found to be wholly or mainly satisfactory. In a further 5 per cent. of cases not all the treatments were unsatisfactory. These figures almost certainly understate the extent of satisfactory treatment in the General Dental Service as a whole since examinations are not made entirely on a random basis.

We are not able at present to estimate accurately the percentage of treatment which is unnecessary but the committee of inquiry we have established is expected to report their findings on this question in the near future.

General Dental Council (Prosecutions)

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prosecutions initiated by the General Dental Council have taken place in each of the past five years in respect of the supply of dentures direct to members of the public by dental technicians.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This is the responsibility of the General Dental Council and not of Ministers. I understand that the numbers of prosecutions were as follows:

	Number
1980	1
1981	2
1982	5
1983	2
1984	6

Mucolytics

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations his Department has had from the National Deaf Children's Society about prescribing mucolytic drugs under the National Health Service; if there is any action he is taking; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if there is any action he has taken to restore mucodyne as a prescribable drug under the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received a number of letters about the exclusion of oral mucolytics from National Health Service prescription including two from the National Deaf Children's Society. We asked the recently established Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs to consider this group of drugs, which includes mucodyne, at their first meetings. They began their consideration of these drugs yesterday but have not yet reached their conclusions.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the non-inclusion of mucodyne on the restricted list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received a number of letters and other representations about the drug mucodyne and other oral mucolytics. The recently established Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs is now considering submissions from the manufacturers of these drugs as a matter of priority.

Open University

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give urgent consideration to making funds available to the Open University as a notional mark-up on the fees paid by disabled students in a similar way to that in which the extra costs of students in prisons are met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I recognise that the Open University provides a valuable service for disabled students, but it would not be appropriate to use the Department's funds for

educational purposes in the way the hon. Member suggests. The Department of Education and Science awards the Open University a block grant which is intended to provide for the university's costs, including those incurred in connection with disabled students.

Disabled People

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether a family with more than one disabled child will be eligible for a disabled child's premium for second and subsequent children as well as a disabled child's addition for the first child;

(2) whether people who are receiving the disability premium on income support because they receive mobility allowance will retain the premium even when their mobility allowance is withdrawn after they reach 75 years;

(3) whether blindness will act as a qualifying condition for a disabled child's premium in the new income support scheme;

(4) whether *(a)* the Government intend to introduce a premium for those caring for disabled people in the new income support scheme, *(b)* such a premium would be available to partners of the claimant who are carers and *(c)* whether it would be paid on top of any other disability premium being received by the assessment unit;

(5) whether age-related premiums will be available in the income support scheme where either the claimant or the claimant's partner meets the age condition specified;

(6) when he expects to be able to reply to a letter from the Disability Alliance containing a series of questions about the proposed income support scheme; and if he will publish his reply in the *Official Report*;

(7) whether the qualifying conditions for the disability premiums under the proposed income support scheme are to be the same for *(a)* a disabled claimant of whatever age, *(b)* a disabled partner of a claimant of whatever age and *(c)* a disabled child;

(8) whether a person who *(a)* becomes blind after the age of 60 years or *(b)* who is blind and first claims income support after the age of 60 years will be eligible for the higher pensioner premium.

Mr. Newton: My letter to Disability Alliance of 19 July covers the points raised by the hon. Member. The text is as follows:

Thank you for your "open letter" of 14 June about the social security review in relation to disabled people. While I found it disappointing that the briefing paper which accompanied it made no attempt at a serious and balanced assessment of the proposals, and indeed does not even mention the fact that the disablement premium would be payable six months sooner than the present long-term scale rate, the questions you posed are a helpful contribution to the process of discussion on which we are now embarked.

Some of your questions relate to detailed points which are precisely the kind of issues on which we will welcome views during the consultation period. In other cases, the implication of your questions appear to show some difficulties over matters that we thought we have made clear in the Green Paper. Consequently, I think the most helpful approach would be to give a fuller version of the relevant arrangements envisaged in the Green Paper in order to clarify our thinking. In doing so, I would like to emphasise that, both on these points and all the others you raise, we shall welcome your own comments (to the extent that they are not already implicit in the way you have phrased the questions themselves). I should mention, though, that your comments on the proposed capital rule for housing benefit appear to overlook the fact that investment income will be ignored, whereas it is at present taken into account.

Each person would receive a personal allowance which would vary according to whether he or she is aged under 25 or 25 and above. The dividing point is the 25th birthday. There would be separate rates for couples above and below 25—where either partner was 25 or more, the over 25 rate would be paid. Any claimant with a dependent child or children would also receive a flat rate family premium; this would be payable in addition to the age-related amounts payable in respect of each child which would continue (your briefing paper does not make this clear).

Any claimant satisfying the relevant qualifying conditions would receive a client group premium. The qualifying conditions for the disablement premium would be for either partner to be in receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance, invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance or for the claimant to be exempt from the requirement to be available for work on the grounds of incapacity for 28 weeks. The qualifying conditions for the premium for pensioners is for either partner to have reached the age of 60. However, there would be a higher premium for pensioners payable where either partner has reached the age of 80 or is in receipt of attendance allowance, mobility allowance or invalidity pension; it would also be payable to those who were already receiving the disablement premium when they reached age 60. All lone parents over the age of 18 would be eligible for the rate of personal allowance payable to those age 25 and above. Lone parents would also qualify for a specific client group premium, as well as their receipt of family premium (by definition). Finally, if the family contains a child in receipt of mobility allowance or attendance allowance, then a double family premium would be payable.

The premiums would be flat rate and would not vary according to a person's age or other circumstances. If someone has underlying eligibility for two client group premiums, then only one — the higher — would be paid. There would be separate rates of the client group premiums for single and married claimants — we have in mind that the distinction would be related to marital status rather than married couples on the basis that, in this context, needs overlap. Just as the family premium itself would be a flat rate payment regardless of the number of children so we envisage that only one double family premium would be payable in respect of each family.

So, to take your example a lone parent would be entitled to the 25 plus rate of personal allowance, the family premium, and one only of the lone parent or disablement or pensioners premiums.

Blindness would be a qualification for the disablement premium in exactly the same way as receipt of one of the benefits listed above. Thus, a blind person would be eligible for the disablement premium even if he or she was capable of work, a blind partner would bring entitlement to the premium, and a person would gain entitlement to the higher pensioner premium where the onset of blindness was after the age of 60. A dependent child who was blind would attract the double family premium, regardless of whether he or she received attendance allowance or mobility allowance. We have not reached a final decision on whether the qualifying condition for the disablement premium on grounds of blindness would be any different from that for the additional requirement for blindness. As you say any new arrangements would need to be operable throughout Great Britain.

There are no proposals in the Green Paper to increase the age of entitlement to income support. As to the structure of support for children, we have invited comment in particular on the current age bands, floating an alternative to the present structure. We shall examine this further in the light of the comments we receive.

I think it is clear that there would be no separate provision in the structure of income support for any residual housing costs such as charges for emptying septic tanks or the cost of repairs and insurance. Some of the other areas you list, for example payment to co-owners and crown tenants, we shall have to consider further to decide whether any of them might be better catered for under housing benefit than income support. Similarly a separate "rent addition" does not fit within the structure of income support as we envisage it and we shall consider this as we consider the wider implications of our arrangements for the system of non-dependant deductions.

On resources, the increased earnings disregard of £15 we have in mind for people receiving the disability premium would apply to the couple as a whole. It will apply either to the earnings of a single person or to the sum of the earnings of a couple in the

relatively infrequent circumstances where both partners work. The Green paper seems to me clear enough on our proposals on the treatment of work expenses. We shall be considering the treatment of other forms of income, such as from boarders and child minding, in examining the detail of current rules as we work up the new scheme. Similarly, we shall have to look at the treatment of particular types of capital.

We will be giving further consideration to the position of carers and shall be interested to have views on the treatment of this group within the sort of structure we are aiming at. Nor have we yet formed a view on such details as the effect on claimants of changes to their benefit entitlement in 1989 or the question of inheritance of certain entitlement.

The extension of the work exclusion rule to circumstances where either claimant is in work tidies up an anomaly that has existed since the introduction of equal treatment. In a benefit which is intended for people not in work and where the rules now allow either of a partnership to claim benefit,, then it is equally logical to apply the basic exclusion of those in work where either partner is in employment.

On the estimate of 50,000 long-term sick and disabled claimants not receiving an additional requirement, I refer you to table 34.41 of the published social security statistics for 1983. You will have noted our recent proposal to extend a heating addition automatically to sick and disabled householders on the long-term rate. So far as transitional protection is concerned, for those on supplementary benefit, we would ensure that, at the time of the change, income support payments make up regular cash income to at least the same level as supplementary benefit did before.

I hope this clarification is helpful. We shall of course look forward to receiving your considered and constructive comments on the Green Paper.

Michelle Bartlett

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up an inquiry into the case of Michelle Bartlett who was in the care of the Social Services Department of the London borough of Wandsworth at the children's home, Wilna Road, Wandsworth.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mobility Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of *(a)* abolishing the upper and lower age restrictions for the receipt of mobility allowance, *(b)* abolishing just the upper age restriction for the receipt of mobility allowance in 1990 and 1995 and *(c)* abolishing the upper age restriction for applications for mobility allowance; and how many extra people would receive mobility allowance in each of these cases.

Mr. Newton: It has been estimated that removing the age limits for mobility allowance altogether would cost some £340 million a year. This estimate is now being updated and I shall write to the hon. Member when the information requested is available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently in receipt of mobility allowance in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not available.

War Widow Pensioners

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if there has been a review of the position of war widow pensioners; if any new proposals are envisaged by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Whilst the position of war widow pensioners has not been the subject of any special review, their position is continually kept under consideration. As a result, last November, for example, we made substantial real improvements in the age allowances payable with war widows' pensions.

Amputees (Chiropody Treatment)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now review the provision of chiropody treatment on the National Health Service for amputees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Handicapped people, including amputees, are already recognised as one of the priority groups for receiving National Health Service chiropody treatment.

Motability (Amputees)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now take steps to extend the provision of automatic gear boxes through Motability for all leg amputees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: For war pensioners who obtain a car through Motability, the Department make grants for any adaptations, including the provision of an automatic gear-box, that are necessary to enable the pensioner to drive. The circumstances in which war pensioners, including leg amputees, can qualify for an automatic gear-box will be extended later this year. All war pensioners who are unable to use a foot clutch will be regarded as satisfying the criteria for an automatic gear-box. This will include all left-leg amputees and those right-leg amputees who are unable to operate a manual gear change.

Amputees (Phantom Pains)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconsider his decision regarding the availability on the National Health Service of Frisium, Sulphadine and Rivotril medication for treating phantom pains for amputees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I assume the hon. Member is referring to frisium, solpadeine and rivotril. Rivotril is already prescribable under the National Health Service. The advisory committee on NHS drugs will be free to reconsider at any time the need for the other drugs mentioned, either on its own initiative or in response to representations from doctors or the pharmaceutical industry. I understand that, as a result of such representations, the advisory committee is likely to look at frisium at an early stage. We have not received any formal representations in respect of solpadeine.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for exemptions from the new board and lodging regulations are waiting to be processed in Portsmouth.

Mr. Ray Whitney: There are currently four cases in the Portsmouth local area for which consideration is being given to exemption from the time limits on payment as a boarder.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many exemptions have been given to the new board and lodging regulations in Portsmouth;

(2) how many people in Portsmouth were receiving board and lodging allowances at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the analyses of board and lodging in all local offices including Portsmouth, following the 29 April changes, have not yet been completed. Prior to this date, information on the number of supplementary benefit claimants receiving board and lodging allowances was not available separately.

Mr. Tony Loyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to include refugees as a group exempted from the board and lodgings regulations.

Mr. Whitney: Refugees are able to qualify for exemption from the time limits for payments as a boarder under the present rules. We are however looking urgently at the operation of exemptions to see whether any changes are necessary with reference to refugees.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the current cost of extending invalid care allowance to *(a)* married and cohabiting women and *(b)* everybody who is caring for at least 35 hours a week, regardless of whether the person being cared for is receiving attendance allowance (i) gross and (ii) after taking into account savings on other benefits; and, taking account of the extra tax that would be received by the Government, how many extra people would receive invalid care allowance in cases *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Newton: The cost of extending invalid care allowance to married and cohabitating women at current rates is estimated to be £108 million a year gross and £85 million a year net of savings on other benefits. No significant tax returns would be likely to accrue from such an extension. About 96,500 women would be likely to qualify for the allowance either at the full rate or partially offset by other benefits. I regret there is no information available on which an estimate could be made of the cost of extending invalid care allowance to those caring for a person who has no entitlement to attendance allowance.

Tobacco Sachets

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information is available to him about the medical effects of the sale, promotion and consumption of Skoal Bandit tobacco sachets in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why the Chief Medical Officer has written to all doctors about the dangers of sucking tobacco contained in a sachet; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has yet reached a voluntary agreement with the producers of Skoal Bandits on the marketing of the product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Authorities (Ancillary Service Contracts)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to satisfy himself that the specifications given by district health authorities in England to those tendering for ancillary services contracts mirror those required to be met previously by in-house operators.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We expect health authorities to review their requirements before producing specifications. All tenderers, whether in-house or private contractors, then have to submit tenders to meet the same specifications.

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is advising district health authorities in England of the best current practice in putting their ancillary services out to competitive tender.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have given health authorities detailed advice on the procedures for putting these services out to competitive tender, but we are reviewing whether any further advice is needed to ensure fair and open competition.

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities in England, after putting their catering, domestic and laundry services, respectively, out to competitive tender, have decided to keep the services in-house.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are aware of 66 health authorities which have decided after tendering to keep part of these services in-house.

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to increase the number of district health authorities in England putting their ancillary services out to competitive tender.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We expect all health authorities to put out their support services to competitive tender and we are monitoring their progress closely. Considerable savings are being achieved by those authorities that have gone out to tender and these savings are being used to improve services to patients.

Health Authorities (Administrative Costs)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current cost in salaries and expenses of managers of regional and district health authorities compared with the equivalent sums paid to their administrative predecessors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: General managers are not direct successors to administrators and the job is a quite different one. Managers have been appointed from several disciplines inside the service or from outside the service. Our main priority when a general manager has been appointed is to review the whole of the existing senior management structure to reflect the introduction of general management within the authority. The cost of any changes, including the general manager's own salary cost, has to be met within the total provision for management.

Dental Charges

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the highest charges levied for a course of routine National Health Service dental treatment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is £115. We estimate that, even when courses for treatment which include non-routine treatment are taken into account, only about 0·3 per cent. of all courses of treatment will attract this charge.

Sight Tests

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make it his policy to require ophthalmic opticians to carry out tests for glaucoma and other identifiable conditions when carrying out a routine National Health Service sight test on any person over 40 years and on any person with a family history of any of these diseases.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The use of ophthalmoscopy for the detection of glaucoma and other indentifiable diseases is already part of the routine sight test carried out under the general ophthalmic service (GOS). There is also a requirement on GOS practitioners to inform the patient's doctor if any abnormality is detected in the course of the sight test. We are satisfied that these arrangements provide the necessary safeguards for patients.

Hospital Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total payment to hospital consultants in each year since 1974 in constant prices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The table shows gross expenditure by health authorities on medical and dental consultants between 1974-75 and 1983-84. The figures are expressed at 1983-84 price levels as measured by the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

Year	*Cost of medical and dental consultants employed by health authorities*
	£ million
1974-75	293·391
1975-76	311·095
1976-77	285·663
1977-78	266·096
1978-79	276·356
1979-80	307·883
1980-81	354·215
1981-82	349·776
1982-83	352·033
1983-84	365·943

* Figures are derived from the summarised accounts of health authorities and include employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.

Insurance Contributions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in a table the national insurance contributions liability of *(a)* contracted-in employees through class 1, *(b)* contracted-out employees through class 1, *(c)* self-employed people through class 2 contributions and *(d)* self-employed people through class 4 contributions in 1985-86 and showing for employees and the self-employed the total amount due in the year and the weekly equivalent and showing separately and in the total the effects of the tax relief available on class 4 contributions, assuming their income is at the following constant levels throughout the year: £35·50 per week, £55·00 per week, £59·00 per week, £89·00 per week, £90·00 per week, £130·00 per week, £146·00 and £265·00 per week, respectively, and £1,925 per year and £4,150 per year, respectively: 0·5, 0·75, 1·0, 1·5 and 2·0 times average earnings and at a level of income to pay income tax at 40 per cent., 45 per cent., 50 per cent., 55 per cent. and 60 per cent., respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is in the table.

Earnings	*Contracted-in Class 1*			*Contracted-out Class 1*			*Class 2 (see note 4)*		*Class 4*		
	Rate	*Weekly*	*Annual 1985-86*	*Rate*	*Weekly*	*Annual 1985-86*	*Weekly*	*Annual 1985-86*	*Weekly*	*Annual 1985-86*	*Tax relief (see note 1)*
£		£	£		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
35·50 per week	R1	3·19	138·96	R1	3·19	138·96	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
	R2	1·77		R2	1·77						
55 per week	R1	4·95	228·90	R4	4·53	206·94	4·75	214·50	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
	R3	3·45		R5	3·43		3·50				
59 per week	R1	5·31	245·44	R4	4·80	218·93	4·75	214·50	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
	R3	4·13		R5	3·92		3·50				
89 per week	R1	8·01	370·24	R4	6·85	310·10	4·75	214·50	0·58	30·01	4·52
	R3	6·23		R5	5·08		3·50				
90 per week	R1	8·10	421·20	R4	6·92	289·64	4·75	214·50	0·64	33·28	5·01
							3·50				
130 per week	R1	11·70	608·40	R4	9·66	502·32	4·75	214·50	3·16	164·45	24·66
							3·50				
146 per week	R1	13·14	683·28	R4	10·76	559·52	4·75	214·50	4·17	216·85	32·53
							3·50				
265 per week	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·91	983·32	4·75	214·50	11·47	596·69	91·00
							3·50				

Earnings £	Contracted-in Class 1 Rate	Weekly £	Annual 1985-86 £	Contracted-out Class 1 Rate	Weekly £	Annual 1985-86 £	Class 2 (see note 4) Weekly £	Annual 1985-86 £	Class 4 Weekly £	Annual 1985-86 £	Tax relief (see note 1) £
1,925 per annum	R1 R2	3·33 1·60	134·68	R4 R5	3·20 1·61	132·60	4·75 3·50	214·50	Nil	Nil	Nil
4,150 per annum	R1 R3	7·18 3·89	310·42	R4 R5	6·22 4·63	282·10	4·75 3·50	214·50	Nil	Nil	Nil
0·5×average earnings 86 per week (see note 2)	R1 R3	2·74 6·02	357·76	R4 R5	6·68 4·93	301·08	4·75 3·50	214·50	3·90	20·29	3·04
0·75×average earnings 129 per week	R1	11·41	603·72	R4	9·59	498·68	4·75 3·50	214·50	3·10	161·15	24·17
Average earnings 172 per week	R1	15·48	804·96	R4	12·54	652·08	4·75 3·50	214·50	5·81	302·02	45·30
1·5×average earnings 258 per week	R1	23·22	1,207·44	R4	18·45	959·36	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·23	583·76	87·56
2·0×average earnings 344 per week	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·91	983·32	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·67	606·69	91·00
Tax at 40 per cent. 18,400 (single person) pa 19,456 (married man) pa	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·91	983·32	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·67	606·69	91·10
Tax at 45 per cent. 21,408 (single person) pa 22,456 (married man) pa	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·90	983·32	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·67	606·69	121·39
Tax at 50 per cent. 26,608 (single person) pa 27,456 (married man) pa	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·90	983·32	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·67	606·69	136·55
Tax at 55 per cent. 34,508 (single person) pa 35,756 (married man) pa	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·90	983·32	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·67	606·69	151·72
Tax at 60 per cent. 42,408 (single person) pa 43,456 (married man) pa	R1	23·85	1,240·20	R4	18·90	983·32	4·75 3·50	214·50	11·67	606·69	166·89

Notes:

1. This is the amount gained in tax relief on half the class 4 contribution.
2. Average earnings have been taken from the Department of Employment's provisional earnings figures for April 1985 in respect of all employees in all occupations.
3. The rates quoted are:
   R1 =9·00 per cent.
   R2*=5·00 per cent.
   R3*=7·00 per cent.
   R4 =9·00 per cent. of £35·50 plus 6·85 per cent. of earnings over £39·50.
   R5*=7·00 per cent. of £35·50 plus 4·85 per cent. of earnings over £35·50 if earnings are between £35·50 and £39·99.
   R6*=5·00 per cent. of £35·50 plus 2·85 per cent. of earnings over £39·50 if earnings are between £35·50 and £54·99.
   * Payable from 6 October 1985.
4. The class 2 rate of £3·50 is payable from 6 October 1985. The figures assume that those with earnings below £1,925 claim small earnings exemption.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the differences between the benefits received by a person who pays contracted-out class 1 national insurance as an employee and one who pays class 2 and 4 national insurance as self-employed; and if he will show that part of the contribution that pays for each of the extra benefits received in each case.

Mr. Whitney: The following list sets out the contributory benefits paid in return for class 1 contributions to people satisfying the necessary conditions:

Unemployment benefit
Sickness benefit
Invalidity benefit
Maternity allowance
Retirement pension
Widow's allowance
Widowed mother's allowance
Widow's pension
Child's special allowance
Death grant

People paying self-employed contributions do not receive unemployment benefit, an additional component to retirement pension and invalidity benefit, or industrial injuries benefits.

There is no simple relation between specific parts of the contribution and particular benefits. Cmnd. 7036 described the formula for calculating the self-employed contribution rates, and these rates were last reviewed according to this formula for 1983-84. Deductions were made from the joint class 1 rate of 19·45 per cent. amounting to 1·9 per cent. in respect of short term benefits for which the self-employed are not eligible and 14·2 per cent. on earnings over the lower earnings limit in respect of earnings related pensions. The class 2 and 4 rates were then chosen so as to produce the same revenue as this notional class 1 rate would have raised from the self-employed. The class 2 rate has been uprated in line with changes in the basic pension but abatements from the actuarial rate have been in force as a concession. This abatement will rise to £1·75 per week following the introduction of proposals in the 1985 Budget.

Single Payments

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many single payments for clothing were made to residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case;

(2) how many single payments for rent deposits were made to residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case;

(3) how many single payments for baby items were made to people in *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case;

(4) how many single payments for removal expenses were made to residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case;

(5) how many single payments for furniture and household items were made to residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case;

(6) how many single payments for fuel debts were made to residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case;

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected on a local basis. The Supplementary Benefits "Annual Statistical Enquiry" provides detailed information about single payments on a national basis. but as the information collected relates only to single payments made over the preceding 12 months to claimants still in receipt of supplementary benefit at the time of the "Enquiry", it does not reflect all the payments made during the year.

The following national figures are based on the provisional results of the 1983 "Enquiry" (the latest available):

Purpose of single payment	*Number of payments*	*Average amounts* £
Maternity needs	141,948	59·91
Removal expenses	38,427	58·20
Clothing and footwear	113,413	48·61
Fuel bills	11,375	55·29
Furniture (and houshold equipment)	653,796	84·56
Furniture repair	84,328	34·55
Bedding	366,841	53·53
Deposits (for rent)	3,588	70·30

Additional Requirements

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras, respectively, are currently in receipt of additional requirements; and what is the average entitlement in each case.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected on a local basis.

The Supplementary Benefits "Annual Statistical Enquiry", which is a sample survey of claimants' entitlement at a particular point in time, provides detailed information on a national basis. The provisional results of the 1983 "Enquiry" (the latest available) show that 3,676,000 weekly payments for additional requirements were being made in December that year at an average rate of £3·46.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently in receipt of attendance allowance in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Newton: At 31 March 1984, the latest date for which figures are available, an estimated 42,150 recipients of attendance allowance resided in the Greater London council area. I regret that information is not available in respect of individual London boroughs.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many occupational pensioners there are in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he proposes to seek the help of the Occupational Pensions Board in advising on, and developing, the Green Paper proposals on occupational pensions.

Mr. Fowler: The board's advisory role, as set out in the Social Security Act 1973, is to advise the Secretary of State on matters that are referred to them. Last year I asked them to advise me on the legislative and administrative implications of personal pensions and their report was made available when I published a consultative document on personal pensions. I have now asked them to advise me on the future administration of the contracting-out arrangements for which they are responsible. I have therefore referred the following remit to the board:

"To consider, in the light of the proposals in the Green Paper 'Reform of Social Security', for phasing out the state earnings related pension scheme, how the arrangements administered by the Board might be simplified or streamlined; whether this would require legislative changes; and to report".

Child Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are in receipt of child benefit, and in respect of how many children, in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available. Child benefit is administered centrally and records are not kept for individual localities.

Income Support

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what kind of presence test for the purpose of entitlement to income support the Government is proposing.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Peckham on 22 July 1985.

Disablement Pensioners

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many war disablement pensioners there are in *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Newton: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

There are an estimated 25,000 war disablement pensioners in Greater London. This includes 1,500 in the area covered by the London boroughs of Brent, Camden and Harrow; and 2,700 in the area covered by the London boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey.

Urgent Needs Payment

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people received urgent needs payment in 1984 in each of *(a)* the London borough of Camden, *(b)* the London borough of Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras;

(2) how many single payments were made to residents of *(a)* Camden, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984; and what was the average payment in each case.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Medicines Commission

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the Medicines Commission's annual report for 1984.

Mr. John Patten: I have received the Report and copies have today been laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with section 5(2) of the Medicines Act 1968. Bound volumes have been placed in the Library, and are also available to hon. Members from the Vote Office, containing the 1984 reports of the Medicines Commission, the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Veterinary Products Committee, the British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Committee on the Review of Medicines and the Committee on Dental and Surgical materials.

Medical Gases and Oxygen

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now provide the British Oxygen Company with copies of the consultants' reports which his Department obtained on the pricing of medical gases and domiciliary oxygen, which were referred to in the twelfth report of the Committee of Public Accounts, House of Commons paper No. 67 Session 1984-85.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that the British Oxygen Company wish to have copies of the reports to enable them to respond to criticisms made of them by the hon. Member for Workington concerning the accuracy of evidence submitted by the company to the Committee of Public Accounts. However, as the two documents contain material relevant to our Department's negotiations with the company, it would not be right to release them. I can say however that I am not aware of anything in the consultants' reports which casts doubt on the factual accuracy of BOC's evidence.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further plans he has for ensuring that children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals are moved out of hospitals.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1985]: Our stated objective is that all children in long stay mental handicap hospitals should come out. Their number has dropped by at least half since December 1980 and the fall continues, helped by our children's initiative. Under this we have made £1 million central finance available from 1981 on a pound for pound basis to voluntary bodies, and £9 million over four years from 1983-84 to health authorities, to help them to move mentally handicapped children out of hospital into smaller more homelike accommodation in the community. The pace is kept up by our clear guidance to health authorities to review with local authorities the cases of the remaining children in their care every six months with a view to more suitable placement. In our examination of health authorities' plans for alternative provision we are looking for any need to raise the question of speed.

WALES

Co-operative Development and Training Centre Ltd.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now ensure that the Wales Co-operative Development and Training Centre Ltd. is given a prior assurance of continued support from his Department for a further period of five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: An application has been received from the centre for further funding and is being considered.

Farm Capital Grant Schemes

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many claims were paid under the capital grant scheme for new roads or the improvement of existing roads; and what was the eligible cost of these and the amount of grant paid on them for each quarter of 1984 and the first quarter of 1985.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The information in respect of farm capital grant schemes is as follows:

Quarter Ended	*Number of Payments*	*Eligible Cost*	*Grant Paid*
		£	£
31 March 1984	434	3,451,704	1,631,644
30 June 1984	428	3,207,830	1,510,730
30 September	305	2,751,071	1,181,686
31 December 1984	233	1,626,618	691,071
31 March 1985	278	1,986,268	791,614

Docklands (Cardiff)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of proposals for docklands redevelopment in south Cardiff.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following confirmation of the compulsory purchase orders in respect of the relevant land on 16 July, I am pleased to say that I have now approved the detailed terms under which urban development grant will be payable. This is a further important step forward which opens the way for development work to begin this autumn.

THE ARTS

Orchestras

Mr. Cohen asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what is his estimate of the total of public funds spent on orchestras for each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Total expenditure by the Arts Council of Great Britain on the principal orchestras in Britain for each of the past five years was as follows:

	£ million
1980-81	3·860
1981-82	4·533
1982-83	5·344
1983-84	5·497
1984-85	5·435

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Redundancies and Early Retirement)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list for the years 1978-79 to 1984-85, by grade and age band and distinguishing between industrial and non-industrial civil servants, the number of civil servants who (i) have been declared compulsorily redundant, (ii) have taken voluntary redundancy and (iii) have taken early retirement, giving in cash terms the per capita cost to the Exchequer of such cessations.

Mr. Hayhoe: Not all the information that the hon. Member has requested is centrally kept. The information that is available is being assembled and I will write to him as soon as this is ready.

Voluntary Retirement

Mr. Favell asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many persons in each of the categories listed in the Report No. 22 of the Top Salaries Review Body, in the Civil Service, armed forces and judiciary, have taken voluntary early retirement in each of the last three years for reasons other than ill health or promotion.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information for premature retirements from the Civil Service and armed forces is as follows:

	1982	1983	1984
Senior grades of the higher Civil Service			
Permanent Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service	—	—	—
Grade 1 (Permanent Secretary level)	—	—	—
Grade 1A (Second Permanent Secretary level)	—	—	—
Grade 2 (Deputy Secretary level)	2	—	4
Grade 3 (Under Secretary level)	5	8	21
Senior officers in the Armed Forces			
Royal Navy			
Admiral of the Fleet	—	—	—
Admiral	—	—	—
Vice-Admiral	—	1	1
Rear-Admiral	—	—	—
Army[*]			
Field Marshal	—	—	—
General	—	—	—
Lieutenant General	—	1	—
Major General	4	2	1
Royal Air Force			
Marshal of the Royal Air Force	—	—	—
Air Chief Marshal	—	—	—
Air Marshal	—	—	—
Air Vice Marshal	3	3	5

[*] Figures for the army are shown for financial years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 respectively.

Corresponding information for the members of the judiciary is being assembled. I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as it is available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Community (Agricultural Support)

82. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken or proposes to take to secure further improvement to the allocation of the resources of the European Economic Community during the year 1986-87; and if he will secure a reduction in the share of those resources devoted to agricultural support.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We shall continue our pressure for the effective application of budgetary discipline, including the guideline for agricultural expenditure in 1986. This is a necessary step to a better balanced Community budget. We shall seek further improvements in succeeding budgets.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the carry over of (i) losses and (ii) allowances in the current financial year against corporation tax in the case of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Moore: The latest estimate is some £10 billion of tax losses of all kinds carried forward by manufacturing industry. The estimate is extremely tentative.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the carry-over of *(a)* losses and *(b)* allowances against corporation tax in the current financial year; and what is his estimate of the additional losses and reliefs which will be incurred in 1985 to carry forward.

Mr. Moore: The total of accumulated tax losses is about £25 billion, excluding the public sector. This

estimate is extremely tentative. I regret that it is not possible to project with sufficient reliability the extent of changes to this total during 1985.

Fortified Wines

Mr. Fry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those companies which have sought and *(a)* been refused and *(b)* been granted permission to import fortified wines under bond since March 1984;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those companies which have sought and *(a)* been refused and *(b)* been granted permission to blend imported fortified wines under bond since March 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is not available centrally and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. However, if my hon. Friend has a particular problem or case in mind perhaps he would write to me.

Cider

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what revenue arose from excise duty on cider in the years 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84;

(2) what consultations took place with representatives of the cider industry in advance of the alteration in cider tax in the Finance Bill 1985; and what advice he received.

Mr. Hayhoe: The revenue arising from excise duty on cider and perry is published in the Annual Report of the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, table 34. There is a copy in the Library of the House. Representatives of the National Association of Cider Makers and the National Association of Perry Makers met Customs and Excise officials on 27 November 1984. Customs reported this meeting to Treasury Ministers together with the trade's written representations.

Departmental Committees of Inquiry

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *141-2*, if he will now take steps to provide the information on departmental committees of inquiry established from 1974 to the present.

Mr. Hayhoe: As I told my hon. Friend on 1 May (col. *141-2*) this information could only by compiled at disproportionate cost.

Civil Service

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total salary bill for the Civil Service in 1984-85; and how this figure compares with the figure for 1978-79 in historic and constant prices, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: The total pay provision of the Civil Service in 1984-85 was £5·4 billion compared to £3·4 billion in 1978-79 in historic prices and £6·1 billion in constant 1984-85 prices, using the GDP deflator.

Income Tax

Mr. Portillo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of total receipts from income tax is paid by taxpayers on average and below average incomes.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *43*]: In 1985-86, average income tax per unit (that is counting husband and wife as one) is provisionally estimated at £8,300. This estimate includes income of all kinds; and covers tax units above and below the income tax threshold. About 18 per cent. of income tax will come from taxpayers with incomes below this level.

Tax Relief

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost in 1985-86 of the tax relief on *(a)* charitable deeds of covenant and *(b)* non-charitable deeds of covenant.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: I regret that information is not available for 1985-86. In 1984-85, relief in respect of covenants to charities (including higher rate relief to covenanting donors) is estimated at about £115 million. I regret that information is not available in respect of all non-charitable deeds of covenant; but in 1983-84, repayments to students are estimated to have totalled some £55 million.

Income

Mr. Portillo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many income taxpayers there are who are on average or below average earnings.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: Average earnings for male employees (all occupations) paid at adult rates whose pay is unaffected by absence are estimated to be about £10,300 in 1985-86. Some 12·8 million taxpaying tax units (that is counting husband and wife as one) are estimated to have incomes below this level.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Torney asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the role played by Mr. Michael Hepker, chairman of Sumrie Clothes, Leeds in the events leading to the collapse of the Johnson Matthey Bankers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the role played by Mr. Michael Hepker, chairman of Sumrie Clothes plc, Leeds, in the events leading to the collapse of the Johnson Matthey Bankers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his replies*, 22 July 1985]: Detailed questions concerning the affairs of Johnson Matthey Bankers are a matter for the Bank of England.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* proceeded against and *(b)* found guilty, during 1984 under section 26(1)(*c*) of the Immigration Act, for making a false statement to an immigration officer or other person in execution of the act.

Mr. Waddington: Figures for 1984 are not yet available. Those for 1979 to 1983 were published in table 21 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1984" (Cmnd. 9544).

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were received into prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1984 by individual prison establishment and nationality.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the following table:

Receptions into Prison Department establishments in England and Wales in 1984 of people detained under the Immigration Act 1971: by establishment

		Number*
Remand centres		
	Ashford	708
	Exeter	3
	Manchester	4
	Norwich	1
	Pucklechurch	3
	Risley	24
Prisons		
	Bedford	9
	Birmingham	26
	Bristol	13
	Brixton	2
	Canterbury	13
	Cardiff	11
	Durham	6
	Exeter	3
	Gloucester	1
	Holloway	51
	Leeds	12
	Leicester	9
	Lewes	2
	Lincoln	4
	Liverpool	1
	Norwich	4
	Oxford	2
	Pentonville	24
	Reading	1
	Swansea	2
	Winchester	9
	Wormwood Scrubs	1
Total		949

*The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average length of detention for those received into prison department establishments under Immigration Act powers during 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The average period of detention in prison department establishments in England and Wales of persons initially received under Immigration Act 1971 powers who were discharged in 1984 was nearly six weeks.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will provide a table indicating the total number of people served with detention orders under paragraph 2, schedule 3 to the Immigration Act during 1984 by nationality.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is as follows:

Detention orders served under paragraph 2(2) of Schedule 3 of the Immigration Act, 1971 in 1984

Nationality of person named in the order	*Number of orders*
Foreign	
Algeria	3
Chile	1
Colombia	1
Egypt	5
France	1
Iran	4
Iraq	1
Libya	16
Netherlands	1
Pakistan	1
Portugal	2
Sudan	1
Sweden	1
Syria	1
Turkey	3
Total foreign:	42
Commonwealth	
Cyprus	1
Ghana	2
Hong Kong BDTC	2
India	2
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	4
Sri Lanka	1
Total Commonwealth:	13
All countries:	55

Probation Service (Pay)

Mr. Mark Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage pay lead of a senior probation officer over a probation officer, both at maximum pay scales on 1 January 1980; what is the equivalent percentage pay lead today; and by how much per annum the salary of a senior probation officer on maximum salary would have to be increased to restore the pay lead over a probation officer on maximum salary to the differential that existed on 1 January 1980.

Mr. Mellor: A senior probation officer at the maximum of the pay scale on 1 January 1980 would have received 116·23 per cent. of the salary of a main-grade probation officer at the maximum. The maximum of the senior probation officer scale is now 113·98 per cent. of the main-grade maximum. To restore the previous percentage differential would require an increase of £252 per annum to the senior probation officer's maximum.

Essex (Chief Constable)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief constable of Essex; and what was discussed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chief constable of Essex briefly on 3 January 1985. I met him on 18 April to discuss the control of shotguns.

Magistrates' Courts

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new magistrates' courts have been opened since 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Two. But a further 32 schemes for new or adapted courthouses have been given building starts since 1983-84.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Leyton on 9 July, *Official Report*, column 385, whether the original reference number on the microfilm of a deleted record on the Police National Computer can be traced to the name of an individual or to a file which has not been deleted.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Firearms

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue revised guidelines to chief constables about circumstances where firearms are issued and used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Every incident in which firearms are used by the police is carefully studied to see whether there are any lessons to be drawn from the incident, but we have no plans at present to revise the guidelines issued in March 1983.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has made for the Immigration and Nationality Department to publish a further report on its work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: Today a report has been published on the work of the Immigration and Nationality Department, copies of which have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office. This second report is focused on 1984 and early 1985, and contains a range of factual information which can be compared with that published in the earlier report. The text of the report was finalised before the Home Affairs Committee published the report of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration on the working of the Immigration and Nationality Department.

Visitors

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of visitors to the United Kingdom in each of the last five years, who have been recorded on the current computer system as those whose embarkation is likely to need checking; if he will provide a breakdown by nationality of those visitors listed above; if he will list the criteria employed in determining the recording of those listed above; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985, c. *505*]: The available information is set out in the table.

Paragraph 20 of the Immigration Rules provides for visitors to be admitted for a period less than the normal six months where this is justified by special reasons—for example, where the passenger might not be admitted to another country after a long period in the United Kingdom or where the case ought to be subject to early review. Such cases which will include those where the immigration officer is not entirely satisfied that the visitor will comply with the conditions of his admission are normally recorded on the Department's computer system.

Admissions of visitors whose departure is to be checked, by nationality, 1981-84

	Ordinary visitors				*Business visitors*			
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Commonwealth citizens								
Australia	2,120	2,080	2,270	2,650	190	280	290	290
Bangladesh	1,920	1,540	1,680	2,180	250	170	170	210
Barbados	440	290	310	270	10	*	*	*
Canada	1,140	1,010	1,260	1,410	160	180	150	180
Cyprus	5,600	4,900	4,160	3,680	370	280	280	220
Ghana	6,380	6,620	6,310	7,800	1,400	1,250	1,410	1,350
Guyana	520	390	460	410	10	*	*	10
Hong Kong	3,350	2,140	2,130	3,100	160	100	120	160
India	17,400	17,600	20,500	23,600	2,340	1,960	2,050	2,190
Jamaica	1,310	1,250	1,310	1,110	40	40	50	60
Kenya	2,180	2,300	2,640	2,360	180	170	180	190
Malaysia	2,770	2,350	2,510	2,640	100	110	100	100
Malta	1,070	870	920	870	70	70	50	80
Mauritius	2,320	2,540	2,500	2,600	50	50	60	60
New Zealand	810	800	810	990	40	90	90	70
Nigeria	19,600	16,800	18,600	14,800	4,080	2,890	3,320	2,950
Sierra Leone	540	480	560	640	30	30	30	30
Singapore	1,040	1,010	990	900	80	70	50	50
Sri Lanka	3,300	3,050	4,330	4,800	360	250	320	390
Tanzania	1,830	1,540	1,810	2,070	150	90	80	110
Trinidad and Tobago	800	680	600	520	30	10	20	10

	Ordinary visitors				Business visitors			
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1981	1982	1983	1984
Uganda	1,120	1,140	1,110	900	180	140	180	160
West Indies Associated States	300	270	300	—	*	*	*	—
Zambia	850	760	580	710	60	40	30	30
Zimbabwe	740	710	800	830	20	30	40	40
British Overseas citizens	1,910	1,860	1,720	1,560	80	50	40	40
Other Commonwealth countries	770	620	630	1,150	60	60	30	50
Commonwealth Total	82,100	75,700	81,800	84,500	10,500	8,440	9,160	9,030
Non-EC Foreign nationals								
Algeria	4,280	4,410	4,510	4,560	200	170	190	170
Argentina	1,140	680	1,740	2,360	30	220	480	400
Austria	400	300	320	290	80	80	90	80
Brazil	1,130	1,080	1,090	1,090	40	30	40	50
Bulgaria	1,450	1,300	1,500	1,150	800	860	920	990
Chile	650	580	470	500	40	30	50	110
China	1,600	1,300	1,470	2,110	1,360	1,680	2,420	3,630
Colombia	1,080	1,040	1,220	1,180	20	20	40	40
Cuba	170	110	100	180	220	260	320	350
Czechoslovakia	4,300	3,760	4,480	5,040	6,840	6,110	6,110	6,860
Egypt	3,430	2,400	2,240	2,170	710	450	360	350
Ethiopia	390	350	400	500	110	60	50	50
Finland	240	260	210	210	20	10	20	20
GDR	1,060	910	910	1,000	1,280	1,180	1,320	1,550
Kuwait	†	10	400	360	†	—	10	10
Hungary	11,000	10,000	9,430	9,930	3,980	4,090	4,500	6,020
Indonesia	800	520	520	550	110	60	80	120
Iran	11,300	9,650	13,800	23,200	3,140	2,600	3,660	5,230
Iraq	10,000	7,160	1,930	1,520	800	470	260	200
Israel	2,920	2,600	2,490	2,660	90	80	100	120
Japan	2,450	2,130	1,950	1,990	130	100	110	110
Jordan	1,300	990	870	870	260	150	160	160
Lebanon	2,070	1,700	1,900	2,200	400	380	330	370
Libya	5,030	6,170	6,950	1,910	1,050	720	600	340
Mexico	960	770	440	620	20	10	20	20
Morocco	3,260	3,120	3,420	3,570	120	110	100	100
Norway	330	380	350	360	120	50	70	50
Pakistan	10,900	11,500	13,600	16,520	1,180	1,160	1,100	1,390
Peru	240	240	340	270	10	10	10	10
Philippines	1,550	1,330	1,390	1,480	340	160	170	250
Poland	30,000	5,990	11,900	17,600	4,470	2,800	4,070	5,170
Portugal	1,390	1,340	1,390	1,530	50	60	100	60
Romania	1,840	1,250	1,100	1,150	1,550	1,110	1,070	1,310
Saudi Arabia	1,480	1,190	1,080	1,050	90	80	80	80
Somalia	260	240	260	280	50	30	20	30
South Africa	1,210	1,180	1,230	1,250	80	90	80	90
Spain	3,980	3,450	3,740	3,670	300	250	240	250
Sudan	2,080	1,420	1,180	1,200	160	150	100	110
Sweden	650	560	550	560	60	60	80	70
Switzerland	860	650	660	600	110	110	110	90
Syria	1,950	1,480	1,360	1,240	450	280	220	210
Thailand	670	600	670	670	80	50	60	60
Tunisia	1,240	1,090	1,110	1,240	120	90	70	90
Turkey	3,340	3,310	4,610	5,690	390	430	610	990
USA	7,140	7,040	8,260	9,300	1,260	1,660	1,840	2,360
USSR	2,770	2,950	2,540	2,130	1,500	1,440	1,290	1,370
Uruguay	110	80	80	80	10	*	10	*
Venezuela	610	420	290	240	10	10	10	10
Yugoslavia	1,200	1,020	1,060	1,350	40	60	70	60
Other foreign countries	7,480	6,150	6,280	6,420	1,160	1,060	970	1,040
Stateless	28,700	20,200	20,600	21,200	4,450	3,600	3,360	3,550
Non EC foreign total	185,000	138,000	150,000	169,000	39,900	34,700	38,100	46,100

* less than 10. † not available. — nil.

Justices of the Peace Act 1361

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in England and Wales have been arrested, how many charged and how many convicted under the Justices of the Peace Act 1361 in each of the last five years; and how many of these arrests and charges related to domestic disputes.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *10-11*]: Further investigation of the data used to provide the information in my earlier reply showed the figures to be incorrect. The correct information is given in the following table. The error is much regretted. Corresponding information for 1984 is not yet available.

Proceedings under the Justice of the Peace Act 1361 to find surety to keep the peace or for good behaviour

England and Wales *Number of applications*

Year	*Total*	*Applications* *Order made*	*No order made*
1980	13,797	12,696	1,101
1981	14,426	13,197	1,229
1982	15,816	14,695	1,121
1983	16,388	15,266	1,122

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many European fishing inspectors have been stationed in *(a)* Britain, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* Holland and *(d)* France since the force was established.

Mr. MacGregor: European Inspectors are stationed in Brussels and not in member states. However, the number of visits made by the inspectors to the member states in question since the force was established up to 15 July 1985 is as follows:

		Visits
(a)	Britain	19
(b)	Denmark	11
(c)	Holland	13
(d)	France	16

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the sum available to finance the proposed environmentally sensitive areas to be established under article 19 of the agricultural structures regulations.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government will make available sufficient funds for the designation initially of five or six environmentally sensitive areas. These areas and the levels of payment appropriate to them have not yet been determined.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission will be consulted over the detail of individual farm improvement plans within environmentally sensitive areas.

Mrs. Fenner: Decisions on the administration of environmentally sensitive areas must await consideration by Parliament of the necessary legislation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which authority or statutory body will be responsible for administering the grants and other incentives available to farmers in environmentally sensitive areas once they have been established.

Mrs. Fenner: The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food will be responsible for administering the environmentally sensitive areas. Decisions on detailed arrangements must await consideration by Parliament of the necessary legislation.

Moorland

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions since 1981 farm capital grants for the reseeding or reclamation of moorland have been refused on conservation grounds in sites of special scientific interest and national parks and in other areas.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that the Ministry does not keep records of cases where grant has been refused or of the reasons for refusal.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks or other screening exists to prevent damage to moorland by reseeding or regeneration through grant aided agricultural improvements *(a)* within sites of special scientific interest and national parks and *(b)* in the wider countryside.

Mrs. Fenner: Applicants under the capital grant schemes must notify the Nature Conservancy Council or a national park authority of any investments they wish to carry out in an SSSI or national park. Throughout the countryside farmers are required under the capital grant schemes to have regard to conservation in undertaking investments. We monitor compliance with this requirement and in the event of any damage we have discretion to refuse grant. Under the proposed new grant arrangements grant will not be available for the reseeding and regeneration of grassland outside the less favoured areas and of heathland and moorland.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to ensure that the extension of the agriculture and horticulture grants scheme until 31 December 1988, giving grant aid for the reseeding of heathland and moorland will not cause significant damage to wildlife habitat outside national parks and sites of special scientific interest.

Mrs. Fenner: The extension of the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme permits claims to be made for reseeding of heathland and moorland only where expenditure was incurred before 9 July 1985. Under the grant schemes farmers are required to have regard to conservation and any breach of this condition will place a farmer's grant at risk.

Animals (Export)

Mr. Murphy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is Her Majesty's Government's

policy on the export of live animals; what recent representations he has received on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government's policy is to allow the export of live food animals to take place under the protection laid down in European Community directives 77/489/EEC and 81/389/EEC. My Department continues to receive letters from various sources on this subject.

Apples and Pears

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the acreage of land utilised for the growing of cider apples and perry pears in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Fenner: The area of land in hectares used for the growing of cider apples and perry pears in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*hectares*
1980	4,486
1981	4,398
1982	4,304
1983	4,225
1984	4,274

Fishing Vessels (Licensing)

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels are licensed to fish for salmon by way of drift-nets off the coast of Northumberland and Yorkshire; and if he has plans to change the licensing system or this method of fishing.

Mr. MacGregor: Licences to fish for salmon are not issued in respect of vessels, but under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975, (c51) water authorities license individuals to use a specified type of instrument. In 1984 the Northumbrian Water Authority issued 121 salmon drift net licences and the Yorkshire Water Authority 29 salmon drift net licences. As I said in replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 24 January and 7 February 1985, we are reviewing the management arrangements for the fishery in these areas and will announce our conclusions when we have completed the review.

Foodstuffs Subsidies

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the subsidies currently payable on each of the principal foodstuffs in total and per unit of sale compared with 1975 in terms of current prices at an annual rate.

Mr. MacGregor: Information on the volume of output of each major product and on the level of expenditure on it are published each year in the "Annual Review of Agriculture".

Crop Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the principal crops the amount payable to United Kingdom farmers as a result of the difference between the green pound and the common agricultural policy price.

Mr. MacGregor: The use of a fixed exchange rate (the "green" rate) rather than variable market rates to convert CAP institutional prices in ECUs into sterling results in prices which can be either higher or lower than those which would apply if market rates were used. At present institutional prices for all CAP products in the United Kingdom are 6·3 per cent. above the level that would apply if market rates were used, but this can vary, and indeed, has varied, considerably within short time scales.

Sheep Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the difference between the average guaranteed price and the average market price for home-killed sheepmeat in each year since 1973 and in 1985 to date, together with any additional payments to hill farmers and others on account of sheepmeat or wool production and financed directly or indirectly out of public funds.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EC (Eggs)

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report* those individual husbandry experts, and organisations, which he consulted about the European Community egg labelling regulations.

Mr. MacGregor: During the course of recent discussions over amendments to European Community legislation dealing with marketing standards for hen eggs, the Agricultural Departments consulted fully with associations representing farmers, the egg trade and industry, consumers and farm animal welfare interests. In addition representations were received from a number of individuals. Advice was provided by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Services, the Egg Marketing Inspectorate and LACOTS.

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the views of the Farm Animal Welfare Council on the European Community egg labelling regulations.

Mrs. Fenner: The Farm Animal Welfare Council has already published its own views on these regulations in its press notice dated 17 July. I am placing a copy in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 25 July 1985

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Costs

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table comparing the average cost of both Houses of Parliament including and excluding pay and allowances, each year since 1970 in terms of constant prices.

Mr. Biffen: Total identified costs for the Houses of Parliament for the financial years 1981-82 to 1984-85 are given in the table:

£'000

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Cost of Parliament including pay and allowances	56,192	63,463	69,598	77,464
Cost of Parliament excluding Members' pay and allowances and Peers' expenses	35,743	41,419	42,981	48,082

These figures are expressed in cash terms. Figures in terms of constant prices and figures for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table comparing the average cost of paying and supporting an hon. Member of this House with such information as he has as to the comparable figure for supporting a member of the Assembly of the EEC; and if he will compare the total costs of the Commons with such information as he has as to the total costs of the European Assembly, the French National Assembly and the Canadian House of Commons all for latest available date.

Mr. Biffen: The latest available figures on the pay and allowances of parliamentarians which have been compiled on a comparable basis are given in the 20th report of the Review Body on Top Salaries (May 1983). For the British House of Commons and the European Parliament these are as follows:

United Kingdom House of Commons

Salary	*Allowances*
Basic salary of £14,510. Maximum salary of £15,362 for those who draw the London allowance of £852 pa which is taxable. Whole of salary taxable	£8,752 secretarial allowance; £875 to meet cost of secretarial pension scheme; £4,376 to employ temporary assistance in event of illness of secretary; all maxima £5,518 (maximum) subsistence allowance. £200 allowance to assist in drafting Private Member's Bill. £1,459 to assist in clearing up the affairs of a deceased, retired or defeated Member of Parliament. (Year beginning April 1982)

European Parliament

Salary	*Allowances*
Same as national Member of Parliament, for example £14,510 for United Kingdom Member of European Parliament. Some countries, for example Belgium allow half of salary tax free.	General allowance of £16,284 but if Member of European Parliament fails to attend at least 50 per cent. of the plenary sessions the allowance is halved. Staff allowances of £16,284 pa to cover salaries, travel and subsistence of staff. Subsistence allowance of £64 per day on sittings and so on.

With regard to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, no meaningful comparison could be made on the basis of figures available.

Line of Route

Mr. Silvester asked the Lord Privy Seal what measures are being taken to reduce queues at the entrance to the line of route for visitors to the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: The Services Committee has approved the following additional measures for visitors to the Line of Route with effect from 21 October 1985:

(1) The special permit system, currently operating between March and July will be taken into use throughout the remainder of the sitting year.

(2) The door at Norman porch will be opened daily at 9.30 am instead of 10 am.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Changes

Mr. Freud asked the Prime Minister if she now proposes to announce any ministerial changes.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Falkland Islanders

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will take steps formally to consult the residents of the Falkland Islands by means of a referendum about their attitudes to resettlement with compensation.

The Prime Minister: The Falkland islanders have consistently made clear, through their elected representatives, their desire to remain resident in the islands. We shall continue to protect their right to live there in peace and security under a Government of their own choosing.

Southampton

Mr. Chope asked the Prime Minister whether she will make an official visit to Southampton.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Southall

Mr. Bidwell asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Southall.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Research and Development

Sir John Osborn asked the Prime Minister what consideration she will now give to obtaining more up-to-date information on the amount spent on scientific research and development each year, indicating the pattern over recent years, broken up into public and industrial, civil and military, pure and applied, and as a percentage of gross domestic product.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure on research and development in science and technology in the United Kingdom is published biennially in the August edition of *Economic Trends*. Information in respect of 1983 will be published in the August 1985 edition. Annual data would impose too large a burden on industry as the Government stated in their response to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology in November 1983. Government expenditure on research and development is published annually in the same edition of *Economic Trends*.

Eastern Africa

Mr. Hancock asked the Prime Minister if she will seek to visit the drought-stricken areas of eastern Africa.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so, but my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Overseas Development has just returned from a visit to Ethiopia and made a full report to me.

Engagements

Mr. Hirst asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Hardy asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Colvin asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 25 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentlemen and my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

Research and Development

Sir John Osborn asked the Prime Minister what has been the trend in total expenditure on research and development in the 1980s and in the 1970s, and as expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product; what it represents as a percentage of gross domestic product; and how this compares with the expenditure in other European and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

The Prime Minister: The information requested for the United Kingdom is available only for years in which a survey of industrial research and development expenditure on science and technology is undertaken and is shown in the following tables.

Research and Development in Science and Technology, performed in all sectors of United Kingdom Economy

	Gross Expenditure on R & D at 1975 prices £ million	*R & D as a percentage of gdp*
1972	2,242	2·07
1975	2,151	2·06
1978	2,365	2·14
1981	2,603	2·34
1983*	2,486	2·19

* To be published in the August edition of Economic Trends.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

Research and Development in Science and Technology, Social Science and Humanities in 1981 for OECD Member Countries

	Gross Expenditure on R & D £ million	*Gross R & D as percentage of gdp*
Australia	913	1·03
Austria	436	1·16
Canada	1,848	1·22
Denmark	283	1·07
Finland	323	1·22
France	5,847	2·01
West Germany	8,558	2·49
Greece	56	0·21
Iceland	10	0·75
Ireland	85	0·79
Italy	2,482	1·01
Japan	14,636	2·38
Netherlands	1,364	1·48
Norway	338	1·28
Spain	512	0·39
Sweden*	1,203	2·23
Switzerland	967	2·29
United Kingdom†	6,215	2·46
United States	39,785	2·52
Yugoslavia	277	0·76

* Research and Development in science and technology only.
† Includes OECD estimate of Research and Development in social science and humanities outside government and universities.
Source: OECD, using rates of exchange at purchasing power parities.

Unemployment

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the policy of migration from the less to the more prosperous areas of the United Kingdom as a means of tackling unemployment and the implications of this policy on the planning processes of elected local authorities.

The Prime Minister: Regional industrial policy aims to reduce regional imbalances on a stable long-term basis, and to encourage indigenous potential within assisted areas. People may move from areas of persistently high unemployment to areas where employment prospects are better. The Government wish to facilitate greater geographical and occupational mobility by freeing markets, particularly in labour and housing, and by making the planning system more sensitive to changing needs. The planning system is the main vehicle for ensuring adequate provision for development to meet changing requirements. In preparing plans authorities are required to take account of guidance issued by my right

hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, for example the strategic guidance which he has issued for the west midlands and south east regions.

Top Salaries Review Body (Membership)

Dr. McDonald asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the list of members of the Top Salaries Review Body over the past five years, giving in each case the date of appointment and the date of resignation.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

Membership of TSRB 1980-1985

Name	*Date of Appointment*	*Date of Resignation*
The Rt Hon Lord Boyle of Handsworth	May 1971	March 1981
Sir Harold Archerley	May 1971	Current Member
Sir George Coldstream KCB KCVO QC	May 1971	March 1982
Baroness Seear	October 1971	May 1984
Lord Hinchliffe	November 1975	May 1984
Lord Plowden KCB KBE	November 1977	Current Chairman
Andrew Leggat QC	February 1979	September 1982
Lord Chorley	May 1981	Current Member
Sir Thomas Skyrme KCVO CB CBE TD	June 1981	Current Member
Sir David Orr MC	July 1982	Current Member
Andrew Morritt QC	December 1982	Current Member
Sir Robin Ibbs	November 1983	Current Member
Sir Peter Matthews AO	November 1984	Current Member
Mrs Alison Wright	November 1984	April 1985

Cabinet Office

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister (1) whether there are any plans to improve or resite the Cabinet Office emergency centre;

(2) if she will list the total amount of *(a)* capital and *(b)* current expenditure incurred by the Cabinet Office for the purpose of planning transition to war activities, during the periods: 1951 to 1960, 1961 to 1970, 1971 to 1980 and 1981 to date, respectively;

(3) if she will list the total amount of *(a)* capital and *(b)* current expenditure incurred by the Cabinet Office for the purpose of planning and preparing for the maintenance of the machinery of government in war during the periods: 1951 to 1960, 1961 to 1970, 1971 to 1980 and 1981 to date, respectively.

The Prime Minister: In accordance with longstanding practice I am not prepared to disclose information on these matters, publication of which would not be in the public interest.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister which Government Departments provide representatives to the planning boards of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation wartime civil agencies; who are currently appointed as United Kingdom representatives to these bodies and to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Civil Defence Planning Committee; and what is the cost of United Kingdom participation in such activities.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom is represented as follows:

NATO Agency	*Government department*	*Number*
Civil Aviation Planning Committee	Department of Transport	1 Official
Civil Communications Planning Committee	DTI	1 Official 1 non-Government employee
Civil Defence Committee	Home Office	1 Official
Food and Agriculture Planning Committee	MAFF	*1 Official
Industrial Planning Committee	DTI	1 Official
Petroleum Planning Committee	Department of Energy	1 Official
Planning Board for European Inland Surface Transport	D/Transport/MOD	3 Officials
Planning Board for Ocean Shipping	Department of Transport	3 Officials *2 non-Government employees

* United Kingdom currently also provides the Chairman.

The cost to the United Kingdom of contributing to the work of these planning boards and committees cannot be separately identified.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister if she will list those occasions since 1 January on which she had the opportunity to raise the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with foreign Governments or Heads of State.

The Prime Minister: Both Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers and I have raised nuclear non-proliferation with a wide range of countries. In particular, we have urged many of the countries which have yet to adhere to the non-proliferation treaty to become members.

X-Ray Laser Project

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister if the United Kingdom intends taking part in collaborative research with the United States of America on the nuclear pulsed X-ray laser project within the strategic defence initiative.

The Prime Minister: The question of British participation in the strategic defence initiative research programme is still under consideration and no decisions have been taken.

Top Salaries

Mr. William Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will state the monthly increase of take-home salary for the categories of persons covered by the eighth report on top salaries at 1 April 1986 where the individual is married and receives only basic tax allowances.

The Prime Minister (*pursuant to her reply*, 24 July 1985): Using current tax rates and income bands and assuming the married man's tax allowance only, the average monthly increase in take-home pay comparing the rates of pay in force before 1 July 1985 with those which will apply from 1 March 1986 are estimated at :

for senior civil servants £157;
for senior Armed Forces officers £222;
for the judiciary £213.

WALES

Moorland

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the area of moorland in Wales which is predominantly heather; and if he will express this as a percentage of the total less-favoured area within Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information on which to base such an estimate is not readily available.

Rough Grazing

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the decline in area of freehold rough grazing between (*a*) 1955 and 1981 and (*b*) 1981 and 1984, in Wales in those parishes comprising the original less-favoured areas.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not available for less-favoured area parishes in 1955. In Wales as a whole rough grazing in sole occupation declined from 533,758 ha in 1955 to 356,742 ha in 1981. Details of sole occupation rough grazing in LFA parishes are available from 1980. This information is as follows:

Year	*Area (ha)*
1980	292,925
1981	300,899
1982	292,210
1983	291,027
1984	290,672

Water

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those water supplies in Wales which do not fulfil the requirements of the European Economic Community directive on drinking water, with regard to the levels of aluminium, iron, manganese and lead in such supplies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The following supplies do not meet the requirements of the EC directive:

Source	*Aluminium*	*Iron*	*Manganese*
Nantyrwch	•	•	•
Garw Isela	—	•	—
Pentell	—	•	—
Capel Dewi	•	—	—
Strata Florida	•	•	—
Bontgoch	•	—	—
Ystradfellte	—	—	•
Lowesgrove boreholes	—	—	•
Nantymoel	—	—	•
Ffynnon Rhys	—	•	—
Llanfynydd	—	•	•
Georgetown	•	•	•
Alwen	•	•	•
Cynwyd	•	•	—
Idwal	•	—	—
Berwyn-y-Cawl	•	—	•
Garneglwyd	—	•	•
Gyrn Goch	—	•	—
Mamilwyd	—	•	—
Nantmor	•	—	•
Rhyd-Ddu	—	—	•
Talwaynfel	—	•	—
Carno	•	•	•
Talybont	—	•	—
Pistill	•	•	•
Penyfan	—	•	—
Pennicill	•	—	—
Upper Wenallt Spring	—	•	—
Cwm Cogr Spring	—	•	—
Llanbedr Springs	—	•	—
Byron	•	—	—
Bacon Bishop	•	—	—
Llanbedr Graben	•	—	—
Llanwrtyd	•	•	—
Kingpin	•	•	—
Byford	—	•	—
Beaumaris Junction	—	•	—
Bolton Hill	—	•	—
Elan Reservoirs (S-TWA)	•	•	•
Elan Aqueduct (WWA)	—	•	•
Craven SR	—	—	•
Llan Penmachno	—	—	•
Cnai Reservoir	—	—	•
Cwmystwyth	•	—	•
Crossor	—	—	•
Afon Cym y Llan	•	—	—
Rhyd	•	•	•
Rhydycroesau	—	•	—
Tir Gowen	—	•	—

In respect of lead a regional delay until December 1989 is being sought from the European Commission under article 20 to enable the Welsh water authority to complete its remedial programme of works. At the commencement of the programme the authority identified that supplies serving some 600,000 people needed remedial work. Improvements to date have reduced this number substantially.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has received from the Welsh water authority about the possibility of privatising the water industry in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A copy of the Welsh water authority's response has been placed in the Library of the House.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, in view of the Gwynedd social services tribunal decision at Colwyn Bay on Friday 19 July, he will seek an urgent meeting with officers of Gwynedd county council to ascertain the implications of this decision on local government services in Welsh-speaking areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The decision of the industrial tribunal has no immediate impact on the delivery of services by the authority to any particular client group. There is provision for appeal and in view of this and the fact that written judgment is not yet available I cannot comment further on this issue.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue a circular to local authorities in Wales indicating for which jobs a knowledge of the Welsh language may be a condition of employment where, in the view of the authority, the jobs require regular contact with persons who may wish to communicate in the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No.

Health Technical Services

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has considered the future of the Welsh health technical services organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following the assumption of his duties last February I have appointed the director of the NHS in Wales to be chairman of the Welsh health technical services organisation from 1 April, and asked him to examine and report to me on the future of the organisation. The director has subsequently made a number of recommendations which I have approved. These are designed to strengthen the management of the organisation and make it more responsive to the needs of health authorities and the NHS generally in Wales. A general manager has been appointed from 1 July and constitutional changes affecting the name and status of the organisation and a reduction in the number of board members is provided for in the Welsh Health Common Services Authority Constitution Order 1985 which was laid before this House on 9 July and will come into effect on 1 August. (S.I., 1985—996).

Clwydian Range

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has yet reached a decision on the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Designation Order made by the Countryside Commission on 7 June 1984.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have today confirmed the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Designation Order as submitted by the Countryside Commission. This proposal attracted the attention of a broad range of interests in and around the area and my decision was taken only after I had fully considered the representations made both for and against the designation and visited the area.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Mr. Dewar asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will give the number of non-legally qualified staff employed in the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The information is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Non-legally qualified staff in:			
(a) Crown Office	67·0	81·0	78·0
(b) Procurator Fiscal Service	652·0	665·0	669·5

Note: The 1983 and 1984 figures are staff in post taken on 31 December each year. The 1985 figure is based on staff in post on 30 June.

Mr. Dewar asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will give the cost of operating the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, respectively, in the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The total cost of operating the Crown Office and the Procurator Fiscal Service was as follows:

	Crown Office	*Procurator Fiscal Service*
	£	£
1983-84	1,538,428	9,788,367
1984-85	1,693,249	10,793,129

Mr. Dewar asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will give the number of qualified solicitors employed by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively, and the salary costs of those employees in each of these years.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The following figures relate to solicitors and advocates as no distinction is made between the two branches of the profession in this context.

Number of qualified lawyers in Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

	Numbers	*Salary Costs*
		£
1983	223	3,699,864
1984	232	3,907,972
1985	236	4,120,072

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many animals have been deliberately inflicted with shock at the Medical Research Council trauma unit, Manchester, over the last 10 years.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the Medical Research Council trauma unit, which was established seven years ago, has used a total of 2,703 rats and 294 mice; no other species have been used. By no means have all these animals been subjected to the condition known as clinical shock, involving circulatory collapse. Experimental injuries are produced only in fully anaesthetised animals.

Mr. Leighton: asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the policy of the Medical Research Council with regard to the use of animals in experiments at its trauma unit in Manchester.

Mr. Brooke: The staff of the Medical Research Council's trauma unit, in common with all scientists supported by the council, are required to observe the principle that animals should be used in their research only when necessary, and in the minimum numbers consistent with achieving valid results in any experiment. The council also expects those whose work it supports to use, wherever possible, procedures which do not involve live animals. There are, however, many areas of medical research—of which the work of the trauma unit is an example — where, because of the need to study the complex interactions in a whole body, it is not possible to make progress without using experimental animals. In such cases research workers are required to carry out their work under licence from the Home Office, in strict accordance with the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876.

University Teachers

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed on 12 July, *Official Report*, column 539, whether, in formulating his answer, he took account of the fact that the settlement for university teachers in August 1980 completed the negotiations of university teachers' pay on the basis of 1 October 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures to show the percentage increases in university teachers' salaries in cash and real terms for each year from 1 October 1974 to the latest available figure.

Sir Keith Joseph: Set out below are the pay settlements awarded with effect from the dates shown:

	Pay settlements in cash terms Per cent.	*Pay settlements in real terms Per cent.*
1 October 1974	8·0	−7·7
1 October 1975	33·0	+5·7
1 October 1976	3·5	−9·8
1 October 1977	9·8	−3·7
1 October 1978	15·6	+7·2
1 October 1979	16·3	−0·7
1 October 1980	*25·2	+8·5
1 March 1981	† 3·2	−1·2
1 April 1982	5·0	−6·7
1 April 1983	4·7	+0·7
1 April 1984	4·8	−0·4

* Consisted of a two-part Clegg-equivalent settlement—9 per cent. on 1 April 1980 plus 8 per cent. on 1 October 1980; together with 8·2 per cent. which was the first part of a two-part settlement extending over 18 months.

† Second part of the two-part settlement.

Undergraduate (Maintenance Grant)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why the maintenance grant for a married undergraduate is assessed on the income of the student's parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: For the assessment of a parental contribution to be waived a student must normally have reached the age of 25 years before starting his course, or have previously supported himself out of earnings for not less than three years. Married students not satisfying one of these conditions have their grant abated by a parental contribution, since marriage alone is not considered to signify the degree of financial independence which would make it unreasonable to expect such a contribution. Married students not assessed for a parental contribution may nonetheless have their grant abated by a spouse's contribution.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns 483-84, to the hon. Member for Leicester, East about teachers' salaries, he will publish comparable figures for head teachers' and deputy head teachers' salaries.

Sir Keith Joseph: There are currently 14 overlapping but separate pay scales for head teachers and 12 for deputy heads. In some years pay increases have applied differentially, and overall average percentage increases for heads and deputies are not readily available. The following tables give approximate percentage settlement increases for the head teacher group 5 and deputy head group 4 scales, and the estimated percentage increases in overall average salaries for all heads and deputies, in cash and in real terms, for the periods requested.

per cent.

		Cash terms		*Real terms*	
		(1) Settlements	*(2) Average salaries*	*(3) Settlements*	*(4) Average salaries*
Head Teachers					
(a)	from Houghton to April 1979	61	70	−20	−16
(b)	from Houghton to April 1984	175	198	−17	−10
(c)	from April 1979 to April 1984	71	75	5	7
(d)	from April 1979 to April 1985	79	85	3	6
Deputy Head Teachers					
(a)	from Houghton to April 1979	69	70	−16	−16

		Cash terms		Real terms	
		(1) Settlements	(2) Average salaries	(3) Settlements	(4) Average salaries
(b)	from Houghton to April 1984	185	197	−14	−10
(c)	from April 1979 to April 1984	69	74	3	7
(d)	from April 1979 to April 1985	77	84	1	5

Notes:

1. Columns (1) and (3) relate to Group 5 headteachers (whose scale runs from £12,042 to £13,317) and to Group 4 deputy headteachers (£8,049 to £10,482) and give the cumulative increases from comparison of actual pay scales, where necessary taking the average of the increases at the minimum and maximum points. Column (1) is in cash terms. Column (3) is adjusted to reflect changes in the RPI during the periods in question.

2. Columns (2) and (4) give average salary increases for all heads and deputies derived from the Department's main mechanised record of teachers, as at 31 March each year adjusted for pay increases applicable (normally) from the following 1 April. Column (2) is in cash terms. Column (4) is adjusted to reflect RPI changes.

3. The estimated average salary figures reflect actual changes in salary levels arising from annual pay settlements ad incremental drift.

4. In extrapolating the figures to 1985 (row d), 5 per cent. has been taken as the settlement increase, and in addition the average salary figures assume a notional 0·3 per cent. for salary drift.

Power Electronics and Microprocessing Techniques

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there is a shortage or a surplus of British graduates qualified in power electronics and microprocessing techniques, relative to the needs of industry; and what has been the shortage or surplus for each of the last five years.

Sir Keith Joseph: There is no precise way of defining the needs of industry for particular types of graduate engineer in areas relevant to the new technologies. However, the first report of the committee on IT skill shortages, chaired by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South West (Mr. Butcher), concluded that the employment market could readily absorb a greater number of graduates from disciplines relevant to the new technologies. Significant increases in such disciplines are currently taking place through the Government's IT in higher education initiative and the engineering and technology programme.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 24 June, *Official Report*, columns 310-11, whether he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage changes in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates; and if he will provide similar information for the period between 1980-81 and 1981-82 *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding these amounts.

Mr. Brooke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Academic Institutions (Clinical Medical Staff)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implications of the National Health Service pay award for recruitment and remuneration of clinical medical staff in academic institutions.

Sir Keith Joseph: The implications of the NHS pay award for clinical academic staff in the medical schools are under consideration and I have at present nothing to add to the reply my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 23 July 1985.

Higher Education (Green Paper)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by when he now expects to receive comments on the Green Paper, "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s," Cmnd. 9524.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be grateful if comments on the higher education Green Paper could be submitted by the end of January 1986. Comments may be sent to the following addresses:

Department of Education and Science, Room 5/11, Elizabeth House, London SE1 7PH.

Scottish Education Department, Room 3/114, New St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh EH1 3SY.

Mr. H. Evans, Welsh Office Education Department, Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NQ.

Department of Education for Northern Ireland, Room A6, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, County Down, BT19 2PR.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what expenditure level he proposes to set for the new Inner London education authority in respect of 1986-87.

Sir Keith Joseph: I propose to determine an expenditure level of £902 million for the new ILEA, which under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1985 will be automatically subject for three years to designation under part I of the Rates Act 1984. This sum represents a cash reduction of 1·5 per cent. on the budgeted total expenditure of the present ILEA in 1985-86 as adjusted. The adjustment allows for the new authority's responsibilities in respect of the Geffrye and Horniman museums, and also an estimate of the reduction in the authority's total expenditure which will result from my proposal to introduce a new contribution formula for the advanced further education pools. This adjustment will ensure that the ratepayers of Inner London receive the benefits of a new formula in the shape of a lower precept than they would otherwise have paid. In so far as ILEA's

1985-86 financial reserves are increased as a result of changing the formula this can of course be taken into account in setting the 1986-87 precept limit.

Notice of the expenditure level which I determine will be formally served on the interim ILEA as soon as it is constituted under the Local Government Act 1985. However, the present ILEA is being informed today of what I propose.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is yet able to announce the form and terms of reference of the review of the University Grants Committee announced in the higher education Green Paper, Cmnd. 9524.

Sir Keith Joseph: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I, as the two Ministers who are advised by the University Grants Committee, propose to establish a committee whose terms of reference will be:

"To review, within the context of expected developments in higher education, the University Grants Committee's constitutional position and role in relation to the Government and to the universities, its membership, its internal structure and working methods, and its secretariat."

Lord Croham has accepted our invitation to be the chairman of the committee. The members of the committee will be announced as soon as possible. The secretary of the committee will be Mr. Peter Syme of the Department of Education and Science. The committee is expected to start work in the autumn. The committee will seek evidence as it considers appropriate, but any individuals or organisation wishing to submit preliminary observations should send them to the secretary of the committee at the Department of Education and Science before 30 October 1985.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the maximum paid in respect of one school and *(b)* the average paid in respect of one school under the assisted places scheme represented by incidental expenses of (i) travel, (ii) uniform, (iii) meals and (iv) all three;

(2) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available the percentage of the average fee income to participating schools in respect of *(a)* assisted places pupils and *(b)* all pupils represented by the assistance with incidental expenses for travel, meals and uniform.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985, columns *349-350*]: The information requested for the school year 1984-85 is as follows:

	£ *Maximum paid to one school*	£ *Average paid to one school*
Travel	9,469	1,354
Uniform	5,566	1,419
Meals	6,715	2,241
All Three	17,539	5,014

The average paid to one school in respect of travel, meals and uniform represents 3·9 per cent. of fee income from assisted pupils or 0·5 per cent. of that from all pupils.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available *(a)* the maximum paid in respect of one pupil, and *(b)* the average paid per pupil under the assisted places scheme for the incidental expenses of (i) travel, (ii) uniforms, and (iii) school meals and of (i), (ii) and (iii) together;

(2) whether he will list in the *Official Report* for the latest year for which figures are available the percentage of the average assistance with fees for a pupil under the assisted places scheme represented by the assistance with incidental expenses for travel, meals and uniform.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985, columns *349-350*]: Information on payments for incidental expenses in respect of individual pupils is not collected by the Department. For the school year 1984-85, average payments per pupil were as follows:

	£ per pupil
Travel	29
Uniform	18
Meals	18
All Three	65

The total is equivalent to 4·8 per cent. of the tuition fee remission payments.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage fee increase in each school participating in the assisted places scheme in each year since its introduction; and what are the increases for the next academic year.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985, c. *349-50*]: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage fee increase over previous year

September

School	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Abbey	11·3	4·0	4·1	5·5
Abingdon	11·7	6·8	6·5	9·9
Aldenham	3·6	5·2	5·0	—
Alice Ottley	10·8	5·8	4·6	—
Alleyn's	11·2	6·9	8·5	8·7
Arnold	9·1	5·6	6·7	6·8
Ashford	10·6	8·0	7·0	9·9
Bancroft's	10·0	15·6	5·9	12·5
Batley Grammar	7·1	5·0	7·3	—
Bedales	23·1	7·8	10·4	11·7
Bedford High	13·0	5·6	6·6	9·0
Bedford Modern	12·0	6·5	6·9	9·0
Bedford 11-13	13·1	5·0	6·0	10·0
Bedford 14+	13·1	5·9	6·0	10·0
Dame Alice Harpur	13·0	8·1	6·1	10·0
Berkhamsted 11-13	10·9	4·9	9·0	6·0
Berkhamsted 13+	10·7	5·6	9·0	6·9
Berkhamsted School for Girls	15·0	7·6	9·9	11·0
Birkenhead	9·2	9·3	6·1	5·5
Bishop's Stortford Junior	•	•	•	5·8
Bishop's Stortford Senior	•	•	•	7·4
Bolton Boys and Girls	9·3	10·0	14·6	—
Bradfield College	31·3	6·9	7·1	—
Bradford Girls Grammar	15·0	10·1	6·2	11·0
Bradford Grammar	11·2	7·6	7·6	6·0
Brentwood	12·1	4·8	4·4	9·2
Brighton College 11+	13·5	4·9	6·7	5·8
Brighton College 13+	12·9	5·5	6·8	5·8
Bristol Cathedral	12·9	4·3	5·1	6·6
Bristol Grammar	14·7	2·7	6·8	7·7
Bruton School for Girls	13·6	8·0	3·7	7·2
Bury Grammar	8·4	8·3	6·4	7·2
Canford	9·7	10·9	6·6	—
Carmel College	13·9	7·8	15·5	0·8

School	1982	1983	1984	1985
Casterton Junior	10·2	7·9	24·4	—
Casterton Senior	6·9	7·9	6·9	—
Caterham	13·2	8·6	7·9	7·5
Charterhouse	15·0	0	10·7	5·0
Cheadle Hulme	10·6	6·1	6·9	5·1
Chigwell	12·1	9·0	6·0	8·0
Churchers College	10·4	7·6	0	9·3
City of London	17·3	7·6	5·0	—
City of London School for Girls	12·3	5·2	13·8	5·6
Clifton College 11+	19·5	8·5	7·0	7·1
Clifton College 13+	19·8	7·2	6·9	7·2
Clifton High 11-13	9·8	2·2	5·4	8·2
Clifton High VI Form	8·9	2·0	6·0	8·5
Colfes	9·9	6·8	9·3	7·9
Colston's 11+	15·2	9·4	4·3	—
Colston's 13+	13·2	9·3	5·0	—
Colston's Girls	11·0	6·7	7·1	7·5
Coventry	12·1	10·3	7·4	8·0
Cranleigh 11+	11·3	7·3	6·5	5·9
Cranleigh 13+	10·8	6·8	7·3	5·8
Culford	11·7	15·1	5·9	—
Dame Allan's Boys and Girls	10·5	6·0	8·7	—
Dauntsey's	12·5	0	0	16·0
Denstone College 11-12	11·4	7·7	5·1	7·1
Denstone College 13+	13·6	7·6	6·0	—
Dulwich College	11·5	7·4	8·2	9·5
Edgehill College	14·4	9·8	5·6	10·3
Eltham College	8·0	7·1	12·3	9·0
Emanuel	11·0	6·4	5·1	7·6
Epsom College	16·1	7·7	10·7	—
Exeter College	14·4	6·0	5·9	6·4
Farnborough Hill	10·0	5·1	10·0	6·0
Felsted Junior	14·7	7·0	7·0	10·0
Felsted Senior	16·3	7·0	7·0	—
Forest Boys	10·9	7·1	5·2	8·3
Forest Girls	11·0	8·1	8·1	10·0
Friends	11·6	10·4	7·2	—
Girls Public Day School Trust, London area, (10 schools)	10·0	5·0	4·5	5·5
Girls Public Day School Trust, Outside London area (12 schools)	10·0	5·0	3·9	5·2
Godolphin and Latymer	10·0	9·1	6·6	7·0
Gresham's	17·2	6·4	9·0	—
Haberdashers' Aske's (Boys)	11·9	5·2	6·0	7·7
Haberdashers' Aske's (Girls)	10·6	6·0	6·1	8·1
Hampton	11·8	7·7	7·1	9·2
Harrogate College	8·7	6·6	5·8	5·9
Hereford Cathedral	14·8	9·8	7·1	12·6
Highgate Junior	12·3	7·6	6·1	7·2
Highgate Senior	11·9	9·1	6·0	6·9
Hulme Grammar—Boys and Girls	7·0	9·3	6·5	—
Hymers College	11·7	9·1	10·1	10·1
Ipswich forms 1 & 2	11·3	7·6	7·4	8·1
Ipswich forms 3-VI	11·5	7·5	7·5	7·9
James Allen's Girls	13·3	7·4	8·9	12·7
John Lyon	6·5	9·1	10·2	—
Kent College 11-15	14·6	12·5	10·3	8·4
Kent College VI	14·8	12·2	10·2	8·7
King Edward's Bath	9·6	13·1	13·4	6·2
King Edward's, Birmingham	10·7	6·1	10·5	7·0
King Edward VI High, Birmingham	9·8	6·0	9·2	5·5
King Edward VII, Lytham	12·8	6·9	9·6	8·1
King Edward VI, Norwich	11·2	8·0	5·5	8·5
King Edward VI, Southampton	8·1	8·3	8·0	5·9
King Edward's Witley	11·9	8·0	9·5	—
King's College, Wimbledon	10·5	11·1	7·1	—
King's High School for Girls, Warwick	11·4	9·7	12·0	7·1
King's, Chester	10·6	10·6	4·8	6·8
King's, Macclesfield	16·5	8·1	7·5	—
King's, Rochester Junior	14·2	8·6	10·1	—
King's, Rochester Senior	14·0	8·6	12·6	—
King's, Worcester	11·7	9·3	9·9	10·0
Kingston Grammar	9·9	8·5	5·4	8·1
Kingswood 11+	9·8	7·5	6·3	—
Kingswood 13+	9·5	7·6	6·3	—
Kirkham Grammar	*	7·8	7·9	8·0
Lady Eleanor Holles	7·4	5·9	5·6	11·4
La Sagesse Convent 11+	10·9	7·1	7·1	—
La Sagesse Convent Yr4-VI Form	19·2	7·1	7·0	—
Latymer Upper	8·6	8·2	7·8	9·3
Leeds Girl's High	12·9	8·7	9·2	7·9
Leeds Grammar	7·7	7·4	6·9	8·9
St Faiths	6·5	0	14·7	—
Leys's	7·7	7·5	5·7	—
Liverpool College	5·9	5·0	5·0	—
Lord Wandsworth College	12·6	9·0	8·6	6·1
Loreto Convent Grammar	12·9	5·7	6·8	—
Loughborough Grammar	9·6	7·9	6·2	5·5
Loughborough High	7·1	8·0	3·5	5·2
Magdalen College	11·9	6·4	6·8	8·0
Malvern College	19·0	8·8	6·9	—
(a) The Elms with Seaford Court	13·0	7·3	7·8	—
(b) Wells House	0	16·2	5·5	—
(c) Hillstone	20·7	7·9	6·2	—
(d) The Downs	10·0	7·4	7·0	—
Manchester Grammer	12·5	7·1	8·1	6·8
Manchester High School for Girls	7·5	5·1	4·6	5·6
Maynard	11·1	6·5	8·9	—
Merchant Taylor's Boys and Girls, Liverpool	13·0	4·5	6·2	10·5
Merchant Taylor's Northwood	12·5	9·0	7·6	—
Mill Hill Junior	7·5	4·4	13·4	13·3
Mill Hill Senior	8·6	8·5	2·8	13·6
Monkton Combe 11+	7·4	9·2	10·6	8·0
Monkton Combe 13+	11·3	7·6	8·8	4·7
Monkton Combe VI Form	11·3	7·6	8·8	4·8
Mount St. Mary's College	9·4	5·3	6·0	—
Newcastle-under-Lyme	12·6	6·5	5·4	4·9
Northampton High School for Girls	11·0	5·7	5·2	—
North London Collegiate	10·3	5·3	3·2	—
Nottingham High	*	*	*	7·7
Old Palace	5·3	9·2	7·5	—
Perse School for Boys	10·6	5·1	7·2	9·5
Perse School for Girls	9·1	2·9	3·9	5·8
Plymouth College	13·5	4·9	9·4	8·9
Pocklington	7·9	6·5	7·7	8·6
Portsmouth Grammar	9·8	8·2	4·1	6·9
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Blackburn	14·7	10·4	5·9	—
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Wakefield	10·1	5·4	12·9	1·2
Queen Elizabeth Hospital	9·0	4·8	6·0	—
Queen Mary, Lytham	12·7	6·9	9·6	8·1
Queen's College, Taunton Junior	13·3	6·2	6·1	—
Queen's College, Taunton Senior	15·4	6·9	5·8	—
Queen's College, London	6·9	6·8	17·8	12·1
Queen's School, Chester	16·3	7·2	13·5	4·0
Ratcliffe College	7·4	7·1	8·5	—
(a) Grace Dieu	11·5	7·8	7·3	—
(b) Main School	11·7	7·7	7·3	—
(c) VI Form	6·2	6·6	5·9	—
Redland High	8·8	3·9	6·6	—
Red Maid's	10·0	21·2	8·4	6·6
Reigate Grammer	11·9	6·6	6·4	—
Repton 11+	14·2	7·2	6·6	—
Repton 13+	13·4	7·7	8·8	8·0
Rossall Year 1	13·4	7·3	8·8	7·9
Rossall Year 2	13·4	7·6	8·8	7·8
Rossall Year 3	13·4	7·1	8·9	7·8
Rossall Years 4 & 5	13·2	7·5	8·6	7·8
Rossall VI Year 1	13·2	7·3	8·3	7·6
Rossall VI Year 2	7·7	5·2	5·8	14·8
Royal Grammar, Guildford				

School	1982	1983	1984	1985
Royal Grammar, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	7·9	4·5	5·3	6·2
Royal Grammar, Worcester	*	*	5·3	7·5
St. Albans	13·5	9·1	7·5	7·5
St. Albans High School for Girls	12·8	11·1	11·2	—
St. Ambrose College	19·2	6·8	4·7	6·7
St. Anselm's College 11+	13·0	6·4	7·5	9·1
St. Anselm's College VI Form	12·5	5·9	1·4	7·6
St. Bede's College	9·2	5·1	3·8	—
St. Bees Forms 1 & 2	13·9	0	0	7·3
St. Bees Forms 3-VI	17·9	4·5	4·3	7·2
St. Benedict's Middle	10·0	11·1	9·4	—
St. Benedict's Senior	9·6	8·4	8·4	—
St. Catherine's	15·8	10·5	18·2	—
St. Dunstan's College, College	12·1	7·8	5·5	12·1
St. Edmunds College 11-13	12·0	9·5	8·9	0·7
St. Edmunds College 13+	12·0	9·5	9·0	6·8
St. Edward's College	24·7	15·3	2·2	4·0
St. George's College	5·9	9·0	14·8	10·1
St. Helen's	9·4	7·6	7·4	7·9
St. John's College, Southsea	25·3	4·4	2·5	1·9
St. John's, Leatherhead	10·7	10·3	7·3	9·0
St. Joseph's College 11-16	12·1	8·1	7·6	5·1
St. Joseph's College 16+	11·8	8·2	6·9	5·3
St. Joseph's Convent	15·4	8·8	6·1	10·0
St. Mary's College	14·9	9·1	11·9	8·7
St. Mary's RC	14·6	14·4	11·1	11·0
St. Mary's Hall	23·3	7·4	8·9	3·4
St. Maurs Convent Forms 1-5	10·3	7·3	6·8	—
St. Maurs Convent VI Form	17·1	4·2	13·3	10·0
St. Paul's Prep School	10·9	7·3	7·1	10·0
St. Paul's Main School	10·8	7·2	7·1	10·1
St. Paul's Girls	11·6	8·1	6·7	10·3
St. Peter's 11-13	10·8	3·1	4·4	6·1
St. Peter's 13+	13·3	3·2	3·6	—
St. Peter's VI Form	13·3	5·2	8·0	—
St. Swithun's	11·7	8·4	7·9	8·2
Salesian College 11+	11·6	14·6	16·4	10·9
Salesian College VI Form	12·8	13·2	10·0	10·6
School of St. Helen and St. Katherine	16·5	8·8	8·7	—
Sedbergh	15·0	8·7	8·2	10·9
Sir William Perkin's	10·6	7·2	6·2	5·8
Stamford	11·1	5·8	6·3	—
Stamford High	13·1	4·1	6·7	—
Stockport Grammar	13·2	7·9	8·5	—
Stonyhurst College Prep Schools	10·6	10·0	9·9	—
Stonyhurst College	10·3	9·9	11·0	—
Stowe	9·7	7·5	8·4	9·4
Sutton Valence	9·2	4·6	6·6	7·0
Talbot Heath	10·0	5·7	5·4	8·2
Taunton 11+	9·0	9·2	9·0	7·9
Taunton VI Form	12·1	9·3	8·9	7·8
Tonbridge	16·0	6·2	6·4	6·3
Trent Junior College	11·7	7·8	7·5	7·3
Trent College Senior	11·2	7·7	7·3	7·2
Trinity School of John Whitgift	10·4	5·1	5·9	6·9
Truro	14·3	8·3	9·2	—
Truro High	15·1	1·5	6·8	5·9
University College 11-13	9·1	4·4	8·7	6·0
University College 13+ and VI	8·9	4·5	8·6	—
Upton Hall Convent	12·5	6·9	9·1	8·3
Ursuline High	7·9	8·3	5·3	—
Wakefield High	4·8	5·3	10·4	1·3
Walthamstow Hall	17·6	23·7	7·6	10·9
Warwick	9·5	4·9	6·4	8·9
Wellingborough Junior	16·3	9·5	4·6	5·4
Wellingborough Senior	16·2	9·3	4·2	5·1
Wellington College (a) Eagle House	8·7	8·3	8·9	8·1
(b) Wellington College	9·2	7·8	7·2	7·6
Wellington	13·6	10·0	9·1	—
Wells Cathedral	10·1	7·4	5·0	7·1
West Buckland	*	*	*	10·3
Westminster-Under	*	*	*	—
Whitgift	10·5	4·8	5·0	6·8
William Hulme Grammar	12·3	8·0	7·5	—
Winchester College	12·2	6·3	6·0	8·5
Wisbech Grammar 11+	*	*	0	9·7
Wisbech Grammar 13+	*	*	0	8·9
Withington Girls	9·5	7·5	7·2	—
Wolverhampton Grammar	4·7	6·2	6·7	—
Woodbridge	22·1	9·5	8·0	—
Woodhouse Grove	7·6	11·2	5·0	5·6
Wycliffe College Junior	15·6	6·9	6·9	8·5
Wycliffe College Senior	15·5	7·0	6·8	8·5
Weighted average (all schools)	10·9	7·4	9·8	n/a

* School was not a participant in the preceding year.
— Fee increases not yet proposed or agreed.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are current salary rates for all teaching grades employed by the Inner London Education Authority; for each grade, what is the inner London weighting allowance; if he will estimate the consequences of a 6·9 per cent. increase in salary rates, giving the revised pay scales; and if there are any proposals to increase the weighting allowance.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: Current salary scales for teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools, operative from 1 April 1984, are set out in the Remuneration of Teachers (Primary and Secondary) (Amendment) Order 1984 (S.I., No. 1650) and apply nationally. The minima and maxima of the main scales are as follows:

	Scale 1	Scale 2	Scale 3	£ per annum Scale 4	Senior Teacher	Deputy Head*	Head Teacher
Minimum	5,442	6,252	7,734	9,201	9,915	6,807	9,573
Maximum	†9,201	9,597	11,031	12,363	13,395	16,689	22,941
Uprating these figures by 6·9 per cent. would give the following salary rates:							
Minimum	5,817	6,683	8,268	9,836	10,599	7,277	10,234
Maximum	9,836	10,259	11,792	13,216	14,319	17,841	24,524

*There are 12 separate scales for deputy headteachers and 14 for headteachers. The figures given are the minima of the lowest and maxima of the highest scales.

†For good honours graduates. Maximum for other teachers is £8,556.

Inner London allowance is payable at the rate of £1,038 for all school teachers serving in the inner London area. No proposals have so far been tabled in the Burnham Committee for an increase in the London allowance for 1985.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Cumbria (Bribery and Corruption)

Mr. Franks asked the Attorney-General, if, in the light of the further information now made available to him, he will request the Director of Public Prosecutions to re-open the police inquiry into the allegations of attempted bribery referred to in the answer of 4 June, *Official Report*, column *113*; and if he will request the Director of Public Prosecutions to seek the extension of the police inquiry to include other relevant matters.

The Attorney-General: I shall consider with the Director of Public Prosecutions the further information with which I have been provided and write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Franks asked the Attorney-General if he will request the Director of Public Prosecutions to seek a police inquiry into the circumstances referred to in planning committee minute No. 1134, of the South Lakeland district council, dated 27 November 1984, in the light of allegations of improper private gain by a third party arising from the breach of confidentiality mentioned in that minute.

The Attorney-General: This is a matter which, in the first instance, should be referred to the chief constable of the Cumbria police.

St. Olave's, St. Thomas's and St. John's United Charities

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Attorney-General whether he will request the Charity Commissioners to conduct an inquiry under section 6 of the Charities Act 1960 into the allegations of maladministration and conflict of professional and private interests concerning the St. Olave's, St. Thomas's and St. John's United Charities.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the trustees of the St. Olave's, St. Thomas's and St. John's United Charities are themselves investigating, through their auditors, certain allegations concerning the activities of one of the charity's officers. They will report to the charity commissioners the result of those inquiries and any action they propose to take in consequence. In these circumstances I do not think there are at present sufficient grounds to request the charity commissioners to conduct a formal inquiry under section 6 of the Charity Act 1960.

Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984

Mr. Chapman asked the Attorney-General if he is satisfied that the requirement to give first consideration to the children of divorced parents is being met, following the implementation of the provisions of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984.

The Attorney-General: Yes.

Mr. Chapman asked the Attorney-General how many maintenance orders have been made for fixed terms; how many have been terminated; and in how many cases both parties have been barred from making applications to the court since the provisions of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 came into operation.

The Attorney-General: The numbers of maintenance orders made for fixed term have only been available from the beginning of 1985. In the period from January to April of this year there were 6,115 such orders made (excluding those made at the principal registry) to benefit a spouse with or without a child.

The remainder of the information sought is not available without incurring disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chapman asked the Attorney-General how many clean break divorce applications have been granted since the provisions of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 came into operation.

The Attorney-General: This information is not available and could not be collected without disporportionate cost.

Mr. Chapman asked the Attorney-General in what ways the Lord Chancellor's Department is monitoring the effects of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department is monitoring the effect of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 by the collection of statistical information from the county courts. The nature of the information collected was revised at the beginning of 1985 following the implementation of the Act.

Mr. Jock Kane

Mr. Foulkes asked the Attorney-General if he will now prosecute Mr. Jock Kane under the Official Secrets Act following the preparation by him of the manuscript for his proposed book "GCHQ: The Negative Asset"; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No decision has yet been taken on whether criminal proceedings should be instituted against Mr. Kane. Civil proceedings to restrain him from publishing the manuscript of the proposed book or any part of it are still pending and Mr. Kane stands restrained in the meantime by an interlocutory injunction to that effect.

Extended Detention

Mr. Lawrence asked the Attorney-General whether it is proposed that the Crown Prosecution Service should be responsible for making the applications for extended detention provided for by section 43 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

The Attorney-General: Although section 43 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 requires that such applications be made by a constable, it will sometimes be desirable for the officer to be legally represented. A requirement that the Crown Prosecution Service should undertake such applications would be inconsistent with its independent status and there will be no such requirement. But a crown prosecutor will have a discretion to provide legal representation for the making of such applications in cases where it appears appropriate to him to do so. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I both hope that when it is considered to be desirable for an officer to be represented on an application under section 43, such representation will normally be provided by a crown prosecutor. Such representation will normally be provided by the crown prosecutor once the service is operating.

TRANSPORT

Transit Permits

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made any representations to the French transport authorities seeking the introduction of special transit permits for heavy goods vehicles proceeding to other countries, particularly Spain and Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: British hauliers need a permit to transit France under the provisions of the agreement concluded in 1969. The number of permits made available by the French authorities each year falls short of our requirements and we are pressing the French to remove the restrictions on both bilateral and transit traffic. We are also campaigning within the European Community for measures to liberalise international road haulage, in accordance with the recent judgment of the European Court of Justice.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to introduce a new shape for the heavy goods vehicle road tax disc to improve detection of tax avoidance.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I agree that a distinctive heavy goods vehicle tax disc would aid enforcement, and the Department is now considering the practical implications including costs. The views of the police will be sought shortly.

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to control the number of heavy goods vehicles entering the United Kingdom from other countries which restrict the number of British vehicles entering them; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Bilateral agreements with the majority of European countries provide for an annual quota of road haulage journeys in each direction, and any restrictions imposed on British vehicles are reciprocated. We shall continue to press for the removal of all such restrictions.

M3

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the current roadworks on the M3 at Sunbury have been necessary; when were they started; when they are expected to be completed; what will be the cost; how many reported accidents have occurred since the commencement of this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: This work is necessary to relieve pressure on the walls retaining the motorway embankments and to strengthen the carriageways through the junction. It began last August and is due to be completed in October this year, at an estimated cost of about £3 million. Since work started, one fatal and eight slight personal injury accidents have been reported.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the current public inquiry into the extension of the M3 motorway to be completed; and when he is likely to receive the inspector's report.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer to my hon. Friend to my reply on 22 July 1985.

Community Transport Services

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reach a decision on the issue of consents for the existing and planned expansion of dial-a-ride and community transport services.

Mrs. Chalker: Consent under the Interim Provisions Act was given last October for the GLC to purchase £700,000 worth of vehicles for dial-a-ride schemes. The council's present application, for additional vehicles up to a value of £900,000, which would involve substantial leasing liabilities over a 5-year period, is under consideration.

Off-licences (Petrol Stations)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for his drink-drive campaign of the incidence of petrol filling stations holding off-licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The number of garages actually holding liquor licences appears to be very small, but my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Department, and I are keeping a close watch on the situation. In doing so, we shall keep in mind the particular aspect to which my hon. Friend refers.

Hayes Bypass

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to reach a decision on the Greater London council's application to carry out noise insulation work in association with the construction of the Hayes bypass.

Mrs. Chalker: I am not certain what point the hon. Member has in mind. If he is referring to the application for consent under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 made by the GLC on 28 March, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave that consent on 13 May.

Light Vans

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate, for light vans and their derivatives, including minibuses and motor-caravans, but excluding car-derived vans, under 1·52 tonnes unladen weight *(a)* the number and severity of casualties in such vehicles for the last year where information is available, *(b)* seat belt wearing rates for front seat occupants in such vehicles, including wearing rates in accidents and *(c)* the crash-protection standards which apply to such vehicles other than those applying to front seat belts; and if he has any plans to introduce national regulations to improve the protection of occupants in such vehicles in the event of a collision.

Mrs. Chalker: *(a)* The number and severity of casualties of occupants of all types of light vans, including car—derived vans, for the last year figures are available (1983) was 102 killed, 1,447 seriously injured and 5,372 slightly injured. The majority of these casualties probably

occurred in car — derived vans, but no separate information is collected. I will provide figures for minibuses and motor caravans as soon as possible.

(b) The seat belt wearing rates of front seat occupants of light vans, including car — derived vans, in 1983 were—drivers 81 per cent., passengers 83 per cent. The data for wearing rates in light van accidents are incomplete, but the indications are that they are probably similar. The wearing rates of front seat occupants of minibuses and motor caravans have not been seperately recorded.

(c) The crash protection requirements for cars do not apply to the great majority of the vehicles in question. However, some crash protection features might be usefully incorporated in the design of these vehicles, and I will consider what might be done.

Anti-lock Braking

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce national regulations requiring the mandatory fitment of anti-lock braking systems on motorcycles.

Mrs. Chalker: Anti-lock braking systems for motorcycles are still under development and must first be proved in service conditions. Trials are under way.

M25

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now give the expected opening dates of the M25, Reigate to Wisley sections, and all other remaining stages of the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We expect to have the whole of the M25 open to traffic by the end of 1986. The actual opening dates of the remaining sections will depend on the progress made by individual contractors which in turn is influenced by weather and ground conditions.

The expected opening dates for these unfinished sections are as follows:

	Dates
Wisley-Leatherhead	August 1985
Leatherhead-Reigate	August 1985
Leatherhead Interchange	Partly open already but will come into full use August 1985
Poyle-M4	September 1985
M4-M40	September 1985
M4 Interchange	June 1986
Swanley-Sevenoaks	July 1986
Micklefield Green-Bedmond Road	October 1986
Bedmond Road-A405	October 1986
A405-The Bell (A6)	November 1986
The Bell-A1 (South Mimms)	November 1986

Seat Belts

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the road safety recommendations in the Transport Committee's report, and with particular respect to the fitting of rear seat belts and ways of encouraging the implementation of cost — effective small engineering schemes for accident reduction.

Mrs. Chalker: As regards rear seat belts I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) on 24 July.

As regards cost—effective small engineering schemes for accident reduction, the Department takes every opportunity to encourage local authorities to maintain an active programme. It is, however, for individual authorities to decide their own priorities for expenditure.

Windscreens

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the proportion of heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles, respectively, which come on to the United Kingdom market fitted with high penetration resistance laminated windscreens.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not keep this information, but believe most HGVs and PSVs sold here have toughened glass windscreens.

Midland Links Motorway Viaducts

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the report will be completed on investigations into the Midland links motorway viaducts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have today placed the interim report on the concrete investigations of the Midland links viaducts in the Library of the House. It deals with the investigations to date and the remedial and protective measures which have been taken.

Nothing has so far emerged to call into question the structural integrity of the viaducts and no traffic restrictions are proposed on this account.

Nevertheless, the report recommends that further research should be carried out into the effects on reinforced concrete of water contaminated by de-icing salts. This will enable an evaluation to be made of the most effective long-term measures. The problems identified are not unique to these viaducts and the work to be undertaken over the next few years will be of benefit to other structures.

Urea was used as a de-icing agent on the Midland links last winter and its use will be continued this coming winter.

Passenger Transport Authorities

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Transport what expenditure levels he proposes to determine in respect of 1986-87 for the new passenger transport authorities.

Mr. Ridley: I expect to receive shortly the financial plans of the passenger transport executives which are submitted to me under the provisions of the Transport Act 1983. My advice under section 3(5) of that Act was issued to the PTEs in May this year, and I expect the plans to include projections based on that advice. Expenditure levels determined for the new authorities will need to take into account the best available information from the PTEs, and I do not therefore propose to announce figures until the new authorities are established.

EMPLOYMENT

Pollution

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what guidance is given to the factories

inspectorate concerning the disclosure of information to the public following the investigation of alleged health risks;

(2) what guidance is given to the industrial air pollution inspectorate concerning the disclosure of information to the public following the investigation of alleged noxious emissions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The general requirements for, and restrictions on, the disclosure of information obtained by factory inspectors are contained in section 28 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. It is the factory inspectorate's practice to disclose as much information as possible to the public on specific investigations.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have registered as willing to work, giving details of their skill and experience, at jobcentres covering Mitcham and Morden at the most recent convenient date; and how many people were registered as unemployed for the purposes of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 681 people registered for employment at jobcentres in the parliamentary constituency of Mitcham and Morden. This figure includes some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefits. Jobseekers are no longer required to register at a jobcentre as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit; nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre.

The number of unemployed people claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in Mitcham and Morden parliamentary constituency on 13 June was 3,557. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the number of *(a)* lone parents, *(b)* heads of two-parent families and *(c)* married women in full-time employment, part-time employment, self-employed and unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available estimates come from the 1984 labour force survey and are shown in the following table:

Persons aged 16 or over in Great Britain

(Thousands)

	Employees in full-time employment*	*Employees in part-time* employment*	*Self-employed*	*All in employment**	*Out of employment and seeking work†*
Lone parents with dependent children‡	218	181	43	442	97
Heads of two-parent families, with dependent children‡	4,521	33	933	5,492	573
Married women‖	2,649	3,265	510	6,433	533

* The full-time/part-time classification is based on the description given by the survey respondents not the number of hours worked. The total in employment includes those who did not state whether they worked full or part-time and those whose employment status was not stated.

† Also includes those not seeking work because of temporary sickness or holiday or because they were waiting to start a new job or awaiting the results of job applications. Full-time students who satisfy these conditions but who are unavailable to start work because they must complete their education are excluded.

‡ Dependent children are those under 16, or those aged 16 to 18 still in full-time education.

‖ A small number in this group will also appear in the lone parent group.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the average weekly earnings of *(a)* women, *(b)* men, *(c)* lone mothers, *(d)* lone fathers, *(e)* heads of two-parent families, *(f)* married women with dependent children and *(g)* married women without dependent children, respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The most recent available information relating gross earnings to household composition and circumstances is that provided by the 1983 family expenditure survey and is set out as follows:

*Average gross normal weekly wages and salaries**

	£
For employees who are head of household	
All men	170·3
All women	93·8
One women with children†	63·8
One man with children†	†152·6
One man, one women and one, two or three children†	181·2
For employees who are the wives of the head of household	
Working with dependent children‡	55·6
Working without dependent children	81·4

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1983‖

* Covering both full-time and part-time employment. Earnings from self-employment and households where no wages or salaries were received because the individuals were unemployed or unoccupied are omitted from these calculations.

† Based on relatively few households and subject to a substantial sampling margin of possible error.

‡ Persons who are under 18 years of age and unmarried are regarded as children in the survey.

‖ The figures relate to the calendar year and are based on a sample of about 7,000 households and will be subject to a margin of sampling and reporting uncertainty.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many doctors have been registered for unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit in the last three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 11 February 1985 at column 26.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the estimated number of additional workers in additional jobs created from the beginning of 1983 to the end of 1984 after making allowance for the additional number of second jobs and the additional number of places on temporary employment schemes.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between December 1982 and December 1984 the employed labour force in Great Britain increased by 553,000. It is estimated that over the same period the number of participants in special employment and training schemes included in the employed labour force reduced by 170,000. The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified but estimates from the labour force surveys suggest an increase of 60,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984 in the number of people with a second job as an employee.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women registered as unemployed and under the age of 25 years in the London borough of Wandsworth on 30 June.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Statistics of unemployment are not available for the date requested. On 11 April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, there were 3,996 male and 2,177 female unemployed claimants under 25 years of age in the London borough of Wandsworth.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women registered as unemployed in the London borough of Wandsworth on 30 June.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Statistics of unemployment are not available for the date requested. On 13 June 1985 there were 11,539 and 4,820 unemployed male and female claimants respectively in the London borough of Wandsworth.

Finer Committee Report

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The recommendations of this committee on employment matters have been overtaken, since it reported in 1974, by the passage and implementation of equality and employment protection legislation, the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the establishment of the youth training scheme and the extension of adult training provision by the the Manpower Services Commission. In many areas rights and opportunities have advanced further than the committee envisaged in its recommendations.

Redundancies

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing redundancies for the period from May 1979 to date involving 10 or more persons as due to occur in Great Britain in each order of the Standard Industrial Classification.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information is given in the following table:

Confirmed redundancies by industry: May 1979 to June 1985†: Great Britain*

Industry‡ (SIC 1980)	*Class*	*Number of Redundancies (thousands)*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	01-03	4·7
Coal extraction and coke	11-12	38·4
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	13	1·8
Mineral oil processing	14	3·3
Nuclear fuel production	15	2·4
Gas, electricity and water	16-17	7·6
Extraction of other minerals and ores	21-23	2·7
Metal manufacture	22	143·5
Manufacture of non-metallic products	24	58·9
Chemical industry	25	56·3
Production of man-made fibres	26	15·0
Shipbuilding and repairing	30	34·0
Manufacture of metal goods	31	135·3
Mechanical engineering	32	271·3
Manufacture of office machinery etc.	33	18·1
Electrical and electronic engineering	34	148·4
Manufacture of motor vehicles	35	139·8
Manufacture of aerospace and other transport equipment	36	43·3
Instrument engineering	37	19·5
Food drink and tobacco	41-42	131·5
Textiles	43	106·2
Leather, footwear and clothing	44-45	103·4
Timber and furniture	46	40·1
Paper, printing and publishing	47	71·6
Other manufacturing industries	48-49	74·8
Construction	50	178·4
Wholesale distribution	61-63	38·5
Retail distribution	64-65	85·9
Hotel and catering	66	25·9
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	67	5·1
Transport	71-77	33·9
Telecommunications	79	22·1
Insurance, banking, finance etc.	81-85	35·2
Public administration and defence	91-94	34·4
Medical and other health services	95	12·7
Other services (not elsewhere specified)	99-99,00	33·8
All industries and services		2,219·7

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† Includes provisional figures for May and June 1985.

‡ Figures for 1979 to 1983 are estimated because of the change in the industrial classification system made in January 1984.

School Leavers

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many school leavers there were in *(a)* Hyndburn and *(b)* north-east Lancashire in 1984; how many (i) secured full-time employment, (ii) secured part-time employment, (iii) entered further or higher educational establishments, (iv) entered the youth training scheme, (v) returned to school and (vi) did not register for any other reason.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information which is available from the Lancashire careers service about pupils reaching minimum school leaving age in 1984 in Hyndburn and north-east Lancashire at 8 November 1984 is as follows:

	Hyndburn	North-east Lancashire‡
Number eligible to leave school	1,190	4,941
Number of known leavers	819	3,262
Entering employment*	291	1,041
Continuing education†	371	1,679
Entering YTS	354	1,585
Did not register	78	330
Unemployed	96	306

* Careers Service records do not differentiate between those entering full and part-time employment.

† Careers Service records do not differentiate between those remaining at school and entering further and higher education.

‡ Consisting of Hyndburn, Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people entered the youth training scheme in *(a)* Hyndburn and *(b)* north-east Lancashire in 1984;

(2) what was the placement percentage of those completing the youth training scheme in *(a)* Hyndburn and *(b)* north-east Lancashire;

(3) how many people completed the youth training scheme in *(a)* Hyndburn and *(b)* north-east Lancashire in 1984.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested on numbers of young people who entered or completed youth training scheme programmes between January and December 1984 is given in the following table:

Hyndburn local authority district	North-east Lancashire	
Entrants	450	3,999
Completions	136	1,504

Note:

North-east Lancashire covers the local authority districts of Blackburn Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale.

I regret that information on the destinations of young people completing schemes is not available in the precise form requested. However, information based on a 15 per cent. sample of young people in the county of Lancashire who left the youth training scheme between July and September 1984 shows that, at the time of the survey, 63 per cent. were in work.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the youth training scheme in the Cheltenham area since its inception.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Progress on the youth training scheme in the Cheltenham area has been most encouraging. Some 1,500 entrants in the Cheltenham local authority district have benefited from the scheme so far. The undertaking that all minimum age school leavers remaining unemployed would be offered a suitable place on the scheme by Christmas has been effectively met in the first two years of the scheme.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment what action he has taken to seek to ensure that local education authorities in England carry out their statutory obligations in respect of the youth training scheme and benefit.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have asked the head of the Department of Employment's careers service branch to write to all chief education officers in England to remind them that local education authorities are, by virtue of section 12(2) of the Employment and Training Act 1973, under a statutory obligation to give information to the unemployment benefit service on behalf of the Secretary of State concerning those youngsters who refuse a reasonable opportunity of receiving training on the youth training scheme. A copy of the letter which was sent on 11 July has been placed in the Library.

The letter refers to the fact that this information is required in connection with the determination of questions as to whether such youngsters should have their benefit temporarily reduced. The letter makes it clear that I am strongly of the view that this is a reasonable requirement on local education authorities which does not in any sense mean that the youth training scheme is "compulsory". Youngsters who, in the past, unreasonably refused jobs or "approved training" were similarly liable to have their benefit reduced: the designation of the youth training scheme as "approved training" is simply an extension of that long established principle.

Family Incomes

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are his latest estimates of average gross weekly earnings for the following, working age, family types: single man, single woman, man, wife and one child, man, wife and two children, man, wife and three children and lone mother and two children.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most recent available information relating gross earnings to household composition is that provided by the 1983 family expenditure survey (published in December 1984) and is set out in the table. Figures from the family expenditure survey for 1984 will be available later this year.

Average gross weekly normal wages and salaries (£) for households where the head of household is an employee and aged over 15 but under 65 years*

Household composition†	£
One man	123·2
One woman	72·1
One man, one woman and one child	191·6
One man, one woman and two children	197·5
One man, one woman and three children	200·5
One woman and two or more children	56·9

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1983.

* Households where the only earnings were from self-employment or where no wages or salaries were received because the individuals were unemployed or unoccupied were omitted from these calculations.

† Persons who are under 18 years of age and unmarried are classed as children in the survey.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1984 the weight given to expenditure on services and on transport and vehicles in the retail prices index at present compared with 1978, 1970 and 1956.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Retail Prices Index Expenditure Weights out of 1,000

	Services	*Transport and vehicles*
1956	58	68
1970	55	126
1978	56	140
1984	65	158

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* information showing the weight council house rents have in the retail prices index on the same basis as given in the answer of 1 December 1982, *Official Report*, columns 208-90.

Mr. Alan Clark: The weight attached to local authority rents in the retail price index for the current year is approximately 28 out of 1,000.

Domestic Gas Explosions (Fatalities)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have died in domestic gas explosions in Scotland in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table shows the number of deaths in Scotland as a result of fires and/or explosions involving gas in domestic premises since 1977.

Year	*Number of deaths*
1977	1
1978	0
1979	1
1980	2
1981	0
1982	1
1983	2
1984	1
1985*	2

* First six months provisional.
Note: Statistics pre-1977 are incomplete.

Careers Service

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance he has issued to local education authorities about their provision of a careers service; and whether he has any plans to alter it.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend's current general guidance to local education authorities about the careers service is given in a memorandum issued jointly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in November 1980.

I have asked officials to take urgent steps to bring the memorandum up to date. In particular, I see a need for greater emphasis on the importance of work with employers as a basis for sound, practical and realistic help to youngsters.

Putney Gas Explosion

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Employment when the report of the Health and Safety Executive on the Putney gas explosion will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. 70]: The report by the Health and Safety Executive to the Health and Safety Commission of the investigation into the Putney explosion on 10 January 1985 at Newnham House, Manor Fields, Putney, is published today. I have placed a copy in the Library.

The investigation finds that gas escaped from a crack in the 150 mm grey cast iron gas main buried at the rear of the building. The crack was probably caused by a combination of stresses from heavy vehicles and ground subsidence acting upon the pipe which rested on the concrete encasement of a drain, which had the effect of concentrating the stresses at the point where the pipe cracked.

Although the number of serious gas explosions involving mains is small, the investigation indicates that the British Gas Corporation needs to re-examine its priorities for the replacement of grey cast iron mains, taking into account the factors which contributed to this tragedy. This re-examination will need to take into consideration the level of expenditure required for an adequate programme of replacement. When it is completed, the corporation will be expected to justify publicly its conclusions. This is the main recommendation of the report.

The report also recommends that action is taken at Manor Fields to replace the gas mains there and to reconstruct the roads to an adequate load-bearing standard.

Additionally, the HSE has commenced work on drawing up guidance to the construction industry on the safeguards required when working near cast iron gas mains. I am asking the HSC to follow up the recommendations made by HSE and to satisfy itself that they are implemented as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Deportation

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were recommended for deportation with no custodial sentence during 1984; and in how many cases the court released *(a)* subject to conditions and *(b)* without conditions.

Mr. Waddington: In 1984 there were 384 court recommendations for deportation with no custodial sentence; the court directed release subject to conditions in 101 cases and without conditions in 171.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of charges brought during the 1984-85 miners' strike have yet to be heard by the courts.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs Legislation (Malaysia)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will study the laws in Malaysia relating to drug offences and their potential introduction into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Meller: The legislation relating to the misuse of drugs in Malaysia, like that in the United Kingdom, seeks to deal with the particular nature of the drug problem in

that country and reflects the measures which are thought to be the best suited to that situation. We are kept informed of the drugs legislation of overseas countries, including Malaysia, and draw such lessons as seem appropriate.

Emergency Plans

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to ensure that communities prepare and keep updated their emergency plans; and if he will consider what incentives he can offer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Responsibility for making, reviewing and revising civil defence plans at community and other levels rests with county councils, assisted by district councils, and we have asked councils to complete their plans by the end of the year. The civil defence adviser to the Home Office has almost completed a programme of visits to all county councils in England and Wales to discuss the present state of civil defence planning and to offer advice.

Local authorities have already been informed that the Home Office is prepared to consider additional grant aid towards the cost of staff needed to prepare and revise their plans. In addition, central training is made available to community advisers and a package of standardised training material is in preparation for local use.

Military Chemical Weapons

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to take steps to inform the public of the properties of military chemical weapons and the protective measures he intends to introduce.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the absence of a ban on chemical weapons we are considering the questions of detection and warning of chemical attacks and of protective measures against them. It is too early to say when this will be completed. Some information on the threat of chemical attack is already available in section 2 of the "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities", which local authorities have been asked to make available to the public; a copy is in the Library.

Attendance Centres

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many compulsory attendance centres have been established since 1983.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1 January 1983, seven new attendance centres have been established.

Miss Hilda Murrell

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further reports he has received from the chief constable of West Mercia on the progress of police inquiries into the murder of Miss Hilda Murrell.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The chief constable of West Mercia has kept my right hon. and learned Friend informed of continuing inquiries in this case. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 22 July at column 342 for the most recent information provided by the chief constable about progress in this case.

Commonwealth Immigrants (Funds)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those circulars published by his Department between 1966 and 1985 regarding the Local Government Act 1966, section 11, entitled "Funding Regarding Commonwealth Immigrants".

Mr. Waddington: Four Home Office circulars have been published between 1966 and 1985 about section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. They are listed as follows:

Home Office circular number	*Date of issue*	*Title*
15/1967	21 February 1967	"Commonwealth Immigrants"
169/1970	29 July 1970	"Commonwealth Immigrants"
97/1982	17 November 1982	"Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966"
94/1985	30 August 1985	"Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966—*Review of Posts*"

Race Relations Act 1965

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to review the working of the Race Relations Act 1965 with regard to its use to restrict recruiting of Welsh-speaking people to work in homes for elderly people or homes for mentally handicapped people in predominantly Welsh-speaking parts of Wales.

Mr. Waddington: No. I am aware of the hon. Member's concern about a particular case, but on present information, we are not persuaded that there is a need for any action on our part.

Vivisection

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been of universities and colleges for breaking the rules on vivisection.

Mr. Mellor: None. A summary of infringements of the 1876 Act and the conditions of licences issued under the Act and of the action taken in respect of these infringements is published annually in the "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals Great Britain". For 1984 information is given in paragraphs 12 to 16 of Cmnd. 9574.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what arrangements are made for the Government to monitor the experiments on animals by drug companies;

(2) how many staff are employed in the monitoring of animals used for experiments by drug companies;

(3) how many drug companies have licences to carry out experiments on animals; and if he will list them.

Mr. Mellor: The 15 members of the Home Office cruelty to animals inspectorate carry out inspections of

premises where medical, dental and veterinary drugs are developed and tested. They do so in precisely the same way as they inspect all other establishments registered with the Home Office under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 as places where experiments, likely to cause pain, may be carried out on live animals. Inspections are carried out mainly without prior notice, to ensure compliance with the 1876 Act and conditions attached to licences issued to individuals under the Act.

I regret that it is not possible to identify the premises registered under the 1876 Act which belong to drug companies, nor the number of licensees employed by such companies.

Law and Order

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on law and order services in each year since 1979; and what the annual increases were in percentage terms, and in real terms.

Mr. Brittan: The information requested has been drawn from table 3.9 in volume II of the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" (Cmnd. 9428-II) and is set out in the table below. The figures are for the total law, order and protective services programme, excluding expenditure on protective services (immigration and citizenship, fire, community services, central and miscellaneous services and civil defence).

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85**
Cash expenditure (£ million)	2,103	2,607	3,095	3,445	3,792	4,183
Annual percentage increase		24·0	18·6	11·4	10·1	10·4
Expenditure in real terms† (£ million, 1979-80 prices)	2,103	2,297	2,570	2,469	2,599	2,746
Annual percentage increase		4·5	7·9	4·2	5·3	5·7

* 1984-85 figures represent provisional outturn.

† The real terms figures have been obtained by deflating the cash figures to a base of average 1979-80 prices, using the gross domestic product deflator at market prices.

Terrorism

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to take any action about the presence in Great Britain of Roberto Piaza and four other Italians who have been convicted of terrorist offences in Italy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: At present I am not satisfied that the information currently available to me is sufficient to justify deportation, taking account of the requirements of the EC law. But I shall keep this aspect of these cases under review. If there was any indication of illegal activity in this country the police would certainly take appropriate action. It would be for the Italian authorities to apply for their extradition. All five were the subjects of unsuccessful applications for extradition in 1981.

There are deficiencies in our current extradition arrangements with Italy and we have entered into discussion with the Italian Government with a view to updating the list of offences for which extradition can be granted to include certain terrorist and drug offences.

Filling Stations (Off-licences)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to indicate whether he intends to introduce legislation to prohibit the issue of off-licences to operators of petrol filling stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The matter is currently under review; no decision has yet been reached on the need for legislation in this field.

Police Interviews

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement, in the light of the impending implementation of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, on the availability of financial and manpower resources for the tape recording of interviews with suspects within the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Field trials in the tape recording of police interviews with suspects are currently being conducted at Croydon and Holborn stations in the Metropolitan police district. Extension of the trials to Clapham, Holloway and the central cheque squad is planned for later this year.

Equipment for the trials at Croydon and Holborn was supplied by the Department. Other costs, including the costs of the equipment for the extension of the trials, are being met from the Metropolitan police's existing resources. The question of the future provision for expenditure on tape recording will be included in negotiations on the size of the Metropolitan police fund.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to the availability of funds for the implementation of the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, particularly with reference to the tape recording of interviews with suspects at police stations; and if he has any plans to postpone any of the previously announced implementation dates on *(a)* financial or *(b)* other grounds.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government have announced that funds will be made available to meet the costs thought likely to flow from the establishment of a duty solicitor scheme. So far as the tape recording of suspect interviews is concerned, it is not envisaged that this will lead to any increased resource requirement and could well lead to greater efficiency. Provision is being made in the Government plans for local authority capital expenditure of £1·4 million to cover the cost of minor works associated with the acoustic enhancement of interview rooms and on the purchase of equipment associated with tape recording in 1986-87. In addition the likely current expenditure involved will be reflected in the rate support settlement.

The administration of the Crown Prosecution Service will be the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. Under the provisions of section 30 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 the costs of the service will be met from money provided by Parliament, and the necessary estimates will be laid before Parliament in due course. The Government's aim is to meet the implementation dates which have been announced.

Passport Office

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Passport Office to be fully computerised.

Mr. Waddington: Computerisation of the six passport issuing offices in the United Kingdom will, of necessity, be phased. We hope that full computerisation will be achieved by the end of the decade.

Firearms

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the legal implications of the territorial condition proposed by his recent working party in its report into the administration of the Firearms Act 1968.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Section 27(2) of the Firearms Act 1968 provides among other things that a firearm certificate shall specify the conditions subject to which it is held. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his previous qestion on 27 June at column 455.

Television Licence Concessions

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many retirement pensioners receive television licence concessions in Portsmouth;

(2) how many retirement pensioners are currently receiving television licence concessions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 May 1985, about 600,000 persons in the United Kingdom benefited from the residential care concessionary television licence, of whom about 2,000 were within the Portsmouth postal code area. While the vast majority of these are retirement pensioners, a small proportion will be physically disabled or mentally disordered persons, but it is not possible from available records to identify the respective groups.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning concessions for retirement pensioners' television licences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: About 290 hon. Members and 390 members of the public have written in the past 12 months about the concessionary licence scheme and concessionary licences for pensioners.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government have any plans to extend television licence concessions for retirement pensioners in warden-controlled buildings to two-bedroomed flats.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no current plans to do so.

Police (Casualties)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were *(a)* murdered and *(b)* injured during shooting incidents with suspects in each of the last five years and in the current year to date within the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information is given in the following table. Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used and police were victims*

Metropolitan Police District — *Number of offences*

	Offence currently recorded as homicide	*Offences when a policeman was injured**
1980	—	5
1981	—	15
1982	—	—
1983	—	15
1984‖	1	16

*May not include cases in which police officers were injured investigating offences against other persons.

†Includes one case in which the policeman was off duty.

‡Includes one case where the firearm was used as a blunt instrument.

‖Provisional.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that full consultation on the Metropolitan police force reorganisation takes place before any proposals are put into practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear in the debate on the Metropolitan police on 28 June column 1204) the basic principles of the reorganisation are now fixed; but within the new structure which has been announced many important questions remain to be decided. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is fully committed to wide consultation on the detailed development and application of the principles. As part of the continuing consultative process, he has recently sought views from over 170 bodies and individuals (including right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies within the Metropolitan police district) on a proposal to set up the eight new areas in September so that detailed discussions on a range of local issues can take place.

Prison Population

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the maximum capacity of each penal establishment in England and Wales and the number detained in each establishment at the latest date available;

(2) how many prisoners were detained in each penal establishment in England and Wales on 31 December 1984, 31 December 1983, 31 December 1982 and 31 December 1981.

Mr. Maller: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners remanded in custody awaiting trial as of 30 June or the latest date available in England and Wales.

Mr. Meller: On 30 June 1985, about 8,300 untried prisoners were in prison department establishments in England and Wales. Information on how many were awaiting commencement of their trial is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of persons remanded in custody awaiting trial at the latest date available who have been remanded in custody for *(a)* more than three months, *(b)* more than six months, *(c)* more than nine months, *(d)* more than 12 months, *(e)* more than 15 months, *(f)* more than 18 months and *(g)* in excess of 18 months specifying the numbers, remand prison by remand prison.

Mr. Meller: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the recent increase in the prison population.

Mr. Brittan: The prison population increased by about 5,400 between the end of September 1984 and the end of June 1985. Seven hundred of that increase was in the remand population, the growth of which has, however, slackened in recent months. The remainder was in the population of sentenced prisoners and mainly amongst sentenced adults. Information on sentencing is not yet available for 1985, and a full analysis of the factors contributing to the increase cannot therefore be made. But our current assessment is that it has been mainly due to a larger number of defendants being dealt with by the Crown court and a larger proportion of them being given a custodial sentence. There was also evidence towards the end of 1984 of an increase in the length of custodial sentences being imposed by the Crown court for some types of offences, which may be a contributory factor. I intend to provide a fuller account of recent changes in the prison population in a statistical bulletin to be published in the autumn.

Prison Officers

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of prison officers currently engaged at each penal establishment in England and Wales at the latest date available;

(2) how many prison officers were engaged at each penal establishment in England and Wales on *(a)* 31 December 1984, *(b)* 31 December 1983, *(c)* 31 December 1982 and *(d)* 31 December 1981.

Mr. Meller: The number of prison officer grades employed at penal establishments in England and Wales on *(a)* 31 December 1984, *(b)* 31 December 1983, *(c)* 31 December 1982, *(d)* 31 December 1981 and 1 July 1985 is listed as follows:

	(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*	*1 July 1985*
Acklington	147	151	153	143	160
Albany	332	257	271	285	322
Aldington	37	40	36	38	38
Ashford	198	196	211	211	198
Ashwell	61	68	63	58	69
Askham Grange	42	41	41	43	45
Aylesbury	140	121	115	120	143
Bedford	181	169	154	156	175
Birmingham	403	406	348	357	376
Blantyre House	42	43	44	45	53
Blundeston	144	144	132	133	146
Brockhill	95	97	79	73	93
Buckley Hall	39	44	47	43	41
Bullwood Hall	65	77	74	84	80
Camp Hill	174	195	204	195	180
Campsfield House	38	37	35	36	35
Canterbury	179	162	159	159	179
Cardiff	206	219	196	205	209
Channings Wood	139	150	128	126	151
Chelmsford	164	170	165	154	154
Coldingley	157	145	144	151	136
Cookham Wood	51	55	54	46	47
Dartmoor	225	216	204	217	218
Deerbolt	106	113	106	100	115
Dorchester	98	91	88	86	93
Dover	95	106	106	117	99
Drake Hall	75	72	62	68	69
Durham	364	371	369	387	357
East Sutton Park	23	24	25	23	24
Eastwood Park	53	50	49	48	48
Erlestoke	91	92	84	78	94
Everthorpe	113	104	101	103	110
Exeter	221	224	215	213	205
Featherstone	138	132	134	139	136
Feltham	167	161	134	145	153
Finnamore Wood	18	17	19	19	21
Ford	102	98	95	97	98
Foston Hall	39	37	39	37	35
Frankland	349	333	280	15	352
Garth	273	253	213	228	257
Glen Parva	253	240	245	229	236
Gloucester	131	135	129	133	127
Gresham	159	154	150	138	153
Gringley	27	27	26	25	27
Guys Marsh	74	68	63	65	74
Haslar	46	45	46	45	44
Hatfield	70	59	59	63	68
Havering	104	102	96	107	101
Hewell Grange	55	50	47	58	58
Highpoint	178	148	76	75	192
Hindley	114	110	102	100	109
Holloway	221	221	154	150	214
Holme	384	292	309	221	342
Hull	249	246	251	274	241
Huntercombe	59	61	62	63	57
Kingston	62	58	66	64	62
Kirkham	80	77	78	98	79
Kirklevington	49	49	46	47	47
Lancaster	95	90	91	90	91
Latchmere House	80	76	76	81	77
Leeds	373	352	330	341	381
Leicester	232	218	204	216	215
Lewes	203	196	191	195	196
Leyhill	65	61	56	55	58
Lincoln	224	223	207	210	226
Liverpool	404	394	402	419	403
Long Lartin	314	319	317	301	308
Lowdham Grange	86	84	90	91	85
Low Newton	123	116	106	106	116
Maidstone	184	197	194	202	188
Manchester	513	457	425	447	506
Medomsley	45	41	39	40	45
New Hall	43	42	41	42	40
Northallerton	82	81	77	80	81
Northeye	98	94	91	91	98
North sea camp	63	62	60	62	60
Norwich	242	236	228	236	226
Nottingham	136	133	110	107	123
Onley	155	153	145	151	146
Oxford	103	106	102	106	103
Parkhurst	306	305	301	302	302
Pentonville	335	320	325	336	336
Portland	166	164	157	158	164

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	1 July 1985
Preston	132	146	137	148	128
Pucklechurch	115	110	103	114	109
Rasby	120	122	118	119	114
Reading	108	144	140	141	137
Risley	463	443	445	441	469
Rochester	134	144	142	139	126
Rudgate	60	60	59	58	56
Send	46	44	44	43	41
Shepton Mallet	83	84	77	79	78
Shrewsbury	93	103	98	103	91
Stafford	210	213	192	203	169
Stamford Hill	106	114	108	109	111
Stoke Heath	138	132	121	131	142
Styal	149	132	132	134	132
Sudbury	65	70	69	71	66
Swansea	160	144	127	128	144
Swinfen Hall	103	100	97	81	102
Thorp Arch	98	97	101	101	101
Usk	85	81	75	75	80
The Verne	132	132	131	125	132
Wakefield	424	406	388	396	407
Wandsworth	412	372	335	331	408
Wayland	—	—	—	—	135
Wellingborough	136	121	110	111	134
Werrington House	45	43	36	37	43
Wetherby	79	78	70	70	71
Wheaton	75	78	81	81	77
Winchester	281	275	277	261	255
Wormwood Scrubs	522	464	464	513	522
Wymott	216	210	202	201	217

Grendon Prison

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report of the advisory committee on the therapeutic regime at Grendon prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: The committee's first report is published today and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. I welcome the report and accept the broad thrust of its proposals, in particular the central recommendation that Grendon should continue to concentrate in the main on group therapy, with the therapeutic community constituting the predominant form of therapy. The committee has also recommended that the arrangements for referral and induction of inmate patients should be improved, that the prison hospital should be reorganised and one floor converted to use as a small unit for the temporary care of inmates who suffer acute psychiatric breakdown elsewhere in the prison system; and that a research strategy and programme should be established with links with external academic departments. I have asked the Prison Department to consider how, and at what speed, the objectives of the committee can be met having regard in particular to their resouce implications.

Community Radio

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to make a further statement about an experiment in community radio.

Mr. Brittan: In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 11 July, at column 505, I said that I intended to make a further statement as soon as possible setting out the locations for some 20 experimental community radio stations, and outlining the application procedure for prospective licensees. After consulting my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about frequency matters, I have decided that the locations for the experimental stations and the band on which frequencies will be allocated shall be as follows:

Location	*Frequency band*
Small Neighbourhood Stations	
Dumfries	VHF
Rhondda	VHF
Wirral	VHF
Sunderland	VHF
Calderdale	VHF
Solihull	VHF
Rutland	VHF
Lincoln	MF
Colchester	VHF
Cambridge	VHF
Purbeck	VHF
Penzance	VHF
Aylesbury	VHF
London*	2 VHF, 1MF
Large Neighbourhood Stations	
Shetland Isles	MF
North West Wales	MF
Community of Interest Stations	
Greater Manchester	VHF
North London	MF
South London	VHF

* Three stations, with a broad geographical spread.

In the experimental phase it will not be possible to consider applications for community radio stations in any other locations than those set out above.

The broadcasting service radius for the small neighbourhood stations will be of the order of five kilometres. The larger neighbourhood stations will have a substantially higher radius. The community of interest stations will have a radius of about ten kilometres. The experiment will run for two years, and arrangements will be made for it to be monitored by way of studies of, for example, the nature of the services provided, audience reaction and the impact on existing local radio services.

Licences for community radio stations will be issued by the Home Office under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949, and it will be a condition of the licence that nothing should be broadcast which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling. Licences will not be issued to individuals or groups who have an interest in more than one station, to groups in which independent television or local radio companies have a majority interest, or to groups of which local authorities or political parties are part, joint or full owners. Licences will not be issued for any station which is primarily religious or political in character.

Community radio stations will be responsible for their own funding, by way of advertising, grants, private or commercial subscriptions or donations or any combinations of these. It will not, however, be possible to carry advertisements for those goods or services which may not be advertised on existing local radio services, and community stations will also be required as a condition of the licence to adhere to a code of advertising practice. I am considering how best to give effect to this. Neighbourhood stations, but not community of interest stations, will in addition be permitted to include sponsored

programming, other than sponsorship by those concerned with goods or services which may not currently be advertised on radio.

Full details of these and other conditions, together with technical requirements, are outlined in notes for the guidance of prospective licensees, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. Further guidance on advertising will be sent to applicants when I have decided on the regulatory framework.

In accordance with the policy outlined in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North on 11 July, the central criterion in considering applications will be that community radio should broaden the diversity of consumer choice by offering the community in question an additional service which is distinct in character, whether because of the nature of the programming, its emphasis on local or specialist interests, its appeal to specific community concerns or for other reasons. Applications which mirror the most popular programming elements of existing radio services are unlikely to be successful.

Copies of the notes for guidance for prospective licensees can be obtained from the Home Office Broadcasting Department. Applications should reach the Home Office by not later than 30 September 1985. In selecting the successful applicants, I hope to have the benefit of advice from a panel of advisers. Subject to the number of applications received, I hope to be able to announce the successful applicants in December.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure levels he proposes to set in respect of 1986-87 for the new joint police and fire and civil defence authorities in the metropolitan areas, and the London fire and civil defence authority.

Mr. Brittan: For these authorities, which under the Local Government Act 1985 will, for three years, be deemed to have been designated under section 2 of the Rates Act 1984, I propose to determine expenditure levels as follows:

	Police *£ million*
Greater Manchester	80·375
Merseyside	56·685
South Yorkshire	34·961
Northumbria	41·952
West Yorkshire	60·616
West Midlands	76·829

	Fire and Civil Defence *£ million*	*These figures are comprised of* *Fire* *£ million*	*Civil Defence* *£ million*
Greater Manchester	38·191	37·803	0·388
Merseyside	27·021	26·684	0·337
South Yorkshire	18·971	18·630	0·341
Tyne and Wear	19·556	19·220	0·336
West Yorkshire	29·347	28·949	0·398
West Midlands	36·060	35·598	0·462
London	141·505	140·804	0·701

The above figures are net of receipts and pension contributions and, for police and civil defence, of specific grant.

These proposals will be conveyed to chief executives of the Metropolitan districts and London boroughs, the Director-General of the Greater London council, chief executives of the Metropolitan counties and chief officers of Metropolitan county police forces and fire brigades and the London fire brigade together with further guidance on the establishment of the new joint authorities which I intend shall be issued next month.

Formal notice of the expenditure levels which I determine will be served on the new authorities when they are constituted. They will be advised at the same time of the procedure for applying for re-determination of the expenditure levels.

Drugs (Rapid Testing Equipment)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the cost, reliability and availability of equipment designed to carry out rapid testing of compounds for possible content of heroin or cocaine; and what is his policy in regard to the provision of such equipment to assist the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1985, c. *17*]: Field kits of varying sophistication are available in this country. The simplest, which costs about £60, produces a colour reaction when a chemical is added to certain drugs and can be used to test for the presence of cannabis, amphetamine, LSD, cocaine, barbiturates and opiates (including heroin). These kits can indicate whether a controlled drug is present but the tests are not sufficiently reliable or specific to be used as evidence in a court of law. They are not used by the Metropolitan police: their provision would be a matter for the commissioner.

THE ARTS

National Museums (Directors)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether the posts of directors of the national museums in England and Wales are graded mobile or non-mobile for the purpose of employment conditions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The directors of the OAL-funded national museums and galleries in England are not civil servants but are employees of the trustees of the museum or gallery concerned. Mobility under civil service conditions of employment does not therefore arise in these cases. Questions on the position of national museum directors elsewhere in the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as appropriate.

CIVIL SERVICE

First Division Association (Conference Resolutions)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister for the Civil Service what response he is making to the resolutions Nos 2, 6 and 9 agreed to at the annual conference of the First Division Association of Civil Servants about *(a)* Her Majesty's Government's handling of Government Communications Headquarters employees and *(b)* a code of ethics for civil servants, copies of which have been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received no invitation from the First Division Association to respond to these resolutions. However, the head of the Home Civil Service met representatives of all the Civil Service trade unions on 23 July when I understand there was some discussion of the subject matter of resolutions 6 and 9.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many registered disabled people were employed by each Government Department at 1 June; and, in each case, what percentage the number represents of the total number of employees.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of registered disabled people employed by Government Departments are collected once a year, as at 1 June, and are normally available in September. For the most recent figures, as at 1 June 1984, I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), 5 February 1985 at column *507*.

Government Forms

Mr. Bellingham asked the Minister for the Civil Service what progress has been made on revising Government forms since April 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: Cabinet Office (MPO) recently submitted a report summarising progress on the review of administrative forms to the Prime Minister and my right hon. and noble Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The report is published today and a copy has been placed in the Library.

The report shows that over 35,100 forms in national use were reviewed last year. Over 8,900 were improved and over 6,300 abolished. Standards of best practice in design and control of Government forms have been adopted which will guarantee progressively better forms in the future.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereal Harvest

Mr. Gale asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to monitor the effects of straw and stubble burning following the current year's cereal harvest.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall be monitoring the position on straw and stubble burning by means of a weekly report during the harvest period from my Department's network of regional and divisional offices, supplemented when available by information collected by other Departments and organisations.

Eggs

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has yet received the report from Lord Peyton's review committee on the future of the Eggs Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The report is now available and will be published today. Copies are available in the Vote Office and the Library. I am grateful to Lord Peyton and his colleagues for having so promptly completed their difficult task.

The committee's principal recommendation is that the authority should be dissolved, though not before the end of 1986—which it considers would give all sections of the industry an opportunity to evolve alternative arrangements for continuing those of the authority's functions which are thought to be necessary for the future.

My colleagues and I will now be inviting comments on the report and will reach conclusions on its recommendations in the light of those comments.

Meat Inspection

Mr. Leigh asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department has taken to improve the technical, financial and organisational aspects of the meat inspection service.

Mrs. Fenner: We set up in May 1984 a team consisting of Sir Peter Preston KCB (chairman), Mr. John Cross CBE and Mr. Charles Runge to look into the technical, financial and organisational aspects of red meat inspection in Great Britain.

The team's report was published on 14 May 1985 and interested parties have been invited to comment by 16 September. We shall decide on what action to take when we have fully considered the team's report together with any comments received.

Pigmeat

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total value of pigmeat products imported into the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

Mr. MacGregor: Imports of pigmeat products in 1984 had a total value of £580,357,000. Pigmeat products imported between January and May this year (the latest period for which statistics are available) had a total value of £228,246,000.

Livestock and Poultry

Mr. Leigh asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department is giving to farmers about the treatment of livestock and poultry in hot weather.

Mrs. Fenner: I am aware of the problems that hot weather can bring for farm livestock and poultry. Each spring my Department issues a press release which draws farmers' attention to these problems and suggests ways to overcome them. I shall arrange for a copy of this year's press release to be placed in the Library of the House. Also during the summer, as part of their advisory role, members of the state veterinary service make arrangements to visit those premises considered to be at risk.

Sugar

Mr. Leigh asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with representatives of British Sugar on the potential for development of biotechnology using sugar as a raw material.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend and I are in regular contact with the views of British Sugar and other interested parties on the potential for development of biotechnology using sugar as a raw material.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Leigh asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the process of notifying milk producers of their individual quotas for 1985-86 by the Milk Marketing Board has been completed.

Mr. MacGregor: The vast majority of producers in England and Wales were notified of their 1985-86 quotas in May. A very small number, generally involving complications such as land transfers, remain to be finalised.

Agricultural Support Expenditure

Mr. Shersby asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* for the period immediately prior to 1973 and currently, spending by Her Majesty's Government on agricultural support both gross and net of Community refunds, as appropriate; and if he will express the figures as a proportion of total Government expenditure.

Mr. Jopling: Expenditure on gricultural support in the United Kingdom, both gross and net of Community refunds, is set out in the table. Since we contribute to as well as draw from the Community budget any comparison with total public expenditure is best made gross of refunds from the Community.

*Expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom**

	1972-73	*†1984-85*
(A) Gross of Community refunds (£ million)	267	1,780
(B) As a percentage of total public expenditure (percentage)	1·1	1·4
(C) Net of community Refunds (£ million)	267	640
(D) As a percentage of total public expenditure (percentage)	1·1	0·5

*Expenditure taken from the Annual Review of Agriculture White Paper Series.
†Forecast.

Mr. Shersby asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* for 1984, 1985 and estimates for 1986, in thousand million European currency units *(a)* total spending on agricultural market support for the Community as a whole (European agricultural guidance guarantee fund guarantee section) and on agricultural structures (European agricultural guidance guarantee fund guidance Section), *(b)* the split of spending on agricultural market support by commodity and other items as conventionally set out by the Commission, *(c)* the same figures but recast to treat commodity specific agricultural revenue consistently so that the dairy and sugar totals are both on a basis net of producer levies and *(d)* the total for spending on agricultural market support permitted for 1986 under the areement on financial disciplines; and how this total was calculated, giving the values of the main parameters in the calculations.

Mr. Jopling: The following table gives the information requested on EAGGF expenditure.

(billion ecus)

	*1984 outturn**	*1985 Budget*	*1986 Preliminary Draft Budget†*
Guarantee Section‡			
Cereals and rice	1·698	2·415	3·135
Sugar	1·632	1·689	1·570
Olive Oil	1·096	0·897	1·077
Oilseeds & proteins	0·871	1·210	1·365
Textiles	0·108	0·213	0·239
Fruit & vegetables	1·455	1·356	1·106
Wine	1·223	0·998	1·115
Tobacco	0·776	0·841	0·850
Milk & milk products	5·442	6·602	6·280
Beef	2·547	2·460	2·256
Sheepmeat	0·434	0·451	0·465
Pigmeat	0·196	0·163	0·219
Eggs & Poultry	0·070	0·124	0·129
Processed products	0·382	0·402	0·448
Monetary Compensatory Amounts	0·376	0·109	0·144
Accession Compensatory Amounts	n/a	n/a	0·039
Minor products	0·052	0·054	0·052
Clearance of previous year's accounts	−0·025	−0·150	—
Compensation for MCA changes	—	0·120	0·100
Stock depreciation	—	—	0·423
Total	18·331	19·955	21·012
Expenditure net of sugar and isoglucose levies‖: Sugar	0·455	0·664	0·523
Total	17·154	18·930	19·965
Guidance Section	0·676	0·660	0·926

* Provisional.
† 1986 figures include provision for expenditure in Spain and Portugal (0·570 becu in the guarantee section). They also include food aid refunds which the Commission has proposed should be transferred to title 9 of the budget.
‡ Excluding fisheries.
‖ Milk figures are already net of levies.

The Commission has estimated maximum permitted expenditure on agricultural market support in 1986 under the financial guideline as 20·619 becu for a Community of ten. The details of the calculation are included in the Commission's document COM(85)324 "Key Figures for the 1986 Budget" which was deposited in the Library of the House on 25 June.

Badgers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instructions his Department's badger control teams are given about their rights to enter private land without the permission of the owner.

Mrs. Fenner: Where a badger investigation commences involving the taking and killing of badgers on land outside the statutory control areas of south-west England signed voluntary agreements must be obtained from the occupier before the teams enter on to the land. In control areas the teams have powers of compulsory entry on to land in respect of certain operations but wherever possible the occupier's co-operation and consent is obtained. The goodwill and co-operation of all landowners is essential and the teams are instructed to maintain this at all times.

Research and Development

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received from the Priorities Board on future resource allocations for agricultural and food research and development.

Mr. Jopling: The Priorities Board is still considering its detailed advice on future resource allocations but, as an interim measure, it has agreed that the savings required in the publicly funded research and development programme in 1986-87 should be found through rationalisation of the existing programme and the removal of less effective areas of work. The board will be putting forward further detailed advice on future priorities and resource allocations in due course.

Ewe Meat

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wheather he will make a statement on the future of the special export certification arrangements for ewe meat.

Mr. Jopling: In negotiations I have strongly opposed any idea that clawback might be chargeable on presentations of sheepmeat on which premium has not been paid. As part of the price-fixing agreement in May, the Commission undertook to make every effort to secure agreement between the member states concerned on the arrangements to apply beyond October. We have repeatedly urged the Commission to initiate the necessary discussions. I regret to say that the Commission has so far failed to follow up the commitment it gave. This is clearly unsatisfactory. I have written personally to Mr. Andriessen to express my concern and to underline the importance of avoiding any further delay.

Beam Trawling

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce new controls on beam trawling in so far as it affects smaller inshore fishermen, particularly in southern and south-western waters.

Mr. MacGregor: Beam trawling is a very effective method of catching flatfish. The increase in the beam trawling sector of the fleet in area VII in recent years has added to the difficulty of managing the Unted Kingdom quotas, particularly for sole and plaice, in this area and has led to suspension of directed fishing and in some cases premature closure of fisheries. In the light of consultations with the main industry organisations concerned Fisheries Ministers have now decided that action should be taken to prevent for the time being any further increase in beam trawling capacity in the area VII white fisheries.

Accordingly, after today and until further notice a licence for a beam trawler to fish for area VII whitefish pressure stocks will be granted only if the vessel is to replace an existing licensed beam trawler and if Fisheries Departments are satisfied that the catching capacity of this sector will not thereby be increased. The same rule will apply to vessels equipped for fishing for scallops or queens with a beam, as such vessels can have a significant impact on flatfish stocks. In addition steps will be taken through the licensing arrangements to prevent existing licensed vessels being converted to beam trawling. The detailed arrangements including the treatment of any special cases will be notified to the industry shortly.

These arrangements will be re-examined when the restrictive licensing arrangements as a whole are reviewed in the course of next year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what bodies have recently been added to those against which complaints may be referred to the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Mr. Hurd: None. The Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration's jurisdiction covers the Northern Ireland Departments and the Civil Service Commission for Northern Ireland. Complaints against certain local and public bodies are a matter for the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints. I am considering the implications for these arrangements of the Government's proposal, set out in Cmnd. 9563, to extend the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in Great Britain.

Housing Repairs

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria are used in assessing whether requests for repairs by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive should be categorised as *(a)* essential or *(b)* non-essential; and at what level of qualifications such decisions are taken within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985, c. *287-8*]: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has advised me that district office staff are supplied with a list of typical repairs which indicates the category into which each item should normally be placed. This is a guideline only and the district office staff apply it with discretion in the light of their assessment of what is essential or non-essential in an individual case. Categorisation decisions are checked by district maintenance officers.

Mr. Clifford Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many of the category C repairs that have been reported in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Antrim district area are subject to a planned maintenance scheme; and how many such schemes have been initiated in this area in the last three years;

(2) how many of the category C repairs, that have been reported in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's number 2 Newtownabbey district area are subject to a planned maintenance scheme; and how many such schemes have been initiated in this area in the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985, c. *287-8*]: These are matters for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has advised me that the information is not readily available in the form requested and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. The

number of planned maintenance schemes initiated in the Antrim and Newtownabbey No. 2 districts in the last three years was as follows:

	Antrim	Newtownabbey No. 2
1982-83	12 schemes involving 1,530 dwellings	13 schemes involving 1,389 dwellings
1983-84	10 schemes involving 2,175 dwellings	9 schemes involving 1,666 dwellings
1984-85	31 schemes involving 4,304 dwellings	20 schemes involving 2,461 dwellings

Police Operations (Costs)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to those processions involving bands in connection with the local government elections in May which took place in the local government districts of Londonderry, Limavady, Coleraine, Magherafelt, Cookstown and Strabane and which necessitated a police presence and as to the total cost of policing each procession; and whether the prescribed notice was received by the police in each case.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: The Chief Constable regularly informs my right hon. Friend and me of law enforcement issues, including the conduct of parades and marches and the police resources involved.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the police operation to stop the parade through the Gortalowry estate in Cookstown on 28 June.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: Precise details are not readily available. However the cost of policing this parade has been estimated at £5,600.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Ministers

Mr. Howard asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The usual written forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. No meetings of the Council are scheduled for August; three meetings are planned for September and six for October.

The Foreign Affairs Council is expected to meet on 16 and 17 September to discuss Commission proposals on global Mediterranean policy and the EC position on an EC/ASEAN ministerial meeting on economic matters in October. Follow-up to the Milan European Council will probably be discussed at this meeting.

An informal meeting of Social Affairs Ministers is due to take place on 16 and 17 September to discuss the flexibility of the labour market and the applications of equal treatment legislation to men and women.

The Agriculture Council is also due to meet on 16 and 17 September and may consider the revised proposals for changes to the starch regime, the labelling of sparkling wines and a new proposal for the review of the sugar regime.

The Budget Council is expected to meet on 17 and 18 September and will seek to establish the 1986 draft budget on the basis of the preliminary draft budget put forward by the Commission.

An informal meeting of ECOFIN Ministers is scheduled for 20 and 21 September. This will discuss preparation for the annual meeting of the IMF/IBRD; unitary taxation, and tax approximation.

Agriculture Ministers are expected to meet informally on 23 and 24 September and are expected to consider the Commission Green Paper on perspectives for the CAP. The Fisheries Council is not expected to meet in September.

Although dates for Council meetings in October have been agreed, it is not possible at this early stage to give details of the agendas for these meetings. Statements on the outcome of Council meetings in October will be made in the usual way.

Falkland Islands (Oil)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what discussions he has held with Firstland Oil concerning a possible offshore oil licence around the Falkland Islands; if he intends to communicate with Argentina regarding the licence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list all representations and communications to his Department since January 1984 concerning the granting of licences for oil drilling on or around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Renton: Firstland Oil and Gas plc has expressed interest in offshore exploration for hydrocarbons around the Falklands. The matter is currently under study. The same company was granted a licence for onshore oil prospecting in the Falklands on 19 July 1984.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the Soviet Foreign Minister the issues of *(a)* the United Kingdom and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' positions with regard to the non-proliferation treaty and *(b)* compliance by the United Kingdom and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with the non-proliferation treaty article VI.

Mr. Luce: We have held regular consultations with the Soviet Union about nuclear non-proliferation, including the non-proliferation treaty. These have revealed a close identity of views between our two Governments about these important matters. It would not, however, be appropriate to disclose what my right hon. and learned Friend might wish to raise with the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Uranium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has received any information as to the use to be made by the Israeli Government of United Kingdom origin depleted uranium obtained via Luxembourg.

Mr. Luce: The Israeli authorities have told the International Atomic Energy Authority that the material was imported for non-nuclear non-explosive purposes and have permitted the agency to carry out an inspection.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the shipment to Israel from Luxembourg of United Kingdom-origin depleted uranium.

Mr. Luce: Export of the material to Luxembourg was authorised in accordance with the policy for nuclear exports laid down in 1976. That it was subsequently re-transferred to Israel is a matter for the Luxembourg Government in conjunction with the Euratom and IAEA safeguards authorities. The Israeli authorities have told the IAEA that the material was imported for non-nuclear, non-explosive purposes and have permitted the agency to carry out an inspection. Discussions in which we are playing an active role are underway within Euratom, to ensure a common interpretation of the safeguards regulations with regard to material transferred for non-nuclear use.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British delegation to the non-proliferation treaty review conference will be presenting any proposals for the strengthening of safeguards following the shipment to Israel from Luxembourg of United Kingdom origin depleted uranium, outside safeguard provisions.

Mr. Luce: There is no intention at present to do so. The safeguards system was successful in detecting the anomaly.

Non-proliferation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 3 May to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), *Official Report*, column 258, if he will set out the dates of those occasions on which his Department has consulted the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on nuclear non-proliferation since December 1982.

Mr. Luce: It is not our practice to disclose details about confidential meetings with foreign Governments. However, these consultations have taken place several times each year during the period in question.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state *(a)* the membership and *(b)* the remit, of the three committees that will be formed at the non-proliferation treaty third review conference.

Mr. Luce: Membership of the main committee is open to any state party. The distribution of work between them is dealt with by the final report of the preparatory committee, which states as follows:

Proposed allocation of items to the main committees of the conference

The Preparatory Committee agreed to recommend for consideration by the Review Conference the following allocation of items to the three Main Committees, with the understanding that the remaining items would be considered in the Plenary:

(a) To Main Committee I:

item 13. Review of the operation of the Treaty as provided for in its Article VIII(3):
Implementation of the provisions of the Treaty relating to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, disarmament and international peace and security:
(1) Articles I and II and preambular paragraphs 1-3.
(2) Article VI and preambular paragraphs 8-12.
(3) Article VII, with specific reference to the main issues considered in this committee.

Security assurances
(1) Resolution 255 (1968) of the United Nations Security Council,
(2) Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

(b) To Main Committee II:

item 13. Review of the operation of the Treaty as provided for in its Article VIII(3):
Implementation of the provision of the Treaty relating to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, safeguards and nuclear weapon free zones:
(1) Article III and preambular paragraphs 4 and 5, especially in their relationship to Article IV and preambular paragraphs 6 and 7.
(2) Articles I and II and preambular paragraphs 1-3 in their relationship to Articles III and IV.
(3) Article VII.

Other provisions of the Treaty.
item 14. Role of the Treaty in the promotion of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and of nuclear disarmament and in strengthening international peace and security:
A. Acceptance of the Treaty by States.
B. Measures aimed at promoting a wider acceptance of the Treaty.

(c) To Main Committee III

item 13. Review of the operation of the Treaty as provided for in its Article VIII(3):
Implementation of the provisions of the Treaty relating to peaceful applications of nuclear energy:
(1) Articles IV and III(3) preambular paragraphs 6 and 7, especially in their relationship to Article III(1, 2, 4) and preambular paragraphs 4 and 5 as well as to Articles I and II.
(2) Article V.
item 14. Role of the Treaty in the promotion of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and of nuclear disarmament and in strengthening international peace and security:
A. Acceptance of the Treaty by States.
B. Measures aimed at promoting a wider acceptance of the Treaty.

Remarks with regard to allocation of agenda items

It is understood that all articles, preambular paragraphs and agenda items allocated to the Main Committees shall be reviewed in their interrelationship. Main Committee I is entrusted with the task of assessing the extent to which obligations of Articles I, II and VI are being met.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government intend to put forward any specific proposals at the third review conference of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Luce: We are still considering the question of specific proposals at the non-proliferation treaty review conference. In the meantime I am arranging to have the United Kingdom's report about implementation of the treaty to which I referred in my answer to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 24 July, placed in the Library of the House.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has considered the implications for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty of any British involvement in the strategic defence initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Our firm support for the strategic defence initiative research programme is fully consistent with out obligations under international agreements to which we are party, including the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). Our strong commitment to the NPT was stressed as recently as 15 July by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her speech to the American Bar Association.

Helsinki Final Act

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the implementation by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Eastern European countries of the provisions of the Helsinki final act during the last six months.

Mr. Luce: during the six-month period to 30 June 1985, implementation by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries of their commitments under the Helsinki final act remained generally unsatisfactory although the pattern varied from country to country. In the Soviet Union, in particular, attitudes towards human rights and fundamental freedoms remained negative.

SECURITY IN EUROPE: PRINCIPLES GUIDING RELATIONS PARTICIPATING STATES: CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES AND CERTAIN ASPECTS OF SECURITY AND DISARMAMENT (BASKET I).

PRINCIPLE VII, WHICH IS CONCERNED WITH RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, RELIGION OR BELIEF" CONTINUED TO VIOLATED BY ALL EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THE POSTURE OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE WARSAW PACY COUNTRIES AT THE CSCE EXPERT MEETING ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN OTTAWA GAVE NO HOPE FOR ANY IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS' PERFORMANCE OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED.

In the Soviet Union, repression of human rights' monitors and those active on behalf of religious or minority rights continued unabated. Particular pressure was put on unregistered religious sects, such as Baptists, Pentecostalists and, in the Ukraine, the banned Uniates. In March, Vasyl Kobryn, a leading member of the "initiative group for the defence of believers in the Ukraine" was sentenced to 3 years' labour camp on a charge of "disseminating anti-Soviet fabrications". Victor Walter, pastor of an unregistered Pentecostalist church in the far-east of the Soviet Union received a 5-year labour camp sentence in April; several other members of the church were also arrested and sentenced. A Lithuanian, Vladas Lapienis, was sentenced in March to 6 years in the camps and internal exile just before his 79th birthday while the following month a prominent Ukrainian activist, Mykola Horbal, received a sentence totalling 11 years.

Within the Jewish community there were a number of arrests and sentencing of teachers of Hebrew in what appears to be an attempt by the authorities to stop the spread of the Hebrew language in the Soviet Union. Pressures on refuseniks continued.

Action was also taken against various unofficial groups including the "Trust" group in Moscow and the Georgian "Phantom" group. The practice of resentencing political prisoners and the political abuse of psychiatry continued.

There was no sign of any significant improvement in the position of well-known individuals such as Anatoly Shcharansky or Andrei Sakharov. In early 1985, Dr. Sakharov announced that he would resign from the Soviet Academy of Sciences if his wife were not allowed to travel to the West for necessary medical treatment. Although it is not clear whether he carried out his threat to go on hunger strike, Dr. Sakharov's family believe that he did and that he might have been hospitalised as a result. At the end of June, the authorities released two films of Dr. Sakharov, allegedly taken in Gorky, which suggested that he was in poor health but receiving medical attention. There is, however, no means of checking the authenticity of the films.

In Bulgaria, the Government continued to respect Principles I to VI whilst overlooking the others. The period under review was dominated by reports of an intensification of the persecution of the ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria. According to the reports a campaign was launched at the end of 1984 to force ethnic Turks to adopt Bulgarian names. Evidence suggests that there was resistance in some areas and that this may have led to a large number of deaths. Repression of religious activity heightened during the review period.

Czechoslovak implementation of Principle VII continued to be unsatisfactory. This was illustrated by the use of "protective supervision" in the case of some released prisoners, and a series of arrests and trials resulting from government attempts to restrict religious practice. A positive development was the amnesty announced on 9 May which benefited a number of people sentenced for political offences.

In Poland, church-state relations remained poor in the wake of the murder of Father Popieluszko despite the Government's proclaimed desire for national reconciliation. Harassment and criticism of priests associated with the opposition continued. The number of political prisoners rapidly increased over the period and a tightening of the criminal code, made it easier to punish those taking part in demonstrations. In mid-February, the authorities broke up a meeting of several solidarity leaders in Gdansk and arrested three individuals: Bogdan Lis, Adam Michnik and Wladyslaw Frasyniuk. All three were later given sentences ranging from 2½ to 3½ years, subject to appeal.

In general, Romania and the GDR continued to pay scant regard to the humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki and Madrid documents. By contrast, despite one or two disturbing developments, Hungary's record on human rights remained comparatively good.

CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY-BUILDING MEASURES.

No observers were invited by the USSR or Czechoslovakia to a joint exercise held in May 1985 in Czechoslovakia. In mid-June, notice was given, with minimum details, of a joint Soviet/GDR exercise involving more than 25,000 troops to be held in July in the GDR. No observers were invited. Observers from certain countries (including smaller NATO countries) were, however, invited by the Soviet Union at the end of June to an exercise to be held from 13-21 July in the south of the USSR.

CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS, OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND OF THE ENVIRONMENT (BASKET II).

There were no major developments in this field over the period. There were, however, some encouraging signs of a renewed interest in expanding trade. Hungary and Poland still provided the easiest access to business contacts and to economic and commercial information.

CO-OPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN AND OTHER FIELDS (BASKET III).

With the exception of Hungary and Poland, Eastern European countries continued to take a restrictive attitude to family visits or reunification, and binational marriages. Emigration remained generally low although in the Soviet Union a slight increase in the permitted level of Jewish emigration was recorded in April 1985 but this increase was not sustained. In the first 4 months of the year, 5,800 people were allowed to leave the GDR legally to settle in the Federal Republic of Germany, fewer than in the corresponding period in 1984. Tourist travel outside Warsaw Pact countries remained very limited, again with the exception of Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Poland.

In the field of information, restrictions on access to Western sources of information continued as did jamming of several Western vernacular services (except in the GDR, Hungary and Romania).

CO-OPERATION AND EXCHANGES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE.

Existing agreements and projects were generally implemented in a satisfactory manner. Bureaucratic and financial constraints were the main obstacles to the development of new programmes of exchanges and co-operation. For example, the Soviet Union failed to grant visas under the cultural agreement to enable British teachers to visit their students, and modest proposals on increased exchanges, which the British side made to the Romanians in February, were not taken up.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Land Resources Development Centre

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of his observations on the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Session 1984-85, "Famine in Africa", Cmnd. 9566, paragraph (xxviii), what are the specific contracts, projects or programmes now being undertaken by the Land Resources Development Centre, listing for each respective piece of work now in hand, the name of the commissioning body, the approximate cost in pounds sterling, the expected date for the completion of each item, and the main locations of the work being undertaken.

Mr. Raison: The following is the information requested:

LRDC projected work programme 1985-86 (as at 1 July 1985)

Contract/Project/Programme	Commissioning Body	Pre-1985-86	Staff costs £ 1985-86	Post 1985-86	Expected Completion Date	Main location of work
Pedology and Soil Survey	Central and South Africa Department, ODA	89,000	33,600	93,200	June 1987	Zimbabwe
Drip Irrigation of Sugar Cane	Central and South Africa Department, ODA	6,000	8,200	2,000	1986	Mauritius
Ewaso-Mara-Loisio						
(a) Regional Coordination	East and West Africa Department, ODA	—	24,800	71,000	February 1988	Kenya
(b) Soil and Water Conservation	East and West Africa Department, ODA	54,000	31,800	71,000	March 1988	Kenya
(c) Forestry	East and West Africa Department, ODA	94,000	57,300	30,000	July 1986	Kenya
Tabora Land Use Planning	East and West Africa Department, ODA	—	3,900	4,100	March 1987	Tanzania
Agricultural Adviser	East and West Africa Department, ODA	—	11,500	—	September 1985	East Africa Dev. Div. Kenya
Soil Conservation	East and West Africa Department, ODA	—	5,800	—	February 1986	Cameroon
Sundarbans Forest Inventory/Tea Rehabilitation Project	Eastern Asia Department, ODA	96,400	16,800	—	July 1985	Bangladesh
Tea Research Laboratories	Eastern Asia Department, ODA	—	5,000	—	November 1985	Bangladesh
Fertiliser Information System	Eastern Asia Department, ODA	—	4,900	—	December 1985	Thailand
Small-holder cocoa development	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	44,600	16,800	—	October 1985	Vanuatu
Forestry Inventory	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	—	7,000	—	June 1985	Grenada
Environment study	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	3,500	3,300	—	April 1985	Turks and Caicos
Land Development Authority	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	44,600	11,000	—	May 1985	Montserrat
Land Use Adviser	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	—	14,000	50,600	October 1987	Nevis
Citrus Development Probability	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	—	4,000	—	October 1985	Belize
Land Resources Study	Latin America, Caribbean and Pacific Department, ODA	—	26,200	13,200	April 1986	Belize
Tarese Control, Land Use Survey	Mediterranean and Near East Department, ODA	85,000	24,600	—	October 1985	Somalia
Northern Region Irrigation Rehabilitation	Mediterranean and Near East Department, ODA	1,300	5,800	—	May 1985	Sudan
Soil Studies	Mediterranean and Near East Department, ODA	—	2,900	—	May 1985	Yemen Arab Republic
Kosi Hill Area Rural Development Programme	South Asia Department, ODA	113,600	48,000	—	March 1986	Nepal
Community Forestry Project	South Asia Department, ODA	—	4,900	—	November 1985	Nepal
Forest Research Soil Laboratories	South Asia Department, ODA	—	2,900	—	July 1985	Nepal
Karnataka Social Forestry Project	South Asia Department, ODA	—	3,300	—	October 1985	India

Contract/Project/Programme	Commissioning Body	Pre-1985-86	Staff costs £ 1985-86	Post 1985-86	Expected Completion Date	Main location of work
Mysore Paper Mills Project	South Asia Department, ODA	—	3,300	—	October 1985	India
Institutional Strengthening	South Asia Department, ODA	—	2,100	228,000	1989	India
Agriculture/Forest Officer	South Atlantic Department, ODA	49,300	27,600	54,200	November 1987	St. Helena
National Agricultural Extension and Research Project	Government of Zimbabwe/IBRD	10,900	40,600	35,500	January 1987	Zimbabwe
Regional Physical Planning Programme for Transmigration	Government of Indonesia/IBRD	141,000	155,800	340,600	September 1987	Indonesia
Project Formulation Mission	FAO	—	3,900	—	May 1985	Malawi
Land Use Planning Project Formulation	FAO	—	5,800	—	September 1985	Tanzania
Rangeland and Livestock Development	FAO	—	9,800	—	October 1985	Somalia
Asian Development Bank Irrigation Project	ILO	—	11,600	—	May 1985	Philippines
Ab Bous	GTZ, Germany	6,500	29,000	—	December 1985	Yemen Arab Republic

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in respect of the Land Resources Development Centre, he will tabulate for each of the scientific disciplines the numbers of personnel employed who possess graduate or broadly equivalent professional qualifications, together with the number of vacancies in each discipline for which funded posts exist and the number of additional posts which will need to be filled for any future approved scheme of expansion, together with the corresponding figures for 1 April 1980.

Mr. Raison: Details of professional staff employed, and vacancies, at 1 April 1980 and 1 April 1985, are given in the following table. No expansion is planned for the centre.

Discipline	1 April 1980 Staff in post	1 April 1980 Vacancies	1 April 1985 Staff in post	1 April 1985 Vacancies
Soils and Land Use	17	2	10	—
Agriculture	13	3	5	—
Forestry	7	1	4	—
Hydrology	3	—	3	—
Economics	6	1	4	—
Chemistry	4	—	2	—
Others*	5	7	4	—
TOTALS	57	14	32	—

* Including statistician, management, and information sciences; some vacancies were in unspecified disciplines.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects have been undertaken, or what direct assistance has been rendered by the Land Resources Development Centre in respect of areas now subject to famine in Africa in the course of the last five years; and in respect of each project or programme, what was the name of the commissioning body and the source of the funds for the payment of the work, together with particulars of any requests or proposals received from any quarter which have been declined over the same period, together with the dates concerned and reasons for the refusal of any request.

Mr. Raison: The following is the information requested.

A. Land Resources Development Centre Activities in Africa south of the Sahara (other than humid tropics) 1980-85

Country	Nature of activity	Timing	Commissioning body	Source of funds
Gambia	Rural development project	Ended June 1980	ODA	ODA/EDA/BODEA
Kenya	Embu-Meru-Isiolo district			
	1. Soil and water conservation	February 1982 onwards	ODA	ODA
	2. Forestry development	July 1982 onwards	ODA	ODA
	3. Livestock development planning	September 1983	ODA	ODA
	4. Regional coordinator	From June 1985	ODA	ODA
Kenya	Chyulu hills: land use development study	November/December 1983	ODA	ODA
Botswana	Planning environment management strategy	November/December 1983	UNEP	UNDP
Malawi	Environmental effects of development study	March-October/December 1983	FAO	FAO
Namibia	Rapid assessment of land use potential	September 1985	FAO	FAO
Somalia	Land use survey: tsetse control project	October 1981 onwards	ODA	ODA/AFEED
Sudan	1. Imatong mountains forestry project	(1976)-September 1982	ODA	ODA
	2. Upper Talanga: sawmill feasibility	November-December 1981	EDF	BBC
	3. Qala-en-Nahal refugee settlement scheme	July-August 1983	Euro-Action Accord	Euro-Action Accord
	4. Vegetation/landform: Tokar delta	July 1983	ODA	ODA
	5. Nile region irrigation rehabilitation (forestry)	June/July 1982 and March/May 1985	ODA	ODA
Tanzania	1. Tabora region: land use planning	(1977) continuing	ODA	ODA
	2. Mtwara-Lindi region. Development planning	(1977)-1984	ODA	ODA

Country	Nature of activity	Timing	Commissioning body	Source of funds
	3. Chief evaluation officer, Planning unit	September 1981-December 1984	IBRD	IBRD
	4. Lecturer in remote sensing, Dar es Salaam	1977-July 1981	ODA	ODA
Uganda	Forestry inventory	July/August 1984	ODA	ODA
Zimbabwe	1. Support to national soil survey	May 1982 onwards	ODA	ODA
	2. Community area resource inventory	January 1985-January 1987	G.O. Zimbabwe	IBRD
Zimbabwe	SADCC Regional Food Security Study	March/July 1982	W. S. Atkins (Land and Water)	Commonwealth Secretariat
Zambia	Integrated rural development (forestry)	January/March 1981	Resdsen Agriculture International	ODA
ILCA	Director general to the international livestock centre for Africa (Ethiopia)	November 1977-81	CGIAR Secretariat	CGIAR

B. Specific requests declined

Date	Country	Nature of request	Source of proposal	Funding agency	Reason not undertaken
January 1981	Niger	Short consultancy: irrigation agronomy	Crown Agents	IFAD	No suitable staff available
January 1982	Sudan	Two agronomists for two years: Kordofan project	Gleecomush (West Germany)	CIZ (FRG)	No suitable staff available
March 1982	Sudan	Plan formulation: South Sudan	Resdsen Agriculture International	ODA	No suitable staff available
March 1982	Nigeria	Surveys of lower Benue river	Clyde Surveys	Not known	No suitable staff available
June 1983	Burundi	Three man resistivity survey team	Nerddydro Petroleum	Not known	No suitable staff available
May 1983	Uganda	Four man development planning team Karamoja	EDF	EDF	Difficult local conditions
July 1984	Botswana	Livestock specialist: tribal grazing	IBRD	IBRD	No suitable staff available
July 1984	Kenya	Investigation of national research stations	ISNAR	ISNAR	No suitable staff available
August 1984	Somalia	Desertification studies	Checchi Consultants (USA)	UNDP	No suitable staff available
November 1984	Ethiopia	Two year land use planning	FAO	FAO	No suitable staff available
June 1985	Guinea	Resource mapping (forestry)	FAO	FAO	No suitable staff available

Refugees (Thailand)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial help for medical supplies etc. has been given to refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos now in camps in Thailand in the last two years.

Mr. Raison: The Government have given humanitarian assistance to refugees in Thailand in the last two years as follows:

	1983 £	1984 £
Through British voluntary agencies	66,000	53,750
Through United Nations Border Relief Operation	200,000	300,000
Through United Nations High Commission for Refugees	50,000	100,000
Through International Commission for the Red Cross	300,000	200,000
Bilateral assistance to non-Communist Cambodian refugees	100,000	100,000
	716,000	653,750

Sri Lanka

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decision has been made on the Sri Lankan Government's request for British aid for the Samanala Wewa hydro-electric project.

Mr. Raison: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has informed President Jayewardene that, subject to our international reporting obligations, we are prepared to make a grant of £14·4 million from the aid and trade provision to be used in association with commercial credit. This is to support the British share of a bid by a consortium of British, French and Japanese firms to design and construct the project on the assumption that the Governments of France and Japan will give similar support.

Zambia

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what promises of aid were made by the United Kingdom to Zambia at the meeting of the World Bank consultative group held on 25 and 26 June.

Mr. Raison: We offered grants of £4 million programme aid, tied to British goods, and £10 million as the first pledge from the £75 million special joint financing we are giving to support the World Bank's African Facility. This £10 million will be untied and will be committed in conjunction with a parallel commitment from the Facility itself.

SCOTLAND

Deich Moss, Islay

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the area over which the proposed drainage works upon Deich Moss site of special scientific interest, Islay, will extend; and what additional area of the site will, according to best estimates, have its hydrology affected by these works.

Mr. Ancram: The area for which permission for the extraction of peat has been granted, and from which

drainage is necessary before peat extraction can begin, extends to some 151 acres. However, phase 1 of the work is limited to 44 acres and my right hon. Friend has stipulated that no drainage of the remaining area covered by the permission may be carried out until at least 12 years after cutting operations in phase 1 have begun, and that before any drainage work for phase 2 is begun all the conditions relating to the method of operation should be reviewed by the planning authority in consultation with Scottish Malt Distillers Limited and the Nature Conservancy Council.

My right hon. Friend is not aware that any estimates have been made of the size or location of specific areas of Duich Moss where the hydrology might be affected by the operations for which planning permission has been granted. In granting planning permission, however, my right hon. Friend has noted that Scottish Malt Distillers Limited have indicated that they would have no objections to a hydrological survey being undertaken simultaneously with the extraction of peat from phase 1 of the operations.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he or the promoters undertook a full environmental impact assessment of the drainage and peat stripping proposal made by Scottish Malt Distillers over Duich Moss, Islay; and if alternative supplies of peat were fully explored and tested before the planning consent was granted.

Mr. Ancram: No formal environmental impact assessment of the proposal was submitted to my right hon. Friend with the planning application from Scottish Malt Distillers Limited to extract peat from Duich Moss. My right hon. Friend's decision to grant planning permission was based on the written submissions made to him. In reaching his decision, my right hon. Friend took account of the proposals for alternative sites suggested by the Nature Conservancy Council and of Scottish Malt Distillers' views of the necessity for extraction of peat from the site proposed.

Agricultural Research Institutes

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy in considering any organisational changes to the agriculture and food research service to preserve the integrated research and development structure of Scottish agricultural institutes and Scottish colleges of agriculture;

(2) if he will make it his policy to maintain the independent status of Scottish agricultural research institutes;

(3) if he will make it his policy, in considering the conclusions of the agriculture and food research service report, "A Long Term View", to maintain the links between research institutes and their governing bodies.

Mr. Younger: The replies to my Department's consultation paper on the strategy for agricultural research and development are currently being considered as are the replies to the Agricultural and Food Research Council's discussion paper "A Long Term View". It is therefore too soon to come to any firm conclusions about the future organisation of agricultural research and development in Scotland. There are however no proposals to alter the present arrangements under which I am responsible for the Scottish agricultural research institutes and for the Scottish agricultural colleges.

Edinburgh Dental Hospital

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting between the Scottish Home and Health Department, the university, the health board and the University Grants Committee on 23 July on the future of the Edinburgh dental hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: A very full and useful discussion took place on 23 July when new proposals for the future of the Edinburgh dental hospital and school were considered. It was accepted that revised proposal for the replacement of the existing dental hospital provide the basis for a more realistic and cost effective approach to the redevelopment of the dental hospital and school than previous studies. Lothian health board and Edinburgh university have agreed to develop the proposals further and thereafter submit them for consideration by the Secretary of State and the University Grants Committee.

Housing (Edinburgh)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether immediate steps will be taken by Her Majesty's Government to provide Edinburgh district council with £5·6 million of funds in respect of housing as soon as the district council comes within the Secretary of State's guidelines relating to the rate fund contribution and adopts accepted budgeting procedures.

Mr. Ancram: I have still to study the details of Edinburgh district council's decision but, as I made clear in my written answer on 20 May 1985, at columns *291-2*, once the council has revised its budget to bring the estimated rate fund contribution for 1985-86 down to the limit set by my right hon. Friend, the gross housing revenue account (HRA) capital allocation for this year, as abated for overspend in 1984-85, will be increased by £3·638 million from £11·440 million to £17·078 million.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when steps will be taken to allocate the £3 million as yet unallocated for defective housing in Scotland; approximately what percentage of this sum will be available for defective housing in Edinburgh; and when the authority will be informed of the precise allocation.

Mr. Ancram: My officials will be writing shortly to the appropriate local authorities requesting details of numbers of applications received under the provisions of the Housing Defects Act and estimated expenditure in the current financial year. When this information is available, supplementary allocations will be issued. It is not possible at this stage to estimate the supplementary allocation which a particular authority will require.

Housing Association Tenants (Purchasing Rights)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether legislation will be introduced so that housing association tenants of general needs housing in Scotland are given the right to purchase their houses with a discount on the same basis as in England and Wales.

Mr. Ancram: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave him on 22 July 1985. The aim of the legislation which my right hon. Friend proposes to

introduce will be to place housing association tenants in broadly the same position as other sector tenants in Scotland.

Children Act 1975

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department's consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities concerning possible amendments to the Children Act 1975 to be proposed as amendments to the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Bill are proceeding satisfactorily.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. In response to a consultation document on implementation of the provisions in the Children Act 1975 dealing with the custody of children a number of bodies commented on the proposals for amendment to those provisions made by the Scottish Law Commission in its report on illegitimacy (Scot. Law Com. No. 82). These comments are being taken into account in our consideration of possible legislation based on the commission's general proposals.

Rate Relief

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when *(a)* the commercial ratepayers and *(b)* the domestic ratepayers will learn how and when selective rate relief will be received by those whose rateable value has increased by more than three times;

(2) what steps he is taking to publicise to *(a)* domestic and *(b)* non-domestic ratepayers the availability of special rates relief under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985; and whether he will make a statement as to the procedures to be adopted.

Mr. Ancram: The Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985 and the order implementing the revaluation rebates scheme come into force on 26 August. Around that time I shall be arranging for Scotland-wide publicity to be given to the scheme. As the order provides, however, no ratepayer need take any action initially to claim rebate. Rating authorities—regional and islands councils—will be comparing the old and new valuation rolls to identify ratepayers whose properties have had their rateable value increased by a multiplier greater than three, and which qualify for a rebate. By 16 September the authorities will write to all such ratepayers granting the rebates, either by making an appropriate payment or by reducing the amount of rates still to pay. By 23 September each rating authority will publish in a local newspaper a notice telling ratepayers that if they consider they might qualify for a rebate but seem to have been missed out, they should write in making a claim within 28 days. Only at this stage therefore is there a possibility that a ratepayer need take any action.

Rating authorities will have much to do in quite a short period to ensure that this timetable is met, and it would be very helpful if ratepayers who think they may be eligible but did not write in individually to their authority asking about the scheme. They should wait until either they are granted rebate or they see the authority's notice in the local newspaper.

Crofters (Glenelg)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the reports he received upon which he based his decision over the refusal of the issuing of a special licence to crofters at Glenelg under schedule 1 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1983.

Mr. Ancram: When an application is received for a licence to kill a bird listed in schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1983 for the purposes of preventing serious damage to livestock, crops etc., my right hon. Friend makes appropriate inquiries into the probable cause, and the seriousness, of the damage and seeks advice also on conservation issues. The advice he receives on these various matters is not customarily made public; and I see no reason to depart from the normal practice in this case.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement detailing the communications he received on the merits or otherwise of granting a special licence to crofters at Glenelg under schedule 1 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1983.

Mr. Ancram: Following a number of telephone calls and one letter regarding the issue of a licence, my right hon. Friend called for and received reports on the agricultural and conservation issues involved. Having considered these representations and reports, his decision was that a special licence should not be issued.

Museums (Directors)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the posts of directors of the national museums in Scotland are graded mobile or non-mobile for the purpose of employment conditions.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The post of director of the royal Scottish museum is graded as mobile. The director of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland is appointed by the board of trustees for that museum. All employees of the trustees are treated for all practical purposes (including pay and conditions of service) as if they are civil servants, and therefore the post of director is graded mobile.

Employment

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the estimated number of additional workers in jobs as employees created from the beginning of 1983 to the end of 1984 after making allowance for the additional number of second jobs and the additional number of places on temporary employment schemes.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Primary Schools (Rural Areas)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many primary schools in rural areas have been closed since 1979.

Mr. Younger: There is no statutory categorisation of schools into rural and non-rural schools. All school closures reported to my Department between September 1982 and September 1984, the latest date for which this information is available, were included in the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Member for Eastwood on 11 July

1985 to the hon. Member for Dundee East at columns 521-2. I will write to the hon. Member about primary school closures before September 1982.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teachers there are in primary schools in rural areas at the latest available date; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Younger: This information is not held centrally. The most recent information on the overall numbers of teachers in education authority primary schools is contained in SED statistical bulletin No. 1/B1/1985. Copies of this and the earlier bulletins on the same subject are available in the Library.

Pupils (Hostel Stay)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils in Scottish schools stay at hostels away from home; and how many of these are able to go home each weekend.

Mr. Younger: This information is not available centrally.

Job Creation

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been created in Scotland since January 1983; how many of them are self-employed; how many are part-time; and how many he estimates are in rural areas.

Mr. Younger: It is estimated that the employed labour force increased overall by 20,000 between December 1982 and March 1985; that, within that total figure, the numbers of employees in full-time employment declined by 45,000, the numbers of employees in part-time employment increased by 44,000 and the numbers of self-employed increased by 21,000. Estimates are not available for the numbers in rural areas.

Average Earnings

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest available figures for gross average earnings in Great Britain, in Scotland, and in rural Scotland.

Mr. Younger: The estimated average gross weekly earnings in April 1984 of full-time employees on adult rates were £159·30 in Great Britain, £155·70 in Scotland, and £159·50 in the area of the Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, Highlands, Island Areas and Tayside local authorities, the Scottish Regions which cover most of rural Scotland. Estimates of gross average earnings are not available below regional level.

General Practitioners (Rural Areas)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioners there are in rural practices in Scotland at the latest available date; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Younger: The number of unrestricted general medical practitioners classified by health boards as working in rural practice was 339 at 1 October 1984. The equivalent figure, at the same date in 1979 was 316.

Hospital Beds (Rural Areas)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds there are available in hospitals in rural areas in Scotland at the latest available date; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Younger: This information is not readily available in the form requested, but I shall write to the hon. Member giving details of beds in the appropriate health board areas.

Public Sector Jobs

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public sector jobs there are, at the latest available date in the rural areas of Scotland; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Younger: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Telephone Exchanges (999 Service)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many telephone exchanges in Scotland are used to provide the 999 service for rural areas.

Mr. Younger: Twenty-five.

Illegal Fishing (Prosecutions)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of prosecutions for illegal fishing in Scottish waters in each of the last five years; and if he will specify the counties involved and the number of convictions.

Mr. Younger: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Police Questioning (Tape Recording)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about his proposals concerning the tape recording of police questioning.

Mr. Younger: I have just received the final report of the working party on the tape-recording of police interviews with suspects. The full working party report together with the report of the experimental study which was carried out in Scotland is now being printed and should be available in August. It would then be my aim to have a consultation period lasting until the end of the year. I shall make a further statement to the House in due course about the implications of the working party recommendations and the reactions to the consultative document.

Milk Outgoers Scheme

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in reallocating quota purchased under the milk outgoers scheme in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: I intend to provide sufficient quota to reduce from 42·5 per cent. to 32·5 per cent. the cut applied to developer awards made by the Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal for Scotland. I also intend to allocate a small amount of quota to maintain quota levels in the Scottish islands and in Kintyre, south of Tarbert. Arrangements are in hand to inform developers and island producers of their new quotas for 1985-86.

Assistance for these two groups will take up some 5 million litres of the reserve, in addition to about 16 million litres already allocated to exceptional hardship cases and small producers and I shall announce as soon as possible my intentions in respect of the 9 million litres remaining in reserve.

I am concerned to protect the positionin those areas of Scotland where the level of quota is especially critical. In particular, all of the balance of quota surrendered by outgoers in the areas of the north of Scotland and Aberdeen and district milk marketing boards will be reallocated there.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about the level of local authority expenditure provision for 1986-87.

Mr. Younger: I propose to increase the level of provision for local authority expenditure in Scotland in 1986-87 by £59 million above the figure published in the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans (Cmnd. 9428). The total provision for relevant current expenditure for 1986-87 will now be £2,989 million. In making this addition I have taken into account the representations made to me by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and I believe that the enhanced level of provision is a realistic target for Scottish local authorities.

The system of guidelines and grant penalties will continue to apply in order to maintain pressure to restrain expenditure. Since the additional provision I have made represents a significant step towards bridging the gap between my view and the view of the local authorities as to what should be spent, I trust that all authorities will now plan to remain within guidelines in 1986-87, thus avoiding the severe penalties which I will otherwise have to impose. The grant total and the guidelines will be announced in due course.

ENERGY

Uranium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department discovered that United Kingdom origin depleted uranium had been sent from Luxembourg to Israel; and what steps he is taking to prevent such transfers in future.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom first learned in November 1984 of the diversion to Israel of depleted uranium originally exported to Luxembourg. The issues raised by this case are now under discussion within Euratom to ensure a common interpretation of the safeguards regulations with regard to material transferred for non-nuclear uses.

Civil Nuclear Facilities

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if agreement has been reached with the European Commission over article 36 of Commission regulation 3227/76 regarding the safeguarding of civil nuclear facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The definitions contained in article 36 of Commission regulation (Euratom) No. 3227/76 were drawn up after full consultation between the Commission and the member states. The United Kingdom was party to these consultations and accepts their use in the application of safeguards on civil nuclear facilities.

Diesel Fuel

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy what regulations, under zoning or other arrangements, exist in the United Kingdom for differential prices for diesel fuel.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: None.

Electricity

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Energy what response has been made to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the revenue collection systems of four area electricity boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received from the Electricity Council a single response to the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission published earlier this year on the revenue collection systems of the East Midlands, South Eastern, North Eastern and South Western area electricity boards. Copies of the response have been placed in the Library.

The commission concluded that none of the four boards it examined is pursuing a course of conduct against the public interest. Flowing from its central finding that there are significant variations between boards in the practices and procedures used for revenue collection, the MMC recommended that these differences should be systematically identified and analysed on an industry-wide basis to facilitate standardisation on best practice. The response indicates that this industry-wide exercise will be undertaken and that boards will continue their efforts to adopt beneficial standard practices. The industry has also recognised the desirability of greater consistency in the application of performance indicators to revenue collection.

The report covers a range of administrative issues relevant to all area boards; the assessment of and co-ordination of appropriate action on the recommendations is taking place. I hope that the council will be able to report substantive progress on a number of issues in the second response due early next year and I shall make a further statement then.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he plans to announce an increase in the resources available to the National Coal Board's enterprise subsidiary.

Mr. Peter Walker: I informed the House on 28 November 1984 that the financial provision for NCB (Enterprise) Limited would be kept under review. I am delighted to say that such has been the progress of this company that there is a need to double the allocation of funds to it. At a press conference to mark the creation of the first thousand jobs I shall today be making the following announcement:

It is only a few months ago that the Coal Board, with the financial support of the Government, created NCB (Enterprise). The objective was simple: to see that new jobs were created in mining areas where colliery closures took place.

For decades, under every form of Government, collieries have closed as the stocks of coal that could be economically extracted disappeared. But now for the first time the Coal Board have taken on the responsibility to see that they actively and energetically encourage new industries and new businesses to provide jobs where a pit has had to close.

The progress within a very few months has been remarkable. Already financial provision has been made to create over one thousand new jobs.

Already more than £1 million is being invested to convert redundant colliery buildings into workshops for new enterprises and new industries. A mass of enquiries has been received. They are currently being processed, and will result in much more money being needed in the coming months.

I anticipate that the £10 million originally allocated will be dedicated to job creation programmes over the coming months.

I am determined that this progress should continue. It is for this reason I am happy to announce today that, before the first £10 million has been allocated, a further £10 million is being made available.

An uneconomic pit with only a short time before its coal stocks are exhausted offers no future for a mining community. New businesses, new enterprises and new opportunities are what these communities require. That is why I have given the highest priority to the creative, exciting and constructive work of NCB (Enterprise). It is my hope that the second £10 million will be well spent and the mining communities can be assured that there will be no lack of financial, practical or political encouragement to the success of the Enterprise company. NCB (Enterprise) has done a marvellous job in a very short period of time, but it is only a beginning and nothing compared with the job that needs to be done and will be done.

South Wales Electricity Board (Report)

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for Energy what response has been made by the South Wales Electricity Board to the report on the Board by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission which was published earlier in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to the reply*, 29 November 1984, c. *537-38*]: I have now received the second response of the South Wales Electricity Board (SWALEB) to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) report published in February 1984. This describes further progress by the board in meeting the commission's conclusions. I have placed copies of the board's response in the Library of the House.

The board has responded in a constructive and specific way to many of the MMC's recommendations and significant progress has been made since my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 29 November 1984 concerning SWALEB's initial response.

The commission recommended that board members should play a more active role in setting SWALEB's corporate strategy through the formulation of key medium term objectives, including cost reduction targets. I am pleased to note that board members are now fully involved in considering the board's central objectives and plans and that comparative performance indicators are studied as part of the planning process. It is clear from the response that SWALEB is committed to continuing progress in reducing its costs while maintaining acceptable standards of service—for example, a key objective in the current annual operating plan is to reduce the board's revenue expenditure by 3 per cent. in real terms compared with the outturn for 1984-85. I welcome the board's increasing use of quantified targets, including job-related indicators, which will play an important part in the continuing effort to enhance efficiency and value for money.

I am also pleased that in response to other recommendations the board is developing a comprehensive management information system related to the role and key objectives of each manager and that it continues to test the effectiveness and performance of its own labour force by regular comparisons between in-house and private contractors' costs over a wide range of work. I am glad to note SWALEB's success in eliminating losses in its appliance repair activity in 1984-85. I am discussing with the Electricity Council whether it might be appropriate for boards to adopt any new accounting arrangements for the repair business.

The commission commented (in conclusion 6) on the board's relations with the council. I attach considerable importance to the promotion of close working relationships within the industry, provided that these are cost-effective and give value for money. I am pleased to note that the Electricity Council has set up an audit group to monitor this aspect of central operations. The council is also taking action on a number of other recommendations with industry-wide implications, including the important areas of computer development and investment appraisal.

I should like to convey the Government's gratitude to the MMC for its thorough and stimulating investigation. Its findings have clearly been of considerable use to the South Wales board in helping it to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

ENVIRONMENT

Homeless Persons (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people have been accepted as homeless in the London borough of Waltham Forest in each year from 1979; and how many were priority cases.

Sir George Young: The following is the available information:

Number of accepted households

Year	*Number*
1979	467
1980	512
1981	535
1982	773
1983*	352

* First half.

About nine out of every ten accepted households were in priority-need. My Department does not collect information on the size of those households.

Reservoirs Act 1975

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what parts of the Reservoirs Act 1975 have still not been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Reservoirs Act 1975 applies to large raised reservoirs and is being implemented in stages:

(i) enabling regulations and regulations for the appointment of the panels of engineers (required for various functions under the Act) came into force throughout Great Britain in 1984;

(ii) on 1 April 1985 throughout Great Britain (except the Greater London and English metropolitan areas, where it will be on 1 April 1986) provisions came into effect

transferring responsibility for reservoir safety from district to county councils (providing for their setting up registers of reservoirs, taking action in event of an emergency and reporting to the Secretary of State about steps taken to ensure compliance with the Act); requiring owners to provide information about their reservoirs; and providing for non-compliance with the Act to be a criminal offence;

(iii) the remaining provisions, mainly concerning the supervision of reservoirs between inspections by qualified civil engineers, will come into force on 1 April 1986 (1 April 1987 in the Greater London and Metropolitan areas).

The Act replaces the Reservoirs (Safety Provisions) Act 1930, which already provides a strict regime for the inspection of large raised reservoirs and the supervision of their design and construction by qualified engineers appointed by the Secretary of State on the advice of the Institution of Civil Engineers. (Mine and quarry lagoons which are tips are covered by the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969 and are supervised by the Health and Safety Executive.)

Planning Zones (Green Belt)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following the publication of the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden", he will make it his policy not to introduce simplified planning zones in green belt areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: The White Paper makes clear the Government's concern for the maintenance of the green belts. In those areas, existing development control policies will continue to apply and the proposals relating to simplified planning zones will not affect those policies.

One-parent Families (Finer Report)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Gow: Most of the relevant recommendations of the Finer committee report were endorsed in DOE circular 78/77 or implemented by the Housing Act 1980. The Department's booklet "One Parent Families: Help with Housing", which was produced in 1978 in the light of the Finer committee's recommendations, has been substantially revised and updated; the new version will be published shortly.

UPVC Framed Windows

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards applications for listed building consent which have been refused solely because it is the policy of the planning authority not to allow UPVC framed windows in old buildings.

Mr. Gow: Guidelines to local planning authorities on alterations to listed buildings are contained in appendix IV and DOE circular 23/77. Each case must be considered on its merits. An applicant who has been refused consent has a right of appeal to my right hon. Friend.

Listed Buildings (Consent)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether as a matter of policy each application for listed building consent for a private house listed as class 2 under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 is considered individually as to whether the application affects the character of the building.

Mr. Gow: It is for the local planning authorities to decide how to determine such applications. My right hon. Friend would expect each application to be considered individually on its merits and as quickly as possible.

Live Animals (Ports of Entry)

Sir Humphrey Atkins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when action will be taken under the endangered species legislation to designate ports and airports for the entry of live animals.

Mr. Waldegrave: Regulations designating ports and airports for the entry of live animals have been made today. They will be laid before the House shortly. These regulations will fulfil a promise made by the Government during the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act in 1981. The regulations will help to implement the rules governing trade in endangered species more effectively, and have been made following extensive consultations with traders and conservation bodies.

Wild Animals (Migratory Species)

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to ratify the Bonn convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government attaches great importance to the protection of threatened wildlife and I am therefore very pleased to be able to announce that the United Kingdom ratified this important convention earlier this week. We now look forward to playing a full part in the first meeting of the contracting parties to be held in Bonn in October.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of permanent staff directly employed by the London Docklands development corporation as at 31 March 1982, 31 March 1983, 31 March 1984 and 31 March 1985.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 22 July 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps the London Docklands development corporation has taken to provide guidance to developers on provisions for disabled people in public buildings as required by the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as amended by the Disabled Persons Act 1981;

(2) how many *(a)* privately owned [illegible] and *(b)* publicly owned or housing association units on London Docklands development corporation-owned land have been designed for people with disabilities; and what is the London Docklands development corporation target number for such dwellings on London Docklands development corporation-owned land;

(3) how many women have obtained new jobs in the London Docklands development corporation area; what industries these women are employed in; and what percentage of total new jobs it represents;

(4) what steps the London Docklands development corporation has taken to seek to ensure that new leisure facilities in the London Docklands development corporation areas are designed to give access for the disabled and elderly; and what steps are being taken to provide sports and leisure facilities that are suited to the specific requirements of the disabled and elderly;

(5) how many construction jobs in the London Docklands development corporation area have been taken *(a)* by women and *(b)* by people from the black and ethnic minority communities;

(6) what provision the London Docklands development corporation has made of roads and pavements in their area for people with impaired mobility, wheelchair users, and pedestrians with aural and visual impairments;

(7) if the London Docklands development corporation keeps a register which indicates the number of members of black and other ethnic minority communities employed;

(8) pursuant to his reply of 29 April, *Official Report*, columns 31-32, if he will list the individual development initiatives for the royal docks being discussed by the London Docklands development corporation.

Sir George Young: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Inter-action of any of its subsidiaries is receiving either capital or revenue funding from the London Docklands Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands Development Corporation has taken to ensure that the design of houses on London docklands development-owned land contains provisions for the disabled.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: Provision for the disabled on sites released to private developers is a matter for the prospective purchasors and builder to negotiate. Provision is made for disabled accommodation, to wheelchair and mobility standards, for local authority and housing association developments on corporation-owned land.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands Development Corporation intends to take to ensure that the composition of private housing estates on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land reflects the multicultural nature of London.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: None.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what training programmes are used within the London Docklands Development Corporation to create awareness of racism and sexism.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: None. The corporation do meet all statutory requirements in respect of equal opportunities, as it relates to selection, promotion, training and termination.

Privatisation

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the findings of the latest privatisation survey conducted and published by the *Local Government Chronicle*, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I share my hon. Friend's disappointment at the survey's findings that so few authorities have recently seen fit to seek the savings which private sector competition can so clearly offer.

Sport (Greater London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional funds he proposes to make available for sporting schemes in the Greater London area.

Mr. Macfarlane: I shall answer this question shortly.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many planning appeals during the last 12 months he has not accepted the inspector's recommendations; how many of these involved proposals for *(a)* residential developments and *(b)* more than 300 residential units.

Mr. Macfarlane: I shall answer this question shortly.

Departmental Vote

Mr. Watson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any changes will be made to the cash limits on his Department's Votes for 1985-86.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The cash limit on Class XIV, Vote 1 relating to expenditure by the Property Services Agency on Civil Accommodation Services will be reduced by £12,222,000 from £606,516,000 to £594,294,000. This is to compensate for an overspend of £12,222,000 in 1984-85 and follows the standard practice whereby an excess over the cash limit in one year is deducted from the cash limit in the next year. The excess occurred because rent and other receipts proved to have been overestimated and work progressed faster than expected so that offsetting shortfalls in gross expenditure did not materialise on the scale forecast. The agency is reviewing its forecasting and monitoring methods, particularly where receipts are concerned, in order to improve its cash limit control.

Water Supply (Norman Shaw South)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the report on the contamination of the water supply in the Norman Shaw South building has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In my statement to the House on 6 June, I said that I had ordered a full investigation into the matter, and that I would publish the report. I also assured the House that the lessons learnt from this unfortunate incident will be vigorously pursued.

The investigation was carried out by Mr. M. J. Dudding, a Principal in the Parliamentary Works Office, assisted at relevant times by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Factories of the Health and Safety Executive, a member of the staff of the Serjeant at Arms' Department or a safety officer of the Property Services Agency's London region. His report has been completed and a copy has today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies have also been sent to the appropriate trade unions and staff associations; and to all occupants of the Norman Shaw south building.

I am satisfied that Mr. Dudding's investigation has been detailed, thorough and impartial. His report was prepared in full consultation with the authorities of the two Houses, and with the Health and Safety Executive. Each of these bodies has expressed itself satisfied with the investigation and the findings of the report.

The investigation has established that anti-corrosion chemicals were accidentally poured into the wrong tank in Norman Shaw south on two occasions, on 4 May 1985 and 4 June 1985. The report reveals weaknesses in the management of the Parliamentary Works Office, and in communications within both that office and the Serjeant at Arms' Department, and between these two bodies.

The main recommendations are that:

(a) improvements should be made in the Parliamentary Works Office relating to records and instructions to staff;

(b) in both the Parliamentary Works Office and the Serjeant at Arms' Department formal training should be given so that all staff understand the relevant procedures, and can pass on and record messages accurately;

(c) the Parliamentary Works Office and the Serjeant at Arms' Department (together with Black Rod's Office in the House of Lords) should jointly consider ways in which communications could be passed through defined focal points in each body, and should redraft the material about services in the two Houses which is made available to Peers, Members and their staff to include reference to building services and the channel for dealing with complaints;

(d) chemical dosing equipment, which would obviate the need to pour chemicals into the water tank, should be fitted to the Norman Shaw south boilers as a matter of urgency.

I accept these recommendations as far as the Parliamentary Works Office is concerned, and I shall be in touch with my right hon. Friends the Lord Privy Seal and the Lord President of the Council about those recommendations which relate to the Serjeant at Arms' Department and the Black Rod's Office respectively.

The following measures have already been taken in Norman Shaw south:

(a) chemical dosing equipment for the boilers has been ordered, and will be fitted as soon as possible;

(b) all down-service supply tanks have been clearly marked as such;

(c) all taps marked "Drinking Water" have been checked to ensure that they are supplied from a rising main, and all drinking water taps have been clearly marked;

(d) all tanks are being numbered, and instructions have been issued that the number and description of the appropriate tank is to be quoted on the order form when a tank is to be dosed; and also that the Technical Officer must show the operative which tank is concerned and explain what is required;

(e) permanent labels marked "Not for drinking" are being made to taps at wash basins which are not supplied directly from a rising main.

Similar measures are also being implemented in other Parliamentary buildings. Additional drinking water taps are being installed during the recess in Norman Shaw south. Management and control procedures in the Parliamentary Works Office will be urgently reviewed in the light of both this report and a district management review of the office which was carried out in May as part of PSA's planned programme of checks to ensure the proper maintenance of the estate and the effectiveness of its district works offices.

The question of possible disciplinary action against any of the PSA's staff concerned in this case, which is a matter for the agency's management, is being considered in the light of the report.

I can assure you that the recommendations of this report will be vigorously pursued.

Building Regulations

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the role of certificates issued by the British Board of Agrément when new building regulations are made under the Building Act 1984.

Mr. Gow: The certificates will have an enhanced role in the new building control system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will agree with the board the aspects of performance which it needs to assess in preparing its certificates in order that the board may demonstrate the compliance of a product or system, which has an agrément certificate, with the regulations. An agrément certificate, issued by the board will give assurance that a product or system to which the certificate relates, if properly used in accordance with the terms of the certificate, will meet the relevant requirements. A statement to this effect will be included in each of the approved documents to be issued by my right hon. Friend as guidance to meeting the requirements of the regulations.

A statement to this effect will be included in each of the approved documents to be issued by my right hon. Friend as guidance to meeting the requirements of the regulations.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Expenditure and Savings

18. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which are the main areas of spending which have been increased in real terms; and which are the main areas where savings have been made since 1979.

26. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state those areas of public expenditure which have been increased and those which have been cut, since 1979.

Mr. Peter Rees: Since 1979-80 the main areas where we have increased spending in real terms are law and order, social security, defence, and the health service. The main areas when reductions have been achieved are public sector housing, support for the nationalised industries, excluding the effects of the coal strike, our contributions to the European Community; and in Civil Service numbers.

Demergers

19. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to amend the provisions of the Finance Acts in so far as they affect fiscal matters relating to demergers.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Inflation

20. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Lawson: Over the 12 months to June 1985, the retail prices index increased by 7 per cent.

Income Tax

21. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the proportion of the population which currently pays less income tax in real terms than in 1978-79.

Mr. Hayhoe: Over 99 per cent. of taxpayers will pay less income tax in 1985-86 than under a 1978-79 indexed tax regime.

46. **Mr. Chope** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the burden of income tax in the United Kingdom on those with below average earnings compares with the United Kingdom's principal European competitors.

Mr. Moore: The table below gives the position for average, three quarters average and half average earnings for the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy.

	United Kingdom	*France*	*Germany*	*Italy*
Income tax as percentage of average earnings				
Single person	22	9	20	16
Married couple	17	3	12	15
Income tax as percentage of three-quarters of average earnings				
Single person	19	6	15	13
Married couple	13	1	10	10
Income tax as percentage of half average earnings				
Single person	14	3	11	7
Married couple	4	1	6	4

Notes:

1. The figures given relate to the average production worker's wage in each country (estimated as at 1 April 1985), as that is the only average earnings figure available for all the countries shown.
2. The tax data used are for 1985-86 for the United Kingdom, 1985 for Germany and Italy, and 1984 for France (which will not set its tax rates for 1985 until the end of the year). The figures take account of personal reliefs, minimum deductions for expenses and other standard reliefs.
3. The income of the married couple is assumed to belong wholly to the husband.

Infrastructure (Investment)

22. **Mr. Strang** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last had discussions at the National Economic Development Council about the level of public investment in Britain's infrastructure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Rees: The NEDC had a lengthy discussion on the public sector built infrastructure on 10 July.

Direct and Indirect Taxation

23. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the levels of direct and indirect taxation in 1979 and at the present time.

Mr. Hayhoe: Direct taxes, including North sea taxes, were £28½ billion in 1978-79, and the Budget forecast for 1985-86 is £69½ billion. Indirect taxes were £30 billion in 1978-79, and the Budget forecast for 1985-86 is £68½ billion.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

24. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will meet the Governor of the Bank of England further to discuss the position of the Johnson Matthey bank.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Members for Liverpool, Mossley Hill and Bolsover.

34. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any disciplinary proceedings have been taken against Bank of England staff following the Johnson Matthey Bankers collapse.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This is a matter for the Governor of the Bank of England.

£1 Notes and Coins

25. **Mr. Janner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many £1 notes and £1 coins, respectively, are now in circulation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: About 235 million notes and 505 million coins.

Capital Transfer Tax (Conservation Land)

27. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now extend the scope of capital transfer tax relief for areas of land which are set aside to be managed to an agreed plan for conservation purposes.

Mr. Peter Rees: In this year's Finance Bill we have extended the scope of capital transfer tax exemption for amenity land supporting a historic house. I have no present plans to extend that or similar exemptions further.

Economic Recovery

28. **Mr. Knox** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there have been any further signs that the economy is recovering from the recession.

35. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent evidence he has had of economic recovery.

Mr. Peter Rees: In the three months to May, the average level of the index of industrial production rose by 3 per cent. from the level of the previous three months to stand at a level 4½ per cent. higher than a year ago. In the second quarter of this year retail sales rose by 2 per cent. and were 4½ per cent. higher than a year ago. All the indications are that we are now entering the fifth year of increased economic activity — the longest period of continuous growth since the 1973 oil crisis.

Commercial Bills

29. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, when he next meets the Governor of the Bank of England, he will discuss with him the value of commercial bills owned by the bank.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend regularly meets the Governor to discuss financial developments in the context of the medium-term financial strategy. I am sure he will have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Privatisation

30. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on the public sector borrowing requirement of the Government's privatisation proposals over the next two years.

Mr. Peter Rees: Forecasts of the proceeds from the special sales of assets programme will be published in the Autumn Statement and the next Public Expenditure White Paper.

Gross Domestic Product

31. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of gross domestic product compared with 12 months ago.

Mr. Peter Rees: After allowing for the effects of the coal strike, GDP grew by an underlying 3½ per cent. between the first quarters of 1984 and 1985.

Interest Rates

32. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will hold discussions with the Bank of England with a view to reducing interest rates.

45. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow.

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he now proposes to take any steps to reduce interest rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow.

P11D Tax Threshold

33. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the current level of the P11D tax threshold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: A total of eight representations from employers and employees about the current level of the P11D threshold have been received since 6 April 1985. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to my remarks about the threshold in the report stage debate on the Finance Bill (*Official Report*, c. 954-5).

Scotch Whisky Industry (Stock Relief)

36. **Mr. Sims** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Scotch whisky industry on the impact of the withdrawal of stock relief; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: We have received a number of representations and in both his Budgets my right hon. Friend has reduced the real level of the duty on whisky.

Monetary Policy

37. **Mr. Gould** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes any changes in the operation of his monetary policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Policy will continue to be operated in the way set out in the Budget statement within the context of the medium term financial strategy.

Tax Inspectors (Performance-Related Bonus)

38. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if tax inspectors of principal grade conducting investigations and agreements of the accounts of small limited companies will qualify for payments under the performance-related bonus scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: All tax inspectors at principal grade level, whatever their duties, are eligible for payments under the performance bonus scheme.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average cost of replacement of a trained inspector of taxes leaving by resignation, including *(a)* cost of recruitment of his replacement, *(b)* cost of training his replacement and *(c)* loss of tax yield whilst his replacement completes training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The cost of replacement will depend on a number of factors. The cost of recruitment varies between about £15,000 for a graduate direct entrant to well under £1,000 for staff selected internally for inspector training. The cost of training, depending on the type of training involved, is estimated from about £20,000 to about £40,000.

It is not possible to give an estimate of the average loss of tax yield involved since this is likely to vary widely from case to case depending on the type of activity on which the resigning inspector has been engaged and whether the vacancy created is in fact carried, pending replacement, in the same or a different area of activity.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will describe the duration and cost of training an inspector of taxes.

Mr. Moore: For a fully trained inspector, the full course of training lasts three years followed by five separate weeks of management and supplementary technical training spread over the next two years. The cost of this training (including salary and overhead costs for non-effective time) is estimated at about £40,000. For other Inspectors, the initial training lasts 13 months. They can then be nominated for management training (two weeks) and supplementary technical training equivalent to about five weeks spread over six months. The cost of this training on the same basis is estimated at about £20,000.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual cost-yield ratio for a typical inspector of taxes engaged in investigative work.

Mr. Moore: An inspector of taxes engaged on accounts investigation work can be expected to produce in extra revenue five times his total cost.

Job Creation (Tax Cuts)

39. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about the advisability of tax cuts as a method of creating jobs.

Mr. Peter Rees: This is a topic often raised in communications received by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Money Supply

40. **Mr. Straw** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent consideration he has given to changes in methods of controlling the money supply.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Such matters are subject to constant review.

Employment

41. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the growth in employment in the United Kingdom since June 1983 compares with the record of major European countries.

Mr. Peter Rees: Since June 1983, United Kingdom employment has risen by 615,000. By contrast, total employment in the rest of the European Community has fallen over this period.

Silver Coins

42. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between size and value of the existing silver coins.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the four cupro-nickel coins currently in circulation. The 10p coin weighs twice the weight of the 5p coin. The weight of the heptagonal 50p coin is three times that of the heptagonal 20p coin. There is no size/value relationship between the round and heptagonal cupro-nickel coins. Exact relationships between size and weight and value are no longer needed because banks and other major cash handlers now use coin counting equipment to count coins instead of weighing them.

£M3

43. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to develop additional measures to M3 of the money supply.

Mr. Ian Stewart: £M3 is not the only available measure of the money supply. The Government has targets for MO and £M3, and statistics are published for a number of other definitions of money. There are no plans to develop further measures.

48. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of M3.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The growth of sterling M3 remains hard to interpret. The over-subscription for Abbey Life has distorted this month's figures. The surge in investment financing to take advantage of the higher capital allowances available in 1984-85 is still unwinding. Part of recent £M3 growth may also be the result of structural changes in the financial sector which do not carry adverse implications for future inflation.

Unemployment Costs

44. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current annual cost to the Exchequer, taking into account lost taxes and benefits paid, of the present level of unemployment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The current annual cost to the Exchequer of benefits to the unemployed is £6·23 billion. It is not possible to estimate the revenue forgone.

Financial Management Initiative

47. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the effectiveness of the financial management initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The financial management initiative has successfully stimulated better financial management and greater efficiency in government departments. Work continues in each department, as it takes forward its plans, as a key part of the overall programme to improve the efficiency of public services.

Public Spending Targets

49. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he still expects that the public spending targets contained in the "Autumn Statement" will be met.

Mr. Peter Rees: The 1984 "Autumn Statement" summarised the Government's public expenditure plans for 1985-86, and these were later detailed in Cmnd. 9428. The public expenditure planning total for that year was subsequently increased at the time of the Budget to £134·2 billion by the addition of £2 billion to the Reserve. I consider this total to be realistic.

Small New Businesses

50. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will now make it his policy to relieve new small businesses of national insurance contributions.

Mr. Peter Rees: The Social Security Bill 1985 sets out the rates of national insurance contributions that will apply from 6 October 1985. The reduced rates for employers' contributions in respect of lower paid employees should encourage employment in new firms as well as old.

Cider (Excise Duty)

51. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue arose from excise duty on cider in the year 1984-85; and what he expects to accrue in the year 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: About £45 million and £60 million respectively.

National Economic Development Office

52. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has recently received from the National Economic Development Office on public spending.

Mr. Peter Rees: The National Economic Development Office prepares papers for the Council as a whole on a

range of subjects. The office paper on infrastructure for the July meeting of NEDC drew out the major issues arising from the papers submitted. It pointed out that the TUC advocated a net increase in public expenditure of £30 billion for infrastructural investment spread over five years, while the CBI called for no net increase in public expenditure, but for savings on current expenditure to be used to finance additional capital expenditure of up to £1 billion per annum, with further increases financed through better use of Government resources.

53. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent meeting with the National Economic Development council.

Mr. Peter Rees: The council discussed a progress report from the Director-General on the new jobs exercise, and papers on the public sector infrastructure. The council agreed to reissue the papers.

Value Added Tax

54. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the building trade about the value added tax registration level.

Mr. Hayhoe: Four since the last Budget, all recommending a reduction or abolition of the threshold.

Tax Reform

55. **Mr. Ancram** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish his proposals for tax reform.

Mr. Moore: Later this year.

Taxation Yield

Mr. Arnold asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the ratio of the yield from direct taxation to the yield from indirect taxation in each year since May 1979.

Mr. Moore: The ratio of the yield of taxes on personal sector income to taxes on consumer spending is given in the table. Estimates of the yields of these taxes in 1984 will be published in the 1985 edition of the CSO Blue Book in September.

Taxes on personal income: taxes on consumer spending

Year	
1978	1·14
1979	1·00
1980	0·98
1981	0·94
1982	0·91
1983	0·89

Sterling Rate

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage *(a)* sterling M3, *(b)* M1 and *(c)* M3 rose in the 12-month periods to the beginning of each month since April 1984.

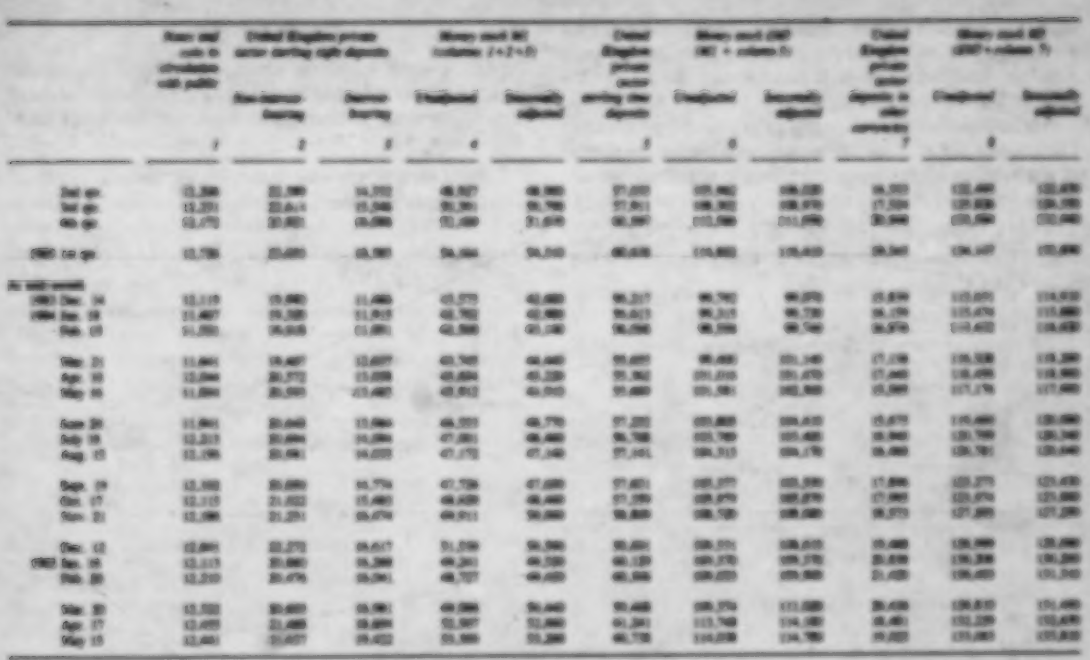
Mr. Ian Stewart: The figures requested by the hon. Member for June 1984 to June 1985 were published using revised seasonal adjustments in the Bank of England's following figures press release on 18 July 1985. The following table provides the information for April and May 1984 on the same basis.

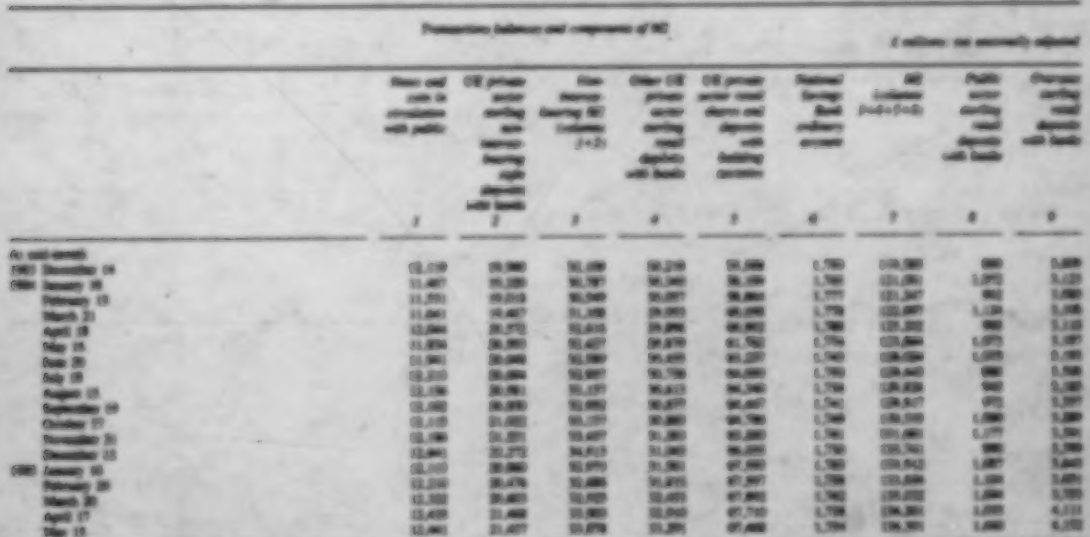
	£M3	M1	M3
Annual growth rates up to:			
mid-April 1984	7·0	13·6	10·7
mid-May 1984	8·0	13·7	9·3

Money stock: amounts outstanding
Components of M1, £M3 and M3

£million

	Notes and coin in circulation with public	United Kingdom private sector sterling sight deposits		Money stock M1 (columns 1+2+3)		United Kingdom private sector sterling time deposits	Money stock £M3 (M1 + column 5)		United Kingdom private sector deposits in other currencies	Money stock M3 (£M3 + column 7)	
		Non-interest bearing	Interest bearing	Unadjusted	Seasonally adjusted		Unadjusted	Seasonally adjusted		Unadjusted	Seasonally adjusted
	1	2	3	4		5	6		7	8	
At mid-quarter											
1979 4th qtr.	9,511	10,028	4,319	23,858	24,246	27,371	51,229	50,760	5,302	62,432	61,868
1980 1st qtr.	9,648	10,340	4,332	24,319	24,510	27,802	52,121	52,312	5,607	62,671	62,796
2nd qtr.	9,946	10,424	4,351	24,721	24,979	31,502	56,223	56,481	5,856	62,435	62,835
3rd qtr.	9,914	10,690	4,265	24,867	24,788	33,895	58,762	58,683	5,660	64,189	63,980
4th qtr.	10,209	10,315	4,597	25,044	25,249	36,746	61,790	61,995	6,189	67,979	68,184
1981 1st qtr.	9,950	10,843	4,678	25,441	25,228	35,750	61,191	60,978	5,847	67,038	66,825
2nd qtr.	10,008	11,534	5,057	26,599	26,599	35,013	61,612	61,612	5,984	67,596	67,596
3rd qtr.	10,255	11,359	5,316	26,930	26,930	34,288	61,218	61,218	5,977	67,195	67,195
4th qtr.	10,824	11,641	5,597	28,062	28,062	34,127	62,189	62,189	6,273	68,462	68,462
1982 1st qtr.	10,707	11,701	5,885	28,293	28,293	34,127	62,420	62,420	6,273	68,693	68,693
2nd qtr.	10,555	11,727	6,279	28,561	28,561	34,127	62,688	62,688	6,273	68,961	68,961
3rd qtr.	10,978	11,331	6,440	28,749	28,749	34,127	62,876	62,876	6,273	69,149	69,149
4th qtr.	10,749	10,790	6,659	28,198	28,198	34,127	62,325	62,325	6,273	68,598	68,598
1983 1st qtr.	11,220	10,600	6,985	28,805	28,805	34,127	62,932	62,932	6,273	69,205	69,205
2nd qtr.	11,772	10,827	7,299	29,898	29,898	34,127	64,025	64,025	6,273	70,298	70,298
3rd qtr.	11,788	10,827	7,299	29,914	29,914	34,127	64,041	64,041	6,273	70,314	70,314
4th qtr.	11,944	10,173	7,297	29,414	29,414	34,127	63,541	63,541	6,273	69,814	69,814
1984 1st qtr.	11,824	10,440	7,305	29,569	29,569	34,127	63,696	63,696	6,273	69,969	69,969
2nd qtr.	11,878	10,469	7,302	29,649	29,649	34,127	63,776	63,776	6,273	70,049	70,049
1985 1st qtr.	11,979	10,561	7,289	29,829	29,829	34,127	63,956	63,956	6,273	70,229	70,229





Foreign Borrowing

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the outstanding public sector foreign borrowing in total by year of repayment.

Mr. Peter Rees: The information requested is as follows:

Total public sector official and commercial foreign currency borrowing, end March 1985

Year of repayment	*£ billion equivalent*
1986	1·1
1987	1·4
1988	1·4
1989	0·9
1990	1·2
1991	0·9
1992	0·8
1993 onwards	3·3
Total	12·1

Inland Revenue (Performance Bonus Scheme)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the rules under which Inland Revenue

staff can receive awards under the performance bonus scheme; if he will detail the amounts available to each grade of staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I am arranging to place in the House of Commons Library a copy of a statement setting out details of the performance bonus scheme as it is being operated in the Inland Revenue in 1985-86.

The amounts of a bonus award for 1985-86 for individuals in each eligible grade of staff are as follows:

£1,100 for Grades 3, 4 and 5

£950 for Grade 6

£700 for Principal and equivalent grades.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in future public expenditure White Papers, he will identify in a separate programme all public expenditure relating to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Peter Rees: I have no plans to do so.

Taxation

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his reply to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) *Official Report*, 2 July, columns 112-15, if he will now publish similar figures relating to income tax and national insurance contributions; and if he will show total taxes as a percentage of gross earnings in each case.

Mr. Moore: The information is in the table.

£ per week

	Single	Married (one working)	Married (both working)	Married with two children (one working)
75 per cent. of average earnings				
1978-79				
Income tax	15·50	12·10	3·30	10·40
NIC	4·53	4·53	4·53	4·53
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	39·7	36·7	29·9	27·1
1979-80				
Income tax	17·14	13·43	4·19	13·43
NIC	5·33	5·33	5·33	5·33
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	39·4	36·6	30·6	28·4
1980-81				
Income tax	21·66	17·21	9·28	17·21
NIC	6·66	6·66	6·66	6·66
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	40·5	37·8	32·3	29·6
1981-82				
Income tax	34·92	28·48	12·54	28·48
NIC	8·69	8·69	8·69	8·69
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·6	40·3	35·8	30·9
1982-83				
Income tax	26·41	21·55	12·50	21·55
NIC	10·34	10·34	10·34	10·34
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·9	40·3	35·6	30·8
1983-84				
Income tax	28·18	22·35	12·60	22·35
NIC	11·54	11·54	11·54	11·54
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·9	40·1	35·1	30·4
1984-85				
Income tax	30·10	23·47	11·90	23·47
NIC	12·50	12·50	12·50	12·50
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·6	39·6	34·2	29·7
1985-86				
Income tax	31·97	24·66	11·94	24·66
NIC	13·38	13·38	11·89	13·38
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·3	39·3	32·8	29·5
100 per cent. of average earnings				
1978-79				
Income tax	23·25	19·78	12·38	18·40
NIC	6·04	6·04	6·04	6·04
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	41·7	39·7	33·4	31·9
1979-80				
Income tax	25·38	21·43	14·19	21·43

	Single	Married (one working)	Married (both working)	Married with two children (one working)
NIC	7·11	7·11	7·11	7·11
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	40·1	39·4	34·2	31·1
1980-81				
Income tax	31·52	27·08	19·14	27·08
NIC	8·88	8·88	8·88	8·88
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·1	40·3	35·6	32·8
1981-82				
Income tax	30·67	31·43	23·49	31·43
NIC	11·32	11·32	11·32	11·32
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	43·9	42·6	38·5	34·8
1982-83				
Income tax	29·22	33·14	24·12	33·14
NIC	13·78	13·78	13·78	13·78
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	44·4	42·8	38·6	35·0
1983-84				
Income tax	41·0	35·18	24·88	35·18
NIC	15·39	15·39	15·39	15·39
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	44·5	42·8	38·4	34·7
1984-85				
Income tax	43·99	37·36	25·79	37·36
NIC	16·67	16·67	16·67	16·67
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	44·2	42·3	37·8	34·3
1985-86				
Income tax	46·74	39·53	26·81	39·53
NIC	17·64	17·64	17·05	17·64
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	44·0	42·0	37·0	34·2
150 per cent. of average earnings				
1978-79				
Income tax	39·50	35·09	27·69	33·82
NIC	7·80	7·80	9·06	7·80
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·9	42·0	37·8	35·8
1979-80				
Income tax	41·79	38·04	30·60	38·04
NIC	8·78	8·78	10·67	8·78
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·0	41·3	37·9	34·7
1980-81				
Income tax	31·24	46·80	38·87	46·80
NIC	11·14	11·14	13·51	11·14
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	42·7	42·0	39·0	36·0
1981-82				
Income tax	37·77	53·33	45·39	53·33
NIC	15·50	15·50	16·97	15·50
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	44·7	44·3	41·3	38·1
1982-83				
Income tax	41·85	56·77	47·74	56·77
NIC	19·25	19·25	20·67	19·25
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	45·4	44·8	41·6	38·6
1983-84				
Income tax	46·45	60·83	50·53	60·83
NIC	21·15	21·15	23·09	21·15
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	45·4	44·7	41·6	38·5
1984-85				
Income tax	51·77	65·14	53·57	65·14
NIC	22·50	22·50	25·00	22·50
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	45·1	44·3	41·3	38·2
1985-86				
Income tax	56·47	69·26	56·54	69·26
NIC	23·93	23·85	26·76	23·85
Total taxes and NIC as a percentage of gross earnings	44·9	44·0	41·1	38·0

Note: Total taxes and NIC are taken to include income tax less child benefit, NIC, and central government indirect taxes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the United States of America and the United Kingdom the change in the incidence of *(a)* direct and *(b)* indirect taxation since 1979 for a person on average earnings so far as this can be calculated.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. 257]: The figures in the following table give a comparison of *(a)* income tax and social security contributions; *(b)* indirect tax payments as a percentage of gross earnings of an average production worker (APW) using the OECD's definition. The tax figures are calculated for a married man with a non-earning wife and two children who earns the APW average. Indirect tax payments (excluding LA rates) are given only for the United Kingdom APW. These are based on a typical expenditure pattern for this earnings level, derived from the family expenditure survey. Equivalent information for the United States is not readily available.

(Per cent. of gross earnings)	*United States (California)*	*United Kingdom*
1979 (United Kingdom 1979-80)		
(a) Income tax and employees' social security contributions	15	26
(b) Indirect taxes	n/a	13
1985 (United Kingdom 1985-86)		
(a) Income tax and employees' social security contributions	17	26
(b) Indirect taxes	n/a	13

Notes:

1. As comparable figures for all occupations, average earnings are not available, the comparison has been made instead on the basis of the earnings of an APW as published by OECD. The 1979 earnings figures refer to males only whereas the 1985 figures refer to men and women because of a change in the OECD series. The 1985 figures are derived by updating the published OECD figures for 1983.
2. Personal reliefs, employment income reliefs and other standard reliefs have been taken into account.
3. It is assumed that the United Kingdom employee is not contracted out from the State pension scheme.
4. The figures for the United States of America include local income taxes at 1984 rates. The 1985 rate is not fixed until the autumn.
5. If child benefits were deducted from the United Kingdom's income tax and social security contributions, the percentages would be:

1979-80	17
1985-86	17

There are no child benefits or analogous payments in the United States of America.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1973-74, 1978-79 and the current financial year, at a full year rate, the percentage of gross income taken in *(a)* direct taxes, including national insurance contributions less child benefit and *(b)* indirect taxation, in the case of a married man with two children, one earner and no other allowances where the earnings of the married man are (i) 45 per cent., (ii) 60 per cent., (iii) 100 per cent., (iv) 200 per cent. and (v) 300 per cent. of average earnings; and if he will provide comparable figures for single persons.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. 257]: The available information is in the table. Indirect tax payments cannot reliably be estimated below about 75 per cent. or above about 150 per cent. of average earnings. Estimates of indirect tax payments in 1973-74 are not readily available.

Per cent. of gross earnings

	1973-74	*1978-79*	*1985-86*
Single			
45 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	19·4	21·6	23·7
60 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	23·4	26·2	28·3
100 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	27·9	31·5	32·6
(b) Indirect taxes	n/a	10·2	11·5
200 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	29·4	33·7	33·9
300 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	31·5	39·8	38·2
Married with two children			
45 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	2·4	−0·7	0·2
60 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	9·4	8·4	10·6
100 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	19·6	20·9	22·0
(b) Indirect taxes	n/a	11·0	12·2
200 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	25·2	27·9	28·0
300 per cent. of average earnings			
(a) Direct taxes	27·9	34·8	33·8

Notes:

1. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The figure for 1985-86 is illustrative and assumes growth of 7 per cent. over the provisional 1984-85 outturn.
2. Direct taxes include income tax and national insurance contributions, less child benefit or family allowance; indirect taxes exclude rates but include the indirect effects of taxes levied on businesses.
3. The estimates of indirect tax payments are derived from the 1983 Family Expenditure Survey.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated taxable values in the current financial year of benefits to taxation under special taxation rules under the different headings together with the real values in each case.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. 258]: Provisional estimates, for 1985-86, of the taxable values of benefits subject to taxation under special rules are as follows:

	£ million
Company cars and car fuel available for private use	1,050
Accommodation	15
Vouchers, including luncheon vouchers	30
Cheap or interest-free loans	40
Private medical insurance	50

The taxable values of vouchers and private medical insurance are based on the cost to the employer of providing the benefits.

The remaining benefits are charged to tax on a conventional basis and I regret that information is not available on which to base a reliable estimate of their value on another basis.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the income effect of a 1 per cent. increase in gross domestic product in real terms on the volume of imports and exports of manufactures.

Mr. Peter Rees: The effects would depend on the source and composition of the increase in GDP.

Civil Service (Pay)

Mr. Favell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what, in cash terms and in real terms, the gross pay and the take-home pay was of a Civil Service permanent secretary with a £30,000 mortgage and two children of school age on 1 July 1979, on 1 July 1982 and will be with effect from 1 July 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: The figures given in the table are annual rates based on the salary applying at 1 July for each of the years in question.

Salary and take-home pay of Civil Service Permanent Secretary*

	Gross Salary (£ per annum)		*Take-home pay (£ per annum)*	
	Actual	*†At 1984 prices*	*Actual*	*†At 1984 prices*
1 July 1979	25,886	40,749	17,700	27,958
1 July 1982	37,750	41,450	24,215	26,589
1 July 1985	52,750	49,649	32,847	30,916

* For a married man with two children of school age and a mortgage of £30,000.

† Using annual average values of the Retail Prices Index except for the figures for 1 July 1985 which have been deflated by the increase in the RPI in the first six months of 1985 compared to the corresponding period in 1984.

Excise Duty

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy regarding differentials between levels of excise duty on beer, light still wines, sparkling wines, medium strength wines, high strength wines and spirits.

Mr. Hayhoe: This is one of a number of factors that my right hon. Friend takes into account when deciding on the levels at which to set these duties in his Budget. Where the duties on beer and table wine are concerned, the differential is of course constrained by European Community law.

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total excise duty charged on spirits in the year ended 31 March; what was the total excise duty received; and what reasons account for any difference.

Mr. Hayhoe: Customs and Excise do not maintain a central record of accrued liability to duty, but estimate, on the basis of quantities of spirits cleared for consumption in the year to 31 March 1985, that the duty charged was of the order of £1,430 million. The provisional out-turn for 1984-85 (that is, duty received) is £1,238·83 million. The figures are not identical because duty payment is deferred by an average of one month. Much of the difference is attributable to distortions of revenue flows in March and April, due primarily to Budget forestalling, the effect of which on receipts in a given year varies with the date of the Budget.

Student Grants

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, for tax purposes, he will consider treating covenant payments representing parental contributions to student maintenance grants in the same manner as local education authority grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: No. Tax relief is already given for payments made under a deed of covenant.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Egger asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, further to his Budget statement on 19 March, he has any more up-to-date information about investment under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Moore: We now know that 605 companies between them raised £100 million under the Scheme in 1983-84, and in the final results are expected to show a further slight increase on this. Nearly 60 per cent. of the total amount invested went to young and very young start-up companies, and about half of the companies invested in each raised £50,000 or less. Direct investment accounted for about 60 per cent. of the total amount invested, and investment via the approved funds for the rest.

Overall results for 1984-85 are not yet available. But we know that investment via the approved funds amounted to some £46 million (£7 million more than in 1983-84) and it is thought that direct investment was probably at least as much as this.

Privatised Public Corporations

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each of the public corporations privatised during the period 1979 to 1984 *(a)* the number of shareholders by size band of holding immediately after flotation and *(b)* the same information at each succeeding 31 December.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 January 1985, c. *446*]: The information provided previously concerning shareholdings in Amersham International was incorrect. The correct information is as follows:

Number of shares held	*Number of shareholders at time of allotment*
1–499	55,486
500–999	3,132
1,000–9,999	4,372
10,000–49,999	696
50,00099,999	44
100,000+	30
	63,760

The figures do not include shares held in trust for individual employees under the company's employee share ownership scheme.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by range of income and for *(a)* single persons, *(b)* married couples without wives' earned income and *(c)* other married couples, the estimated annual value of claims for mortgage relief and the cost to the Exchequer, assuming the present level of interest rates prevails throughout the year;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of taxpayers in each taxation group receiving relief on mortgage interest and the average relief per mortgagor, together with the assumed rate of interest in the same manner as of his answer of 7 March 1983, *Official Report*, c. 284.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his replies*, 18 July 1985, c. 258]: The latest estimates are given in the following table. The figures are derived from a projection from the 1982-83 survey of personal income (the latest available), on the basis of current interest rates. The table does not include the relief given to former option mortgagors who are now included in the arrangements for giving mortgage interest relief at source. I regret that it is not possible to provide reliable estimates for this group in detail. Nor is it possible to provide reliable separate estimates for the small number of elderly taxpayers with mortgages.

Taxpayers receiving mortgage interest relief and average relief by income range 1985-86

Range of total income (lower limit) £	Single persons			Married couples wife not working			Married couples wife working		
	Numbers thousands	Total mortgage interest relief £ million	Average mortgage interest relief £	Numbers thousands	Total mortgage interest relief £ million	Average mortgage interest relief £	Numbers thousands	Total mortgage interest relief £ million	Average mortgage interest relief £
3,000	35	3	100	—	—	—	—	—	—
4,000	40	10	250	40	10	190	40	2	45
	50	23	500	80	35	390	35	5	130
6,000	80	35	450	90	50	510	35	13	270
7,000	100	55	550	150	100	640	85	35	430
8,000	110	80	720	240	160	580	95	65	680
9,000	110	95	860	220	130	600	140	80	560
10,000	150	120	790	410	280	640	180	200	510
12,000	150	120	820	390	280	740	280	420	800
15,000	80	75	950	220	210	790	270	550	740
20,000	40	45	1,200	150	170	1,100	470	640	950
30,000	20	30	1,700	70	130	1,800	150	220	1,500

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Borrowing (Bank Advances)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the proportion of borrowing financed by bank advances in the case of *(a)* all companies and *(b)* manufacturing in each of the years from 1977 to date.

Mr. Fletcher: The information available from the Department's analysis of the published annual accounts of a representative sample of Great Britain industrial and commercial company groups and independent companies is given in the following table. The figures include borrowing by both Great Britain companies and their United Kingdom and overseas subsidiaries as the analysis is based on the consolidated accounts of company groups. These cover the Great Britain parent company and all its United Kingdom and overseas subsidiaries. An alternative series for industrial and commercial companies, but not manufacturing, is available from the national accounts and published in "Financial Statistics" table 8.3.

*Increase in bank loans and overdrafts as a percentage of increase in total borrowing**

	Industrial and commercial companies	Manufacturing companies
All companies†		
1977‖	81	68
1978	56	66
1979	113	90
1980	54	73
1981	60	57
1982•	69	83
Large companies‡		
1981	58	57
1982•	69	78
1983•¶	−161	−150

* Borrowing is defined as bank loans and overdrafts, short-term loans, debentures, mortgages and long-term loans, and is measured net of repayments and redemptions.

† Figures are grossed-up from a sample to cover all limited company groups and independent companies registered in Great Britain other than banking, insurance and financial companies. Full details are given in Business Monitor, MA3, Company Finance.

‡ "Large" defined as company groups or independent companies with capital employed of over £4·16 million.

‖ Estimates for a particular year relate to companies' accounting years ending between 1 April of the year shown and 31 March of the following year.

¶ Negative sign for 1983 indicates increase in bank borrowing because total borrowing from all sources by large companies in 1983 was negative, with repayments exceeding new borrowings. Provisional estimates show net repayments of £2·5 billion for all companies and £1 billion for manufacturing companies with increases of £4 billion and £1·5 billion respectively in bank borrowing.

• Provisional.

Source: Business Monitor, MA3, Company Finance, 12-16th issues.

Strategic Mineral Stockpile

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what terms he proposes that the disposal of the strategic mineral stockpile should be effected.

Mr. Trippier: It has been decided to sell materials representing about one quarter of the contents of the stockpile in the course of the financial year.

The material will be offered for sale on open tender. If bids are otherwise equal in all respects, preference in disposal will be given to those involved in setting up the stockpile, namely companies on whose behalf the material was purchased, and suppliers of the material. No price preference will be given, however. In addition it is intended that the material should be disposed of in such a way as to cause the least possible disruption of the market and to retain for as long as is feasible a balanced stock of strategic minerals.

If user industries were to put forward a proposal to finance the stockpile themselves, the Department of Trade and Industry would be glad to discuss the sale of the stockpile to them.

External Power Sockets

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to require that all external power sockets, including those to which electric lawnmowers are attached, are protected by an earth leakage circuit breaker.

Mr. Fletcher: Legislation of the type that the hon. Member proposes would essentially be a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Energy, but since I have a general responsibility for safety in and around the home I can comment that it would of course only be partially effective. The reasons are that it could not in practice be applied retrospectively and in any case many people operate lawnmowers and other outside appliances from sockets inside the house. It would therefore in my view be inappropriate.

I am however advised that the recommendations for the wiring installation in buildings prepared by the Institution of Electrical Engineers include incorporation of a residual current circuit breaker for external power outlets. This will make some contribution to reducing the risk of electrocution.

My officials are currently investigating whether there are any other measures that could be adopted which would provide additional protection against the risk of electric shock for the users of lawnmowers and similar products. I intend to make a statement shortly.

Shipyards (Public Sector)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many shipyards the Government intend to leave in the public sector.

Mr. Butcher: Following the privatisation by March 1986 of British shipbuilders' (BS) warship activities, seven BS yards and Harland and Wolff PLC will remain in the public sector. In the longer term we hope that improved performances, coupled with improved market conditions, will enable as many as possible of these yards to return to the private sector.

Product Advertising

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list all products on which advertising is banned by regulations made by Ministers;

(2) if he will list all products on which advertising is restricted by regulations made by Ministers.

Mr. Fletcher: There are over 80 different statues and statutory instruments with relevance to the control of advertising and related trading practices. These are the responsibility of a number of different Government departments and the information requested could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Steel (Production Costs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the wage cost of producing a ton of steel in the United Kingdom compared with other European Economic Community countries and the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The British Steel Corporation's total employment cost of producing a tonne of liquid steel was £50 in the financial year 1984-85. Comparable data is not available for the United Kingdom as a whole, for other EC countries, the USA or Japan.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the ratio of *(a)* wages and *(b)* fuel and power to the price of finished steel in the United Kingdom compared with other European Economic Community countries and to the United States of America.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the cost of making basic iron and steel consists of *(a)* repayment of capital and interest, *(b)* depreciation, *(c)* bought-in materials, *(d)* other overhead charges including labour overheads and *(e)* variable labour charges.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information is as follows:

The percentage of BSC costs of iron and steel making accounted for by:	*1984-85 per cent.*
(a) Repayment of long-term loans and interest	7
(b) Depreciation	2
(c) Raw materials and consumables	50
(d) Fuels, utilities, hire charges and carriage costs	15
(e) Wages and salaries and other employment costs	21
(f) Other operating charges	5

Source: British Steel Corporation, Report and Accounts 1984-85

Vehicle Component Manufacturers

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to refuse Government financial assistance to vehicle component manufacturers based in the west midlands who seek to set up manufacturing subsidiaries adjacent to the Nissan factory in Sunderland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The purpose of Government financial assistance is to encourage increased economic growth, both generally and in the assisted areas. The Government believe, however, that the final choice of location for new investment should remain a matter for the commercial judgment of the companies concerned.

Directors' Fees

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column 120, concerning the increase in directors' fees and other emoluments from 1979 onwards, if he will publish in the *Official Report* his follow-up letter to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, dated 11 July, on this matter together with the enclosed tables.

Mr. Fletcher: This is as follows:

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs

Austin Mitchell, Esq, MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A OAA

11 July 1985

Dear Austin,

You tabled a Question recently about the increase in directors' fees and other emoluments for 1979 to the latest year available.

In my written reply to you on 15 May, I said that the information was not immediately available from the Department's regular analysis of company accounts but that I would write to you as soon as possible.

We are unable to provide estimates of the total directors' fees and emoluments to all companies, but we do have some limited information for large industrial and commercial companies covered by the Department's analysis of company accounts. The purpose of the analysis is to provide estimates of the balance sheet, income and appropriation account, and sources and uses of funds of all industrial and commercial companies based upon a small representative sample of 2,600 such companies. Unfortunately the sample is not designed to produce statistically reliable estimates of directors' emoluments, and for this reason no information on these emoluments are published with the other results of the analysis in Business Monitor MA3, Company Finance. However, we do have information for the larger companies in the analysis in respect of the emoluments of the chairman and the highest paid director as shown in table 1 and table 2 attached. The population of companies varies slightly from year to year mainly as a result of takeovers and mergers, so it is not possible to derive a precise estimate of the annual increase from these figures. However, these figures are not inconsistent with the reported findings of the ICSA/Korn Ferry International survey of companies in the "Times 1,000" largest companies.

I hope this is of some assistance to you.

I have arranged for a copy of this letter to be placed in the Library.

Sincerely,
Alex
ALEX FLETCHER

Table 1
Mean Emoluments of Chairman and Highest Paid Director in Large GB Industrial and Commercial Companies, 1979-83†*

£000

Accounting Year	No. of Companies Analysed	Chairman	Mean Emoluments £ Highest Paid Director‡
1979	582	28,493	39,549
1980	587	33,540	45,936
1981	577	39,622	52,476
1982	587	44,033	61,181
1983	[395	50,231	66,447

* Large industrial and commercial companies are defined as independent companies and company groups with capital employed of more than £21·8 million and whose main activities are other than insurance, banking and finance. They include GB companies operating mainly overseas.
† Each year covers accounting periods ending between 1 April of that year and 31 March of the following year.
‡ Relates only to the highest paid director where he is not the chairman.
‖ Some companies have yet to be analysed but full details will be available early next year.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry's Analysis of Company Accounts as summarised and published in Business Monitor MA3 "Company Finance".

Table 2
Quartiles and Medians for Emoluments of Chairmen and Highest Paid Directors in Large Industrial and Commercial Companies†, 1979 to 1981‡*

£

	Lower Quartile		Median		Upper Quartile	
	Chairman	Highest Paid Director‖	Chairman	Highest Paid Director‖	Chairman	Highest Paid Director‖
1979	9,450	26,660	25,600	37,688	42,773	48,640
1980	12,328	30,047	30,782	41,719	47,800	57,836
Percentage increase	29·2	12·7	20·2	10·7	11·8	18·9
1981	13,225	31,977	34,375	46,027	57,714	65,797
Percentage increase	7·3	5·8	11·6	10·3	20·7	13·7

* As for table 1.
† Figures not readily available in this detail for 1982 and 1983.
‡ As for table 1.
‖ As for table 1.

Employment (French Subsidies)

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make representations to the European Economic Community regarding the compatibility with European Economic Community regulations of the offering by the French Government of subsidies designed to attract employment to France from the United Kingdom; what representations he has received about the proposed transfer by the Terreco Group of work from Case Tractors in Meltham and Leigh to various establishments in France; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I understand the European Commission have approached the French authorities about the package of French Government support made available following the J. I. Case acquisition of the International Harvester tractor operations in France. The Government have received many representations on the future of the Meltham and Leigh plants notably from the hon. Member for Colne Valley. The Government have discussed and continue to discuss the future manufacturing operations of J. I. Case in the United Kingdom with senior management from Tenneco and its J. I. Case subsidiary.

Prosper de Mulder and Imperial Meat

Sir John Wells asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to expedite the review by the Office of Fair Trading in the matter of Prosper de Mulder and Imperial Meat.

Mr. Fletcher: At my request the Director-General of Fair Trading is seeking undertakings from Prosper de Mulder following the MMC report on animal waste. I am being kept in touch with developments and expect to receive shortly a report by the Director-General on the outcome of his discussions with Prosper de Mulder.

British Telecom

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department has between 1960 and 1985 made any capital grant payment to Post Office Telecommunications or its successors in order to secure due functioning of Post Office/British Telecom undertakings in the event of attack.

Mr. Butcher: The Department of Trade and Industry assumed responsibility for the payment of grant to the post

office under the Civil Defence (Posts and Telecommunications) Regulations 1971 upon the dissolution of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in 1974. Grant was paid in respect of up to 52¼ per cent. of approved capital expenditure on measures taken to secure the due functioning of the post office's undertaking in the event of hostile attack. Grant was paid to British Telecom after the split of the postal and telecommunications businesses of the post office in 1981.

Prior to 1969, appropriate facilities were provided by the General Post Office as part of its general duties as a department of central Government. Between 1971 and 1974, grant was the responsibility of the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications.

Details of grants paid since 1974 are given in the Appropriation Accounts, which are available in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the detailed purposes for which capital grant has been provided to British Telecom and its predecessor over the period 1978-79 to date in order to secure due functioning of its undertakings in the event of attack.

Mr. Butcher: I regret that it would not be in the interests of national security to provide the information requested.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now provide substantial additional support to assist the work of the British Overseas Trade Board.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. Friend will examine carefully the future needs of the export promotion programme when considering the many competing claims in the current public expenditure round.

Steel Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of steel plants which have been closed or substantially closed since May 1979 and the plants which have been scheduled for closure in substantial part, together with the number of jobs lost in each case.

Mr. Butcher: The following list covers closures involving more than 100 employees, and partial closures estimated to have resulted in the loss of more than 500 job opportunities, which have taken place since May 1979 or are scheduled to take place shortly.

	Numbers
BSC Plants	
Barrow	170
Beckermet ore mine	200
Bilston	2,350
Clydebridge	575
Consett	4,300
Cookley	600
Corby	6,000
Craigneuk	380
Glengarnock	200
Hallside	600
Hartlepool	1,000
Jarrow	280
Lanarkshire	550
Landore	330
Llanwern/Port Talbot	6,700
Monkshall	240
Prothero	600
Rotherham (Aldwarke/Templeborough)	4,000
Scunthorpe:	
Normanby Park	4,100
Redbourne	1,700
Shotton	7,000
Stocksbridge	500
Teesside:	
Cargo Fleet	400
Cleveland/Clay Lane	2,700
Tinsley Park	1,100
Warrington	680
Workington	1,500
Private Sector Plants:	
John Bagnall & Sons	330
Brockhouse District Steel	300
Brymbo Steelworks	1,250
Ductile Planetary Mill	270
Dupont Steel Works	1,300
Firth Brown/Forgemasters	1,750
GKN South Wales	600
Hadfields	2,650
London Works Steel	480
Patent Shaft Steelworks	1,530
Round Oak Steelworks	1,800
Total numbers not readily available:	
Aurora	
Effingham Steelworks	
Exors of James Mills	
Richard Johnson & Nephew	
Lilleshall Steel	
Lloyds (Dudley)	
Loughlan	
Manchester Steel	
Martin Black	
Neepsend	
James Neill	
Park Webb Forge	
Swift Levick	

The total number of job opportunities lost in the steel industry in the same period, by demanning as well as capacity reductions, was approximately 130,000.

ABTA (Code of Practice)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Office of Fair Trading has examined the provisions of the Association of British Travel Agents' code of practice in so far as it relates to consolidation of holidays by tour operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I understand that the Office of Fair Trading is currently monitoring ABTA's two codes of practice and that this monitoring will include all aspects of the codes including the question of consolidation of holiday arrangements by tour operators.

I also understand that the office has expressed its concern to ABTA about the reported volume of consolidations this year and has asked the Association to inform the office of what action it intends to take to deal with the problem.

Metal Packaging Manufacturers Association (Exhibition)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to energy and resource conservation and recycling of beverage containers organised by the Metal Packaging Manufacturers Association to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall from 28 October to 1 November.

Mr. Trippier: Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the upper waiting hall to take place from 28 October to 1 November 1985.

Vosper Shiprepairers

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the latest position concerning the privatisation of Vosper Shiprepairers.

Mr. Butcher: British Shipbuilders is still negotiating with potential purchasers of Vosper Shiprepairers but it made clear in its evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee on 24 July that it will close the yard if it is unable to sell it.

Cordless Telephones

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans any legislation to prevent the marketing of cordless telephones.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East by my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Information Technology on 28 June at column *505*.

Nationalised Industries (Overseas Project Board Report)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the Overseas Projects Board's report of February 1984 on the overseas role of the nationalised industries.

Mr. Channon: I am making available both the Overseas Projects Board's report and the subsequent joint report by officials and the nationalised industries by depositing copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

Insolvency Bill

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why the Insolvency Bill *[Lords]* does not include a provision to re-enact section 166 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914.

Mr. Fletcher: One of the major thrusts of the Bill is the prosecution of wrong doing in relation to insolvency. Section 166 of the Bankruptcy Act 1914 currently contains an exception to the general rule on the use of evidence in proceedings for bankruptcy. That exception falls with the non-re-enactment of the section.

Insurance Industry

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state his conclusions on the issues raised by the decision of the courts in the case of Bedford *v.* Inland Revenue Board and Stewart *v.* Oriental.

Mr. Fletcher: The Department has consulted the insurance industry about the implications of these judgments of the High Court. Comments have also been received from others interested in the approach adopted by the Department to determining whether authorisation to carry on insurance business in the United Kingdom is required under the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

Issues relevant to this subject are raised by certain cases brought before the European Court of Justice by the Commission of the European Communities. I intend to consider those judgments before coming to a firm view. Meanwhile individual cases will be considered as they arise.

I am however able to make clear the attitude which will be adopted towards past conduct which may appear from the High Court judgments to have been unlawful.

As at present advised, the Secretary of State does not expect to take action under Part I of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 or the corresponding provisions of earlier legislation—

(a) in respect of the conduct of unauthorised overseas insurance companies who on or before the date of this statement effected or carried out contracts of insurance using arrangements and procedures in operation on or before 10 November 1983 under which either the effecting or the carrying out did not occur in the United Kingdom or the decision either to effect or to carry out was not taken in the United Kingdom; or

(b) in respect of unauthorised overseas insurance companies whose insurance activities in the United Kingdom are in future limited solely to the discharge of obligations assumed under contracts of insurance effected on or before the date of this statement whether or not the contract was effected in contravention of section 2 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 or a corresponding provision in earlier legislation; or

(c) in respect of a United Kingdom agent where by virtue of *(a)* or *(b)* action would not be taken in respect of his principal overseas.

The Secretary of State will continue to take action in cases in which contracts were both effected and carried out in the United Kingdom through a branch office or an agent irrespective of when the arrangement in question was made, except in respect of the discharge of obligations falling within *(b)* above.

DEFENCE

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any delay or alteration in his plans for the flotation of the royal ordnance factories.

Mr. Butler: No. It remains the Government's objective to introduce private capital into Royal Ordnance plc as soon as commercially practicable, but no decisions have yet been taken on the precise timing or method of privatisation. The preferred option continues to be to float the company as a whole.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are circumstances in which he will postpone the proposed sale of the royal ordnance factories in 1986.

Mr. Butler: It remains the Government's intention to introduce private capital into Royal Ordnance plc as soon as commercially practicable, but no decisions have yet been taken on the precise timing.

Small Company Suppliers

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken by his Department to seek to ensure prompt payment to small company suppliers, whether as main contractors or subcontractors to main contractors.

Mr. Butler: The Ministry of Defence's arrangements for the payment of contractors' bills are sent annually to all our contractors irrespective of size. These arrangements include the date on which bills should be submitted within each four weekly cycle. Our aim is to make payment 7 to 10 days later, provided the bills are properly supported by the necessary documentation.

The relationship between contractors and subcontractors is a matter for the parties concerned, and one in which the MOD should not be involved. Nevertheless, I would expect contractors to pay their subcontractors in the same prompt and helpful way in which the MOD settles its payment claims.

Submarines

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United Kingdom's Trident submarines will be built to conform to the same standards, particularly in relation to noise suppression, as the United State's Trident submarines.

Mr. Butler: The United Kingdom's Trident submarines will be built to the high standards demanded by our operational requirements.

Nuclear Weapon Tests

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will extend his statement of 29 October 1984, *Official Report*, columns *854-5*, lifting some of the restrictions of the Official Secrets Act placed on participants in the United Kingdom nuclear weapon test programme in Australia and the External Territories, to include the series of test carried out at Christmas Island and in the vicinity of Malden Island in the Pacific; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: Yes. Any participant or dependant subject to the Official Secrets Acts is now authorised to communicate to any person information in the categories defined as follows and which relates to the United Kingdom atomic test programme on Christmas Island and in the vicinity of Malden Island and the subsequent United Kingdom involvement in the United States series of tests similarly carried out on the islands in 1962 (that is from the initiation of the GRAPPLE series of tests in May 1957 to the completion of the GRAPPLE Z operation in September 1958 and the United Kingdom involvement in the US operation DOMINIC (UK Codename BRIGADOON) in 1962.

Category 1. The measures taken before, and at the time of the tests and that have been taken since, for the purpose of protecting persons against exposure to the harmful effects of ionising radiations and against contact with radioactive substances and other toxic materials used in or produced by the tests.

Category 2. The means by which buildings, equipment and materials remaining at the test sites were disposed of during and on completion of the tests.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, any information which reveals directly or by inference could reveal details of design, construction or performance of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices is specifically excluded from this authorisation.

Those in possession of information about which they have doubts as to whether it is covered by this authorisation should seek the advice of the Ministry of Defence.

Army Manpower Strength (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the manpower strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland on 30 June, giving details of the number of operatives in each year for the following categories: Ulster Defence Regiment, Regular British Army and British Territorial Army.

Mr. Lee: My Noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, as between full-time, part-time, male and female operatives on 30 June.

Mr. Lee: The figures for 30 June 1985 are not yet available. However, the position as at 31 May was as follows:

Part-time		*Full-time*		*Total*
Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	
3,223	519	2,495	196	6,433

Military Bands

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total figure spent on military bands, including personnel and equipment, by each of the three armed services in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: The annual costs of service bands over the period in question were as follows:

£ million

	Royal Marines	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1980-81	6·40	20·83	2·34
1981-82	7·06	23·62	2·50
1982-83	7·90	25·10	2·60
1983-84	8·10	24·20	2·89
1984-85	9·33	27·90	3·79

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent progress has been made in the negotiations for the European fighter aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report progress on the development of a European fighter aircraft; and if he will proceed with the project if France expresses its intention not to participate.

Mr. Butler: Discussions on EFA are continuing as a matter of urgency. The further industrial studies have been received and were considered by the national armament

directors of the participating countries at a meeting in Madrid on Tuesday. The Ministers concerned are in close touch. The British Government's aim remains to reach early agreement on a five-nation project which satisfies the military requirements and is conducted on the basis of an equitable industrial partnership.

Soviet Space Weapons

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the Soviet space weapon research programme is having on British and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence planning.

Mr. Butler: The extensive and long-standing Soviet space weapon research programme is a cause of continuing concern to both Her Majesty's Government and to the NATO Alliance as a whole. Soviet ABM capabilities are taken into account in decisions affecting the maintenance of the British strategic deterrent force. One of the important justifications for the United States' strategic defence initiative programme is the extent of Soviet research activity in this field.

Defence Equipment (Expenditure)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of United Kingdom defence spending is on equipment manufactured in the United States of America: and what information he has as to the proportion of United States' defence spending on equipment manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butler: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish detailed figures of our defence purchases from individual countries, nor does the United States Government publish equivalent figures for their purchases from the United Kingdom; but the current balance of defence trade between the United States and the Kingdom is in the order of 2:1.

Aero Engine Parts

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to purchase aero engine parts for the armed forces only from manufacturers who are owned or controlled by United Kingdom nationals.

Mr. Butler: No. The criteria for decisions on procurement sourcing remain as set out in the Open Government Document "Value for Money in Defence Equipment Procurement", which was published in October 1983.

NATO Papers

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library copies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation unclassified allied tactical papers.

Mr. Lee: NATO produces a range of Allied tactical publications. If the hon. Gentleman will let me know which particular area he is interested in, I shall consider what might be made available to him.

Imber Firing Range (Incident)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the incident on the evening of 19 July at Stoke Hill, near Imber firing range, in which a civilian vehicle was hit by a Landrover of the Royal Greenjackets while on a public road.

Mr. Lee: I am not aware of any such incident on 19 July but a minor accident did occur at Stoke Hill on 18 July on a road passing through Ministry of Defence property. A military landrover, which was taking part in an exercise on the Salisbury plain training area was struck, while stationary, by a civilian car. No-one was injured and the resultant damage to both vehicles was assessed as slight.

Atomic Demolition Munitions

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether units of the British Army of the Rhine have engaged in joint training with the United States forces to practice the employment of atomic demolition munitions.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Radiation Tests

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if HMS Starling, HMS Eagle and HMS Birmingham were involved in radiation tests during 1953.

Mr. Butler: No.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what tests on the affects of radiation have been carried out in the last three years.

Mr. Butler: A number of such tests have been carried out but none involving HM ships.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of decontamination procedures carried out in ships involved in nuclear tests between 1950 and 1956; and where this decontamination took place.

Mr. Butler: There were two series of tests conducted by the United Kingdom in the period 1950 to 1956 that involved the use of ships. The first, Operation Hurricane, was carried out in October 1952 in the Monte Bello Islands off the west coast of Australia and consisted of one test. The ships concerned, HMS Campania, Narvik, Tracker and Zeebrugge, were outside the direct effects of the explosion and as a result were subjected to contamination only through their contact with sea water which had itself been contaminated by the radioactive products of the explosion. Decontamination procedures consisted of washing, scrubbing and hosing down those parts of the ships that were directly exposed to contact with sea water, ie ships' boats and underwater inlets. Appropriate precautions were taken during these procedures, including the monitoring of those personnel employed in these tasks.

On their return to the United Kingdom several months after the test, further action was taken in various royal dockyards to remove any remaining residual contamination. Because several months' delay had occurred between the time of the test and the return to the United Kingdom, the residual contamination was light. Whilst the work was carried out the necessary health physics precautions were, of course, taken.

The second series of tests, Operation Mosaic, was carried out in May and June 1956 also in the Monte Bello Islands. Three ships were involved, HMS Alert, Diana and Narvik. The only vessel exposed to radioactive fallout was

HMS Diana. As part of the tests, this ship was required to steam through clouds of fallout generated by the explosions, in order to test the ventilation and wash down arrangements. These proved satisfactory. Levels of contamination on the ship were checked subsequently to the vessel's actual participation in the tests. It was found that, due to the efficiency of the wash down arrangements, residual contamination was minimal.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Royal Navy ships involved in radiation tests between 1950 and 1956.

Mr. Butler: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Australian Royal Commission has asked his Department to supply any information concerning HMS Starling, HMS Eagle and HMS Birmingham and their involvement in radiation tests.

Mr. Butler: No.

Operation Cauldron

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place copies of all available documents relating to the germ welfare experiment, Operation Cauldron, in 1952, in the Library.

Mr. Lee: No; the documents requested remain classified.

Defence Situation Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans to alter the location or facilities of the defence situation centre.

Mr. Butler: I shall answer shortly.

Sizewell "B" Inquiry

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department incurred any expenditure in relation to the Sizewell "B" public inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: My Department was not involved in the Sizewell "B" public inquiry but in their normal course of duty some Ministry of Defence staff spent a very small proportion of their time watching out for any MOD interest in the proceedings. I am afraid that it is not possible to quantify the expenditure this entailed.

Nimrod Aircraft (Civil Call Signs)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence why a Nimrod aircraft was required to mimic the call sign and behaviour of a transatlantic civil airliner whilst shadowing and photographing current Soviet exercises off the coast of Norway; and what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the implications of this incident for the future safety and security of civil air traffic.

Mr. Lee: I am not aware of any incident such as that referred to by the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what contacts his Department's staff have with medical boards on mobility allowance cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: In seeking consistent adjudication, it has long been the practice for the Department's medical staff to refer mobility allowance cases back to the medical board if it was thought that the board's decision, or the record of it, needed clarification or reconsideration. A commissioner's decision has criticised this practice where the reference was, in effect, inviting the medical board to alter the substance of its decision and the board subsequently did so. Some people will have gained benefit as a result of such reconsideration by the board. Others will have lost benefit.

In the light of the commissioner's comments, we have decided that it would be right to take the necessary steps to identify the cases involved and initiate appropriate action to put matters right. This requires a special scrutiny of over ½ million files. When the cases are found, we do not intend to disturb those where the medical board's decision was altered in the claimant's favour. But where a favourable decision was altered by the medical board to an adverse one, we propose dealing with them in one of two ways, depending on whether or not the claimant had appealed to a medical appeal tribunal against the decision of the medical board. Where the claimant had not appealed, we propose referring the case to a medical appeal tribunal to determine it afresh. As regards those cases where the claimant had appealed, we propose taking a test case to the commissioner to determine whether the medical appeal tribunal decision should stand.

Instructions have already been issued to prevent reference back to medical boards by Departmental staff outside the terms of the regulations. We are looking into the position as regards industrial disablement benefit to see to what extent a similar practice of reference back to medical boards have applied.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 12 November 1984, *Official Report*, columns *143-4*, if he has reached a decision on repayment of mobility allowance consequent to commissioner's decision R(M)2/82; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985, c. *639*]: The commissioner's decision R(M)2/82 held that, contrary to our previous understanding, the claimant had no right of appeal against the length of a mobility allowance award where it coincided with the recommendation of the examining medical practitioner. It follows that, where a claimant had in fact appealed to a medical board in these circumstances and the board, in considering the whole case afresh, had decided he did not satisfy the conditions for the allowance, the consequent withdrawal of benefit should not have occurred.

I am glad to say that we have now found a way to identify these cases fairly readily through our overpayment records. Once we have done so, we propose dealing with them in one of two ways. As regards those cases where the

claimant did not appeal to a medical appeal tribunal against the decision of the medical board, we propose referring the case to a tribunal, inviting it to regard the earlier decision as a nullity and to determine the case afresh. As regards those cases where the claimant did appeal against the decision of the medical board, we propose taking a test case to the Commissioner to determine whether the medical appeal tribunal decision should stand.

I am replying accordingly to a letter from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation who raised the matter with me, and I am sending a copy of my reply to the right hon. Member.

The regulations were of course amended in August 1983 to give claimants the appeal right which the commissioner's decision held the existing law did not give.

Housing Benefit (Pensioners)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioner householders there are in receipt of housing benefit who have non-dependants living with them for whom a deduction from housing benefit is made.

Mr. Newton: It is estimated that there are about 450,000 pensioner households in receipt of housing benefit from which a deduction is made in respect of non-dependants.

Mental Health Act Commission

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost to public funds of the Mental Health Act Commission for the year 1985-86; how many staff are employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The estimated cost in 1985-86 is £1,022,000. Nineteen staff are employed at the three secretariat offices. Seventy one per cent. of the total cost is for the fees and expenses of commissioners and second opinion work. The remainder is for staff salaries, accommodation and general expenses.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether non-dependant deductions made from the housing benefit of households with non-dependant income support claimants living in them will be abolished.

Mr. Newton: This is a matter for further consideration in the light of comments made during the consultative period on the "Reform of Social Security: Programme for Change" (Cmnd. 9518).

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish details of the basis on which the non-dependant deductions to rent and rate rebates, now housing benefit have been increased each year since their introduction; in each year what percentage increase was involved; and how that compared with the percentage by which the needs allowance was uprated.

Mr. Whitney: The information in the form requested is set out in the table.

I understand that under the rate rebate, rent rebate and rent allowance schemes, which preceded housing benefit, the basis for any uprating of non-dependant deductions was the movement in the general retail prices index. Between 1972 and 1976 no increases were made but in 1976 deductions were increased to restore them to 1972 levels. Increases between 1977 and 1981 were made in line with changes in the general retail prices index. In 1982, prior to the introduction of the housing benefits scheme, the deductions were increased to bring them into line with deductions which were applied under the supplementary benefits scheme. It was decided, that with the introduction of housing benefit in 1983 all non-dependant deductions would follow in future the practice under the supplementary benefit scheme which was to uprate them in line with the movement of the housing element of the retail prices index.

The increases shown in April 1984 were part of the measures we took then to limit the growth in housing benefit expenditure.

Percentage increases in non-dependant deductions from rate rebates, rent rebates and rent allowances, and in the single person's needs allowance from 1973 to 1985

Year	Percentage increase in non-dependant deductions from rate rebates, rent rebates and rent allowances*	Percentage increase in single person's needs allowance†
1973		
April	0	33·3
October	0	10·7
1974		
October	0	14·5
1975		
April	0	9·0
November	0	8·6
1976		
November	50	9·5
1977		
November	0	8·1
1978		
November	7·5	7·9
1979		
November	17·0	13·9
1980		
November	18·5	12·4
1981		
November	10·0	7·0
1982		
November	122·9–36·2	10·0
1983		
November	0	4·0
1984		
April	16·55·7	0
November	3·5	4·6
1985		
November	10·1	5·6

* The statutory rate rebate, rent rebate and rent allowance schemes were introduced in 1972. The first uprating was in 1973.

† Between 1973 and 1981 the needs allowances were uprated by a cash amount equal to the increase in the supplementary benefit long term needs rate. Since 1982, the main element of the needs allowances has been increased in line with increases in the supplementary benefit long term needs rate and, in addition, the housing element has been increased in line

with the movement in average weekly local authority rents, domestic rates, and water and sewerage charges.

† Range of percentage increases applied to different categories of non-dependent deductions.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances young people under 25 years of age will qualify for housing benefit under his social security review proposals; and whether single people, married couples and lone parents will be treated similarly.

Mr. Newton: As at present, any householder will be able to claim housing benefit. However, we are proposing that in calculating entitlement, the rules for housing benefit should be aligned with those for income support. This means that the proposed income support structure, including different rates according to whether the claimant is above or below 25, and single or married, plus special premiums for lone parents and those with families, will be reflected in the housing benefit assessment.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many persons will receive less in housing benefit, or have to pay more towards their rent and rates costs, as a result of the changes in non-dependent deductions to be implemented in November 1985; and how much money the changes involve.

Mr. Newton [*pursuance to his reply*, 8 July 1985, c. 367]: We estimate that approximately 1 million households will be affected by increases in the levels of deductions made from housing benefit in respect of non-dependants to take effect from November 1985. The estimated cost of not uprating the levels of these deductions would be approximately £30 million.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will show the weekly gross and net earnings levels at which eligibility for housing benefit will expire, assuming average amounts for rent and rates, following the proposals for the November 1985 uprating in respect of the following household types, assuming one wage-earner: *(a)* single person, *(b)* married couple, *(c)* married couple with one child, *(d)* married couple with two children, *(e)* married couple with three children and *(f)* married couple with an 18-year-old in work or training, living at home; and if he will also provide information on the net income derived from these earnings levels taking account of income from child benefit and expenditure on housing costs, including water rates, and average travel to work costs.

Mr. Newton [*pursuance to his reply*, 8 July 1985, c. 367-68]: The information requested is given in the table.

Earnings levels at which housing benefit will expire
November 1985

	(i) Gross earnings £	(ii) Net earnings £	(iii) Net income £
Household type*			
(a) single person	91·95	68·82	42·22
(b) married couple	114·45	89·75	63·15
(c) married couple with one child	123·16	96·20	74·08
(d) married couple with two children	139·04	102·31	85·81
(e) married couple with three children	142·54	104·68	97·38
(f) married couple with 18 year old non-dependant in work/training	92·54	70·38	57·58

* The following rent and rate levels respectively have been assumed for the various household types: £13·45 and £5·20 for (a) and (b); £13·40 and £6·25 for (c) and (f); £16·55 and £6·40 for (d) and (e).

† As requested, the figures in column (iii) are obtained by subtracting full rent and rates, £5·90 for fares to work, and £1·65 for water rates from column (ii), and then adding child benefit where appropriate. For household (f), the non-dependant contribution of £10·45 has also been added. If the non-dependant were on a Youth Training scheme, no non-dependant deduction would be made.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households on supplementary benefit are subject to non-dependant deductions from housing benefit.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuance to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. 375]: We estimate that there are approximately 400,000 households on supplementary benefit which have deductions made from housing benefit in respect of non-dependants.

Drugs (Promotion)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that drug companies supplying drugs through the National Health Service should not seek to promote drugs directly to the consumer.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regulations under the Medicines Act 1968 prohibit drug companies from advertising prescription-only medicines to the public. We can see no reason to prevent drug companies from advertising over-the-counter medicines which patients frequently buy direct from chemist shops and other retail outlets although they are often prescribable under the National Health Service. There are restrictions on the way in which over-the-counter medicines may be advertised.

Drugs (Studies)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request the Committee on Safety of Medicines to require investigations into light relatedness in toxicity studies on drugs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The guidelines on the pre-clinical and clinical testing of medicinal products are drawn up on the advice of the Committee on Safety of Medicines. The committee has not advised that this should be a requirement. The occurrence of a rash, including one induced by light sensitivity, in a clinical trial would be reported in the results and would be taken into account by the Committee in its evaluation of the product.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will request the Committee on Safety of Medicines to ensure that all tests of significance produced by manufacturers' statisticians in clinical trials of drugs are automatically checked by the committee's statisticians;

(2) in what ways the Committee on Safety of Medicine checks the validity of the results obtained from drug clinical trials.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Chislehurst on 29 January at columns *161-2*. In assessing the evidence in particular cases, the committee, having received an assessment from its professional secretariat, decides whether tests of statistical significance need to be checked before it gives its advice to the Licensing Authority.

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether it is the practice for members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines to declare an interest when the committee is discussing a drug manufactured by a company with which a member has had a financial relationship, and to abstain from the discussion;

(2) if he will provide a list of the members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the names of the drug companies with which they have had a financial relationship and the nature of the relationship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply on 3 June to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) at columns *107-10*.

Wheelchair Users

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give statistics on the total number of wheelchair users in the United Kingdom and a breakdown into age groups, male and female, and broad categories of ailments.

Mr. Newton: The figures requested are not at present available, but it is estimated that about 420,000 people use wheelchairs provided by the Health Departments and that some 80 per cent. are over 60 years of age. Information about the number and characteristics of wheelchair users will be collected in a survey of disabled people being conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Family Income Supplement

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the number of (*a*) one-parent families and (*b*) two-parent families in receipt of family income supplement; in each case what are the average payments; and how many families in each category receive the maximum payment allowed.

Mr. Whitney: The position at the end of April 1985, the latest date for which information is available, was as follows:

	Numbers in receipt of FIS	*Average payment*	*Numbers receiving maximum*
Two-parent families	117,000	£31·50	15,000
One-parent families	82,000	£13·20	11,000
Total	199,000	—	26,000

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of one-parent families and two-parent families in receipt of supplementary benefit for each of the last five years; what was the average payment; and what was the average length of time spent on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: The information to the latest date available is as follows:

	One-parent families			*Two-parent families*		
	Number (thousands)	*Average weekly payment* £	*Average time* (months)	*Number* (thousands)	*Average weekly payment* £	*Average time* (months)
1979	322	30·57	39·4	166	33·46	20·3
1980	336	36·05	n/a	243	39·21	n/a
1981	382	42·57	39·5	402	44·31	15·6
1982	441	39·24	38·1	488	40·26	17·0
1983*	475	36·88	30·7	500	40·41	19·2

* Provisional.
n/a=Not available.
Note: the fall in the amount of the average weekly payment after 1981 is due to the introduction of housing benefit.
Source: annual statistical inquiries.

Mr. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the number of (*a*) female lone parents and (*b*) male lone parents in receipt of supplementary benefit who are (i) single, (ii) widowed, (iii) divorced, (iv) separated and (v) a prisoner's spouse, giving the number of children in each category and the average payment to each category.

Mr. Whitney: The available information, for December 1983, is as follows:

	(a) Female lone parents			*(b) Male lone parents*		
	Number (thousands)	*Number of children* (thousands)	*Average weekly payment* £	*Number* (thousands)	*Number of children* (thousands)	*Average weekly payment* £
i. Single	144	198	33·99			
ii. Widowed	7	12	36·57	15	23	39·74
iii. Divorced	147	265	39·16			

	(a) Female lone parents			(b) Male lone parents		
	Number (thousands)	Number of children (thousands)	Average weekly payment £	Number (thousands)	Number of children (thousands)	Average weekly payment £
Ir. separated	149	281	37·37	9	16	39·53
Ir. prisoner's spouse	4	8	40·95	—	—	—
Totals	*431	*753	36·73	24	39	39·66

* The figures do not add up exactly due to rounding.
Source: Annual statistical inquiry 1983.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of special rules about income earned during the on-season in relation to the eligibility of seasonal workers for supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: People who engage in seasonal work are entitled to supplementary benefit during their off-season if they are unemployed and available for full-time work, but on-season earnings may affect the amount of supplementary benefit payable.

If the on-season earnings of a claimant exceed two-and-half times his normal and additional requirements (three times the single household ordinary rate, if greater) the excess is regarded as available for the weeks of the off-season. The excess is divided by the number of weeks in the off-season and the result is treated as weekly earnings, subject to the normal earnings disregard.

Family Incomes

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the number of *(a)* one-parent families headed by a woman, *(b)* one-parent families headed by a man and *(c)* two-parent families which rely on (i) state benefits, (ii) earnings from employment, (iii) maintenance payments and (iv) other items as their main source of income.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 21 November 1984 at column 201.

One-parent Benefit

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures on the numbers of one-parent families receiving one-parent benefit; if he will estimate how many of these do not benefit financially from doing so; how many lone parents who would benefit financially from one-parent benefit do not receive it; and what is the percentage take-up rate.

Mr. Whitney: In July 1985, 581,000 families are receiving one parent benefit. The latest estimates of take-up, and the other figures requested, relate to December 1982. At that time 510,000 one parent families received one parent benefit and of those 185,000 did not gain by claiming. A further 100,000 one parent families might have gained financially if they had claimed. The take-up rate was 75 per cent. of those who stand to gain by claiming.

Opren

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the estimate of the Committee on Safety of Medicines of the number of people who took Opren who had photo sensitivity reaction;

(2) when the Committee on Safety of Medicines requested further evidence about the two side effects of Opren photo sensitivity and onycholysis; and whether it was given any evidence or papers prepared by people not employed by the manufacturing company Eli Lilley;

(3) how many clinical trials were examined by the Committee on Safety of Medicines before it gave a product licence to Opren; how many patients were involved; how many received the drug at a sub-therapeutic dose; how many of the trials lasted longer than three weeks; how many involved more than 40 people; how many were double blind trials;

(4) what experimental studies were reported to the Committee on Safety of Medicines by the manufacturers of the drug Opren as evidence of the drug's freedom from carcinogenicity;

(5) whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines decided that the study of the side effects of Opren by Walter M. Mikulaschek provided by the manufacturing company after a request for further information was of a scientific standard acceptable to them;

(6) if the Committee on Safety of Medicines requested evidence of the safety of Opren on old people before it issued a product licence;

(7) whether any of the clinical trials on Opren carried out in the United States of America or in the United Kingdom and available to his Department, showed that older patients were more likely to suffer adverse reactions;

(8) whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines before it gave a product licence to the drug Opren, requested evidence of freedom from carcinogenicity from the manufacturing company.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: These questions concern matters contained in statements of claim in current legal actions against the Department of Health and Social Security and the Committee on Safety of Medicines. I am advised that they are therefore sub judice.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg, the chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, was ever employed by Eli Lilley to do research into Opren; if members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines were made aware of Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg's past involvement with the company; and if Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg took part in the committee's deliberations on Opren;

(2) if Eli Lilly and its British subsidiary disclosed immediately to the Committee on Safety of Medicines all the evidence it had of adverse reactions to Opren.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The matters raised in these questions fall within the issues contained in statements of

claim in legal actions against our Department and the Committee on Safety of Medicines and are sub judice. We and the committee intend to defend those actions.

I feel, however, that because of the personal nature of some of the innuendos, it is right to put the following facts on the record. Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg has never been employed by Eli Lilly. In 1978-80 staff of his university department carried out a study on gastric bleeding with benoxaprofen (Opren) and flurbiprofen, financed by the company. Such financing is normal practice where university departments carry out studies on behalf of the pharmaceutical industry. Sir Abraham gave advice on the planning of the study but was not involved in the conduct of the study. This role was set out on the record when the report of the study by Dr. Yeung Laiwah and others, was published in 1981 in the Annals of Rheumatic Diseases. In January 1980, staff of his department began planning a further study at the request of Eli Lilley into gastric bleeding with benoxaprofen and piroxicam. This study continued into 1982 but was never completed. He gave no advice on that study and took no part in it.

Sir Abraham was not a member of the Committee on Safety of Medicines when it gave its advice to licence Opren in February 1980. He was appointed to the committee from March 1980 and was fully involved in all the committee's discussions leading up to the withdrawal of the product from the United Kingdom market in August 1982.

I must make it clear that I have complete confidence in the integrity and judgment of Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg. I regret that the right hon. Member should use parliamentary questions to make thinly veiled attacks on named individuals and to embark on a search for information in support of legal claims.

Product Licences

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Committee on Safety of Medicines requires clinical trials supporting a request for a product licence to be double blind trials.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This is not a standard requirement. The design of a clinical trial will depend on the condition being treated and the effectiveness of the medicinal product being tested. In some cases a double blind trial is essential, but in others, for example where a very effective drug is to be used to treat a life-threatening condition, such a trial would not be appropriate.

One-parent Families

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Whitney: The recommendations affecting and accepted by the Department have been implemented in whole or in part.

Resource Allocation Working Party (Formulae)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department makes adjustments to the Resource Allocation Working Party's formulae to take account of the numbers of patients receiving private medical care and treatment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No adjustments are made at national level. The Resource Allocation Working Party recommended that in distributing resources to health authorities within a region, regional health authorities should have regard to special local factors such as the extent to which alternative facilities relieve or add pressure on the National Health Service.

Appeals

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appeals were outstanding at the latest available date against decisions made on the revised board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Benefits

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the total current annual cost of benefits to the unemployed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated total cost of benefits paid in respect of unemployment in the United Kingdom is £6·6 billion for 1985-86.

Reform of Social Security

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in full the equivalence scales used in the technical and statistical annex to paper I of volume 3 of the Reform of Social Security; and if he will also state the origin of these scales.

Mr. Newton: Following are the equivalence scales:

	Equivalence income scale
Married couple (householders)	1·00
Single householder	0·61
Married couple (non-householder)	0·78
Single non-householder	0·42
Child aged 0-1	0·09
2-4	0·18
5-7	0·21
8-10	0·23
11-12	0·25
13-15	0·27
15-18	0·36

The scales were derived from the family expenditure survey (United Kingdom) for 1971 and 1972. Further details of the derivation of these scales is given in Social Trends, Number 8 (HMSO, 1977) at pp. 27-29.

Benefits (Children)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and what percentages of working families falling within the lowest quintile of income distribution in 1982 were dependent on a single wage; and of these how many had a child under five years of age.

Mr. Whitney: It is estimated* that there were about 625,000 working families† with children falling within the

lowest quintile of income distribution‡ in 1982. Of these about 500,000 (about 80 per cent.) were dependent on a single wage‖ and of these about 250,000 had at least one child under five years of age.

* The estimates have been derived from analyses of 1982 family expenditure survey data.
† Includes one parent families.
‡ Income is taken to be net equivalent income: that is, adjusted for family size and composition.
‖ Second wages of £4 a week or less have been ignored.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures showing the weekly rates of child support, national insurance child addition plus child benefit, with national insurance long-term benefits, in November of each year since 1979, including November 1985, at current and at November 1985 prices.

Mr. Whitney: The combined weekly rates of child benefit plus child dependancy additions to national insurance long-term benefits in November of each year from 1979 were:

	£
1979	11·10
1980	12·25
1981	12·95
1982	13·80
1983	14·10
1984	14·50

Their value at November 1985 prices cannot be calculated until the retail price index for November is available. The combined weekly rate from November 1985 will be £15·05.

Income Support

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether his proposed new income support rates will be less for married parents under 25 years of age than for lone parents;

(2) if he will ensure that the rates of his proposed new income support system do not penalise two-parent families by comparison with lone parents.

Mr. Newton: Decisions on the rates of income support that would apply have not yet been taken, but in deciding the balance between rates for different groups we will take account of the considerations referred to by my hon. Friend.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that his proposed income support system does not penalise married and cohabiting couples by comparison with single people of opposite sexes sharing accommodation, and by comparison with divorced or separated married couples.

Mr. Newton: We expect that the current rules governing the circumstances in which claimants are treated as living together would continue to apply under the proposed income support scheme.

"Low Income Families"

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects publication of "Low Income Families 1983".

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 3 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) at column *177*.

Working Families

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services further to his reply to the hon. Member for Carshalton, *Official Report*, 3 July, if he will now publish figures for 1984, or the latest available date, showing the estimated numbers of working families with gross incomes, excluding state benefits, in the following income ranges: under £80, £80 to £89, £90 to £99, £100 to £109, £110 to £119, £120 to £129, £130 to £139, £140 to £149, £150 to £159, £160 to £169, £170 to £179, £180 to £189, £190 to £199, £200 to £219, £220 to £239, £240 to £259, £260 to £279, £280 to £299 and £300 and over, respectively, distinguishing between one-and two-parent families, between one-and two-wage families and between families with each of one, two, three and four or more dependent children.

Mr. Whitney: The latest information, which relates to 1981, is in the table.

Number of working families at various income levels—(Great Britain, 1981)

Thousands

Gross weekly income excluding state benefits	*Total*	*One parent families*	*Two parent families*	*One wage families*	*Two wage families*	*Number of dependent children* *1*	*2*	*3*	*4 or more*
Under £80	310	90	220	290	20	150	100	60	10
£80-89	150	40	120	140	10	60	60	20	10
£90-99	240	30	210	200	40	100	110	20	10
£100-109	300	30	280	220	90	110	130	40	20
£110-119	270	30	250	190	90	100	130	30	10
£120-129	380	20	360	210	170	170	160	30	20
£130-139	370	10	360	190	180	150	140	60	20
£140-149	340	10	330	180	170	140	160	30	10
£150-159	330	•	330	170	170	150	150	10	10
£160-169	330	•	330	130	200	140	130	50	20
£170-179	320	10	310	100	220	130	150	40	10
£180-189	240	10	240	90	150	70	130	40	•
£190-199	270	—	270	100	160	120	110	20	10
£200-219	430	20	420	130	300	160	220	50	•
£220-239	320	—	320	130	190	120	150	50	10
£240-259	270	—	270	90	180	130	100	20	10

Gross weekly income excluding state benefits	Total	One parent families	Two parent families	One wage families	Two wage families	Number of dependent children: 1	2	3	4 or more
£260-279	180	*	170	50	120	50	90	40	10
£280-299	140	*	130	40	90	60	50	20	—
£300 and over	650	10	640	220	430	240	280	110	20
Total	5,830	290	5,540	2,870	2,970	2,340	2,540	760	200

*Less than 5,000.

Notes:

1. The figures are derived from the 1981 Family Expenditure Survey and are subject to sampling error. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10,000 and so rows and columns may not sum exactly to the totals shown.
2. Gross weekly income is the income reported in 1981 without any updating.
3. A "working family" is defined as one where at least one parent is in full-time employment or self-employment. The figures include families where the head has been sick or unemployed for less than 3 months—in these cases income has been taken as the family's income when the head was in work.
4. The figures exclude any families not living in private households.
5. A "two-wage family" is one where the second wage exceeds £4 a week.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for 1984 or the latest available date, showing estimated numbers of out of work but working age families, with gross incomes, including state benefits, in each of the following income ranges: under £50, £50 to £59, £60 to £69, £70 to £79, £80 to £89, £90 to £99, £100 to £109, £110 to £119, £120 to £129, £130 to £139, £140 to £149 and £150 and over, respectively, including housing benefit and distinguishing between one and two-parent families, between families with each of one, two, three and four or more dependent children and between recipients of each of the main national insurance benefits, including statutory sick pay, and in each case without supplementary benefit, and recipients of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: The latest information, which relates to 1981, is in the table:

Number of out of work families of working age at various income levels—Great Britain, 1981

Thousands

Gross family income excluding state benefits	Total	One parent families	Two parent families	Number of dependent children: 1	2	3	4 or more	Housing (a)	(b)	All benefits being received: SB (a)	(b)	FIS (a)	(b)	FIS (a)	(b)	Other (a)	(b)
£																	
Under 50	250	190	60	170	60	10	10	70	150	20	10	*	—	*	*	10	—
50-59	190	130	60	100	80	20	—	50	140	20	10	*	—	10	*	10	*
60-69	270	130	140	90	150	30	10	50	160	30	10	10	—	10	*	10	—
70-79	170	80	90	50	60	50	10	30	90	10	10	10	—	*	*	10	*
80-89	110	40	70	20	50	30	10	20	60	10	*	*	*	10	*	*	—
90-99	70	30	40	10	20	20	10	20	30	10	10	—	—	10	*	*	—
100-109	50	10	30	10	—	10	10	10	20	*	—	—	—	10	*	10	—
110-119	30	10	20	10	*	10	10	20	—	—	—	—	—	10	*	—	*
120-129	20	10	10	—	10	*	—	10	*	—	—	—	—	*	*	*	—
130-139	10	*	10	—	10	*	*	10	*	—	—	*	—	*	*	*	—
140-149	10	*	10	—	10	*	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	*	*	—	—
150 and over	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	*	10	—	10	—	10	—	—	—
Total	1,200	630	640	480	460	230	100	310	680	130	70	30	*	80	*	60	10

(a) Without supplementary benefit.
(b) With supplementary benefit.
* Less than 5,000.

Notes:

1. The figures are derived from the 1981 Family Expenditure Survey and are subject to sampling error. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10,000 and so rows and columns may not sum exactly to the totals shown.
2. The totals do not coincide exactly with other published statistics. This is due to the different data sources.
3. Gross weekly income includes rent and rate rebates, and is the income reported in 1981 without any updating.
4. An 'out of work family' is defined as one where neither parent is in full-time employment or self-employment, except that families where the head has been sick or unemployed for less than 3 months are included.
5. The figures exclude any families not living in private households.
6. 'Other' NI benefits include maternity and widows' benefits.

Allowance Claims

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of *(a)* mobility allowance claims and *(b)* attendance allowance claims succeed upon the first re-application and subsequent re-applications.

Mr. Newton: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to fresh claims made on the termination of an existing award which was given for a limited period. The information requested for 1984 is as follows:

(a) 83·1 per cent.
(b) 85·1 per cent.

It is not possible to distinguish between first renewal of an award and second and subsequent renewals.

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims were made for mobility allowance in the last three years; and what percentage succeeded without *(a)* the appeals procedure being used, *(b)* after the first stage of appeal and *(c)* after the second stage of appeal.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The information available is as follows. It relates to decisions given in the relevant years, not to the results of claims made in those years.

	Claims			Appeals					
	Number of claims	Decided in claimant's favour		Appeals and references decided by medical board	Decided in claimant's favour		Appeals decided by medical appeal tribunal	Decided in claimants favour	
	(1)	(2) Number	(3) Col. (2) as a percentage of Col. (1)	(4)	(5) Number	(6) Col. (5) as a percentage of Col. (4)	(7)	(8) Number	(9) Col. (8) as a percentage of Col. (7)
1982	109,340 *(21,240)	76,130 *(17,130)	69·6 *(80·6)	11,410	3,600	31·6	2,663	703	26
1983	126,300 *(19,500)	86,300 *(16,450)	68·3 *(84·4)	12,970	3,890	30·0	3,070	1,000	33
1984	132,000 *(23,950)	93,500 *(19,900)	70·8 *(83·1)	14,750	4,800	32·5	3,933	1,107	28

Notes:
Cols. (1)-(3) Figures for renewal claims are shown separately in brackets marked * but included in the total.
Cols. (4)-(9) Figures include renewal claims.

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims were made for attendance allowance in the last three years and what percentage succeeded *(a)* without the appeal procedure being used, *(b)* after the first stage of appeal and *(c)* after the second stage of appeal.

Mr. Newton: The information available relates to decisions given in the relevant years, not to the results of claims made in those years. Details of the number of decisions on attendance allowance made on initial applications in 1982 and 1983 are given in table 14.05 of Social Security Statistics 1984. The equivalent information for 1984 is as follows:

	Numbers
Initial claims decided	239,804
First awards	
Higher rate	67,445
Lower rate	114,325
Rejections	58,034

The percentage of initial decisions for 1982, 1983 and 1984 resulting in an award was 74·7, 73·4 and 75·8 respectively.

Appeals against disallowance because of failure to satisfy the medical conditions are made by requesting the Attendance Allowance Board to review the decision. There is no further right of appeal against the board's decision on the medical conditions. Details of review decisions in 1982 and 1983 (including reviews of existing awards where there has been a change in the beneficiary's circumstances) are given in table 14.22 of Social Security Statistics 1984.

The equivalent information for 1984 is as follows:

	Numbers
Total decisions	33,374
Successful	23,184
Unsuccessful	10,190
	Percentage
Success rate	69·5

Benefits (Girocheque)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of issuing a giro benefit cheque; and how many have been issued to a value below that average cost figure during the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: The average cost of issuing a giro benefit cheque varies from 65 pence for a computer produced cheque up to £1·20 for a manually produced cheque. Wherever possible, small amounts of benefit are not paid by giro but are added to other payments due, but figures are not available for the number of cases in which small payments have proved necessary.

South London Hospitals

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the increase in waiting lists and waiting times for gynaecology inpatient and outpatient treatment respectively in south London hospitals following the closure of the South London hospital for women.

Mr. John Patten: The requested information on outpatients is not available centrally. The available information for in-patients is given in the table. In general, figures on waiting lists are believed to include a significant proportion of duplicated entries and patients who no longer require treatment. About half of all admissions to hospital are immediate and many of those on waiting lists already have a planned date of admission.

South East Thames and South West Thames Regional Health Authorities—District Health Authorities wholly or partly within the Greater London area

Date	Number of persons on in-patient waiting lists for admission to the specialty of gynaecology				Total cases
	Urgent		Non-urgent		
	All cases	Cases on list for more than one month	All cases	Cases on list for more than one year	
31 March 1984	308	118	2,870	323	3,178
30 September 1984	123	37	2,538	206	2,661
31 March 1985*	93	36	2,491	139	2,584

* Provisional.

Health and Personal Statistics

Mr. Mescher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update table 3:14a of the latest "Health and Personal Social Service Statistics for England" by giving data for 1981 to 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The updated figures requested for the years 1981 to 1983 are shown in the table. We do not yet have figures for 1984 at this level of detail.

The table is due to be published shortly as part of the 1985 edition of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics".

Nursing and midwifery staff: Analysis by occupation and grade—30 September

England *Whole-time equivalents*

		1980	1981	1982	1983
All Nursing and Midwifery Staff*	Total	364,828	386,654	392,557	393,086
Administrative nursing staff at Regional, Area and District HQs and centrally-based services		2,263	3,261	3,393	4,041
Administrative midwifery staff at Regional, Area and District HQs		124	112	109	200
Blood transfusion service staff		945	970	995	1,144
Hospital nursing staff:	Total	308,815	326,587	332,111	329,965
Qualified:	Total	151,815	162,186	168,294	171,000
Senior Nurses and above†		7,595	6,669	6,267	5,634
Tutorial nursing staff		3,308	3,567	3,768	4,307
Other registered nurses		83,792	90,467	94,219	95,661
Enrolled nurses		56,496	61,483	64,040	65,398
Learners:	Total	71,391	74,395	75,309	72,505
Post-registration student nurses		2,719	2,546	1,991	1,939
Post-enrolment student nurses		1,509	2,188	2,093	1,674
Pre-registration student nurses		46,899	48,484	50,673	50,535
Pupil nurses		20,264	21,176	20,552	18,336
Unqualified:	Total	86,232	90,007	88,507	86,460
Other nursing staff‡		85,718	89,722	88,346	86,391
Nursing cadets		515	285	161	69
Hospital midwifery staff:	Total	17,163	17,388	16,792	18,156
Qualified:	Total	12,932	12,631	13,028	13,404
Senior Nurses and above†		946	840	791	646
Tutorial midwifery staff		536	506	522	545
Other state certified midwives		11,449	11,284	11,715	12,213
Learners: Student midwives		4,231	4,758	3,764	4,753
Primary health care nursing staff:	Total	32,747	34,929	35,653	35,867
Senior Nurses†		1,567	3,035	1,490	1,311
District nursing tutorial staff		61	76	55	47
Health visitors‖		8,761	9,115	9,389	9,613
TB visitors with HV certificate		36	26	26	27
TB visitors without HV certificate		57	59	55	50
District nursing (registered nurses)¶		9,894	10,150	10,406	10,542
District nursing (enrolled nurses)¶		2,967	3,532	3,749	3,898

	1980	1981	1982	1983
School nursing (registered nurses)*	2,190	2,404	2,434	2,445
School nursing (enrolled nurses)	225	205	225	218
Dual/triple duty posts:				
Health visitor/district nurse/midwife (and Health Visitor/Midwife)	91	103	84	68
District nurse/midwife (and SRN/Midwife)	1,043	950	842	684
Enrolled nurse/midwife	37	19	8	5
Other registered nurses‡	1,494	2,019	2,047	2,059
Other enrolled nurses*	573	461	408	408
Nursing auxiliaries and other unqualified staff	3,752	4,256	4,445	4,494
Community health midwifery staff:				
District midwife	2,773	3,406	3,504	3,713
Agency nurses (hospital)#	3,989	3,520	2,727	2,191
Agency midwives (hospital)#	201	237	254	200
Agency nurses (PHC)#	35	—	58	43
Agency midwives (PHC)#	—	—	—	7
Health visitor students#	1,027	1,125	1,069	1,023
District nurse students#**	—	229	418	577

* Excludes HV students, District Nurse students and agency staff.
† Incorporates the grades of Senior Nursing Officer and Nursing Officer existing prior to the 1982 reorganisation of nurse grading structure.
‡ Includes nursing auxiliaries and nursery nurses.
‖ Includes Health Visitor Fieldwork Teachers, HV School Nurses and HV Bank Nurses.
¶ Includes District Nurse Practical Work Teachers. Bank District Nurses and SRNs and SENs assisting District Nurses.
• Includes school nurses and SRNs assisting school health services.
■ Includes SRNs assisting health visiting and other SRNs in community nursing.
▪ Includes SENs assisting health visiting and other SENs in community nursing.
Not included in the totals.
**Grade introduced in 1981.

Visit Statistics

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, for England *(a)* the total number of visits by district nurses and the rate per 1,000 population and *(b)* the number of persons first seen by a district nurse and the rate per 1,000 population for the following age groups (i) up to five years, (ii) five to 16 years, (iii) 16 to 64 years, (iv) 65 years and over and (v) all ages.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect centrally information on the total number of visits by district nurses. The table shows the number of persons treated by district nurses. Patients are counted and their age recorded at the time of their first treatment by a district nurse within the health district during the calendar year. We do not yet have statistics for 1984.

Persons Treated (First Treatments) by District Nurses and Rates per Thousand Population

England

Age Group	*1981*		*1982*		*1983*	
	Persons treated (thousands)	*Rate*	*Persons treated (thousands)*	*Rate*	*Persons treated (thousands)*	*Rate*
Under 5 years	170·8	60	172·1	60	166·1	56
5-16 years	259·3	32	251·4	32	244·9	32
17-64 years	1,495·9	52	1,511·7	52	1,580·3	54
65 years and over	1,441·0	202	1,497·9	211	1,559·9	221
All Ages	3,367·0	72	3,433·1	73	3,351·2	76

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will list for each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 for England *(a)* the total number of visits by health visitors and the rate per 1,000 population and *(b)* the number of persons first seen by a health visitor and the rate per 1,000 population for the following age groups (i) children born that year, (ii) up to five years, (iii) five to 16 years, (iv) 16 to 64 years, (v) 65 years and over and (vi) all ages.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is given in the table. All visits other than those to households where there is tuberculosis or other infectious diseases are included. A "first visit" is defined as the first visit received by a person from any member of the health visiting staff in the health district during the calendar year. If a person who has been seen by a health visitor moves to a new health district and is visited there by a health visitor during the same calendar year, "first visits" will be recorded in respect of this person by both health districts. It is therefore possible for the number of first visits to exceed the population in a given age group. We do not yet have statistics for 1984.

Visits by Health Visitors and Rates per Thousand Population

England

Age Group	1981 Total Visits Thousands	1981 Total Visits Rate	1981 First Visits Thousands	1981 First Visits Rate	1982 Total Visits Thousands	1982 Total Visits Rate	1982 First Visits Thousands	1982 First Visits Rate	1983 Total Visits Thousands	1983 Total Visits Rate	1983 First Visits Thousands	1983 First Visits Rate
Born in current year	3,053·8	5,090	646·5	1,080	3,038·2	5,189	632·7	1,070	3,066·0	5,170	638·0	1,080
Other Children under 5 years	5,180·2	2,318	1,638·1	733	5,355·4	2,322	1,667·8	723	5,376·1	2,283	1,677·2	712
5-16 years	489·3	60	215·1	26	488·6	61	213·5	27	473·2	62	205·7	27
17-64 years	2,340·1	82	798·5	28	2,533·9	88	840·4	29	2,719·6	93	890·6	31
65 years and over	1,407·2	197	461·7	65	1,367·9	192	438·2	64	1,321·0	187	446·3	63
All Ages	12,474·7	267	3,759·9	80	12,806·0	274	3,811·6	81	12,957·9	277	3,857·7	82

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, for England, the number of whole time equivalent staff in each of the following categories *(a)* health visitors, *(b)* health visitor trainees, *(c)* tuberculosis visitors and *(d)* district nurses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not yet have information at this level of detail for 1984. Figures for the remaining years are shown in the table.

NHS directly employed staff—England—in post at 30 September
**Whole-time equivalents*

	1981	*1982*	*1983*
Health visitors†	9,240	9,500	9,710
Health visitors students	1,130	1,070	1,020
Tuberculosis visitors‡	60	60	50
District nurses‖	14,520	14,900	15,120

Source: SR7 Annual Census of Non-Medical Manpower.

* All figures rounded to the nearest 10.

† Includes health visitors, health visitor field work teachers, T.B. visitors with health visiting certificates, health visitor/district nurse/midwife, health visitor/midwife, and school health visitors.

‡ Without health visitor certificate.

‖ Includes district nurses, district nurse practical work teachers, SRN, SSEN & SEN with district training, SSEN and SEN assisting district nurses and district nurses/midwives.

School Meals

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the administrative cost involved in paying that element of family credit designed to cover school meals to the member of the family in receipt of child benefit where this is not the wage earner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We cannot at this stage make a reliable estimate of the additional administrative cost involved in such a proposal.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will introduce a computerised system to enable general practitioners to ascertain in each health care district which consultant in each speciality has the shortest waiting list for *(a)* inpatients and *(b)* outpatients.

Mr. John Patten: Departmental guidance on the management of inpatient waiting lists suggests that waiting list information should be made available to general practitioners so that a patient may be given the opportunity to be referred to a hospital with a shorter wait. We are at present funding a pilot study in the West Midlands Region making use of a computer system to test the effect upon referral practice of providing general practitioners with regular information about total (both inpatient and out-patient) waiting times at hospitals outside their own district. If this proves successful we will consider how it might be extended more widely.

Short-Term Funding

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all current or proposed short-term funding initiatives by his Department which include an element of direct services to clients by voluntary organisations which are also within the competence of local social services authorities.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for a list of our schemes of grants to voluntary organisations, and of the organisations which received grants in 1984-85. In general these schemes of grants maintain the long standing tradition of enabling voluntary organisations to provide services of a kind which the statutory services also have the power to provide.

Covenant Payments

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether, for the purposes of claiming supplementary and other means-tested benefits, he will consider treating covenant payments representing parental contributions to student maintenance grants as local education authority grants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether, in assessing the income of student claimants for rent allowance during term-time, covenant payments representing parental contributions to student maintenance grants are deemed to cover term-time alone or the entire calendar year;

(3) whether, in assessing the income of student claimants for supplementary benefit during the summer vacation, covenant payments representing parental contribution to student maintenance grants are deemed to cover term-time alone or the entire calendar year.

Mr. Newton: So far as supplementary benefit is concerned the chief adjudication officer has issued guidance which states that, where the amount paid to a student under a covenant together with the tax refund is no more than the assessed parental contribution, the total should not be taken into account for benefit purposes during the summer vacation. Students are unlikely to qualify for family income supplement because they will not satisfy the full-time work condition.

For housing benefit, in general we would expect local authorities to take a parental contribution paid by means of a covenant into account on the same basis as the grant to which it relates. For most students this will mean that payments are taken into account only in term-time and the

Christmas and Easter vacations. However, circumstances may arise in which the terms of a covenant are such that an authority decides to take the income into account over a longer period. We have no plans to change the relevant legislation. However, I understand that the chief adjudication officer is considering issuing further guidance on supplementary benefit.

Board and Lodging

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to increase *(a)* the personal allowance and *(b)* the meals allowance for those receiving payments for board and lodging in November.

Mr. Newton: *(a)* Yes; *(b)* No.

Family Credit Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it is proposed to introduce transitional regulations to protect family income supplement recipients against any cash losses resulting from the introduction of the family credit scheme.

Mr. Newton: The detailed transitional arrangements for family income supplementary recipients on the introduction of the proposed family credit scheme are still being considered.

Administrator Position

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultation there was with his Department about the method of advertising of the post of emergency beds service administrator of the south-east Thames regional health authority before the post was filled; whether his Department was consulted about the appointment to the post of Mr. John Cross; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The appointment of the administrator of the London emergency bed service is a matter for the South-East Thames regional health authority about which we would not normally expect to be consulted.

I understand that the chairman of South-East Thames regional health authority has recently written to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) making it clear that this appointment has no untoward implications for the future of the service.

Presence Test

Mr. John Hunt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now provide further details of the operation of the presence test in respect of eligibility for income support payments under the proposals contained in the Green Paper, "Programme for Change"; and if he will explain, in particular, how this test will operate in respect of refugees and asylum seekers.

Mr. Whitney: I would refer my hon. Friend to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 22 July.

Mrs. A. Carr

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to give a substantive reply to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside's letters of 5 July, 11 June, 26 April and 26 February 1985 and 11 December 1984, concerning the case of Mrs. A. Carr of Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret the delay in dealing with this difficult and complex case, and have written again to the hon. Member to explain the current position.

Benefits (Unclaimed)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the estimated amount of money unclaimed by pensioners entitled to supplementary benefit in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated amount of supplementary benefit unclaimed by pensioners likely to be entitled to but not claiming supplementary pension in 1981, the latest date for which information is available, was £210 million.

Source: Family expenditure survey 1981.

Self-Help

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give further encouragement to the growth of local self-help and mutual aid groups dealing with specific health or social problems or conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There are hundreds of local self help and mutual aid groups throughout the country which make a significant contribution to meeting health or social service needs. The sorts of groups I have in mind are, for example, those of people looking after heavily dependent relatives or stroke support groups. Some support by way of advice or information can often make the difference between a group continuing to flourish or fading away. Local voluntary organisations can provide such support if they have the resources to do so.

I am therefore making available up to £1·75 million to help strengthen local advice and support services provided by local voluntary organisations for self help and mutual aid groups formed round specific health or social conditions or problems.

The money will be used to explore ways of helping and supporting self-help groups by for example, providing advice, information, and help with places to meet. It will do this by funding for three years about 20 local projects under the wing of existing local voluntary organisations such as councils for voluntary service. Each project will be designed to help existing or potential self help groups in their areas.

The scheme has been designed in co-operation with and will be run by a group of national voluntary organisations who are coming together for this purpose under the title of the Self Help Alliance.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what support his Department gave to voluntary organisations in 1984-85.

Mr. John Patten: We believe that the voluntary and informal sectors make a vital contribution to meeting needs in the health and personal social services fields. We have therefore increased the total real value of our grants to voluntary organisations by 121 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1984-85. voluntary organisations which received grants in 1984-85 are listed in the tables.

Grants to voluntary bodies under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968—General Schemes (subhead K2(1))

	£
Action on Smoking and Health	136,000
Advance	34,000
Age Concern	225,000
Alcoholic Hostels	69,579
Alzheimer's Disease Society	27,160
Anthony Nolan Fund	6,000
Anorexic Family Aid	12,500
Apex Trust	56,000
Arthritis Care	5,000
Association for all Speech Impaired Children	9,000
Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus	42,000
Association for Breastfeeding Mothers	1,750
Association of Carers	23,000
Association of Professions for the Mentally Handicapped	8,000
Association of Residential Communities for the Retarded	10,000
Baby Life Support Systems	15,000
Back Pain Association	17,000
Bexley Moorings	21,000
Blenheim Street Agency	7,600
Breakthrough Trust	35,000
Brendoncare Foundation	7,500
British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering	265,000
British Association for Service to the Elderly	13,000
British Association of the Hard of Hearing	25,000
British Association of Immediate Care	20,000
British Deaf Association	15,000
British Epilepsy Association	20,000
British Institute of Mental Handicap	29,700
British Kidney Patient Association	30,000
British Limbless ExService Men's Association	10,000
British Red Cross	12,000
British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society	4,000
Bristle Bones Society	5,000
Brook Advisory Centres	35,000
Calibre	6,000
Campaign for Single Homeless People	28,000
Campaign for the Mentally Handicapped	14,000
Cancer Link	6,000
Care	10,000
Catholic Child Welfare Council	2,000
Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	34,000
Centre for Ethnic Minorities Health Studies	20,000
Centre for Policy on Ageing	25,512
Centre on Environment for the Handicapped	28,000
Cherwell Housing Trust	7,500
Child Accident Prevention Trust	52,200
Child Care	82,463
Child Poverty Action Group	10,000
Children's Legal Centre	30,000
Children's Society	198,000
City Roads Crisis Intervention	28,600
Coeliac Society	13,000
Combat Huntington's Chorea	16,000
Community Drugs Project	5,300
Community Projects Foundation	68,000
Community Service Volunteers	28,000
Compassionate Friends	2,500
Contact	25,000
Contact a Family	35,000
Cope	99,500
Coronary Prevention Group	8,500
Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People	48,000
Coventry Voluntary Services Council	5,850
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme Ltd.	66,000
Cruse	100,000
Cyrenians	40,000
Dial UK	16,500
Disability Alliance	10,000
Disabled Drivers Association	4,000
Disabled Living Foundation	320,580
Disablement Income Group	15,000
Doncaster I.T. Organisation	20,000
Downs Children's Association	10,000
Dr. Barnardo's	213,972
East Youth and Community Association	22,050
Elizabeth House Association	4,000
English Access Committee	57,200
Extend	9,000
Family Forum	30,000
Family Holiday Association	3,500
Family Planning Association	158,750
Family Policy Studies Centre	45,000
Family Rights Group	23,000
Family Service Units	178,500
Family Tree	8,500
Family Welfare Association	160,000
First Key	30,000
Fluoridation Society	15,000
Forest and Gardens (Northumbria) Ltd	15,000
Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths	10,000
Gingerbread	58,000
Gingerbread Holidays	5,000
Good Practice in Mental Health	57,300
Greater Manchester Council on Alcoholism	35,550
Haemophilia Society	15,000
Hampshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	6,550
Handcrafts Advisory Association for the Disabled	5,000
Headway Association	5,250
Holiday Care Service	4,000
Home Start Consultancy	19,000
Horticultural Therapy	25,000
Human Ageing Trust	9,000
Hyde Park Community Action	28,435
Independent Adoption Society	8,250
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	142,000
International Social Service	45,000
International Voluntary Service	18,000
In Touch	2,960
Invalids at Home Trust	1,500
Invalid Childrens Aid Association	10,000
Iris Fund	1,000
Joint Committee on Mobility for the Disabled	800
Kent Council on Alcoholism	24,051
Kidney Transplant Olympic Association	3,500
La Leche League of Great Britain	3,500
L' Arche Ltd	15,000
Leonard Cheshire Foundation	63,000
Liverpool Alcoholism Services	31,900
Makaton Vocabulary Development Project	6,000
Mastectomy Association	6,000
Maternity Alliance	30,000
Medical Commission on Accident Prevention	6,000
Mencap	233,750
Mental After Care Association	30,000
Mental Health Film Council	16,200
Mental Health Foundation	20,000
Migraine Trust	5,000
Motability*	348,359
Motor Neurone Disease Association	6,000
National Agency on Alcoholic Misues (NAAM)	310,789
National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society	3,150
National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	255,000
National Association for the Childless	15,000
National Association for the Deaf/Blind, Rubella Handicapped	35,754
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare	10,000
National Association for Mental Health	380,000
National Association for Patient Participation	2,000
National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital	91,000
National Association of Leagues of Hospital Friends	11,000
National Association of Limbless Disabled	5,000
National Association of Victims Support Schemes	8,500
National Association of Young People in Care	38,700
National Association of Youth Clubs	48,000
National Birthday Trust	16,500

	£
National Childbirth Trust	55,000
National Childminding Association	111,720
National Children's Bureau	210,426
National Council for One Parent Families	125,000
National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependents	10,000
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	147,908
National Council on Alcoholism	97,216
National Eczema Society	13,500
National Federation of Kidney Patients	6,000
National Federation of the Blind of the United Kingdom	4,000
National Foster Care Association	73,730
National Information Forum	230
National Library for the Blind	10,000
National Marriage Guidance Council	30,000
National Out of School Alliance	34,800
National Playbus Association	37,455
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	80,000
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	202,000
National Tape Magazine for the Blind	500
National Youth Bureau	66,000
Network for the Handicapped	1,500
Norfolk Children's Projects	10,000
Northern Regional Association for the Blind	42,634
Northern Schizophrenia Fellowship	22,850
Northorpe Hall Trust	25,000
Nottingham Council for Voluntary Services	22,000
Ockenden Venture	56,849
One to One	6,000
Opus	15,000
Outset	14,750
Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research	12,000
Overseas Doctors Association	7,000
Parents for Children	54,000
Parent to Parent Information on Adoption Services	5,575
Partially Sighted Society	15,000
Patients Association	6,800
Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied	23,000
Portsmouth Council on Alcoholism	13,000
Pre-School Playgroups Association	391,000
Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Disabled	49,000
Radio Lollipop Limited	15,000
Rainer Foundation	102,300
Rape Counselling and Research Project	23,953
Re-Solv	20,000
Richmond Fellowship	97,500
Rother Help Centre	50,000
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation	237,000
Royal National Institute for the Blind	250,000
Royal National Institute for the Deaf	42,300
Runnymede Trust	2,000
Samaritans	105,000
Save the Children Fund	355,875
Sequal	57,500
Sexual and Personal Relationships of the Disabled	32,000
Shape	9,000
Sheffield Advocacy Project	10,000
Sickle Cell Society	12,000
Social Work Training Grants	103,990
Society for Mucopolysaccharide Diseases	1,500
Society of Voluntary Associates	15,500
Southern and Western Regional Association for the Blind	65,090
Spastics Society	24,000
Spinal Injuries Association	38,000
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse	94,400
St. Albans Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility	1,510
St. Dismas Resource Centre	553
St. Elizabeth's Home	26,250
St. John Ambulance	52,000
St. Katherine Housing Trust	8,000
Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Association	10,000
Tibble Trust	3,000
Toy Libraries Association	42,000
Turning Point	113,150
Vocal	20,000
Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children	30,000
Voluntary Organisations Liaison Committee for Under Fives	25,400
Volunteer Centre	93,256
Vortex	10,225
Wessex Rehabilitation Association	21,000
Westminster Pastoral Foundation	66,000
Widows Advisory Trust	12,000
Winged Fellowship Trust	14,000
Women's Aid Federation (England)	100,000
Women's Health Concern	7,000
Women's National Cancer Control Campaign	68,000
Women's Royal Voluntary Service	50,000
£ for £ Scheme	363,652

Grants to Voluntary Organisations towards Capital Works

	£
1. For Registered voluntary children's homes (subhead H1(1)(a)	
Caldecott Community	31,601
Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust)	175,958
Plainlands (Children's Family Trust)	11,500
Newhaven House (Rainer Foundation)	4,002
2. For Assisted Community Homes (subhead H1(1)(b)	
Duncroft (Barnardo's)	34,791
St. Williams (Catholic Child Welfare Society)	150,347

Grants to Voluntary Organisations Under Schedule 5 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 (as amended) (subhead) B(3)552)

	£
A. General Scheme grants	
Aberdeen Cyrenians	4,400
Birmingham, Committee for Night Shelter	6,900
Birmingham, St. Anne's	3,650
Birmingham, St. Basil's	6,800
Brighton, YMCA	4,950
Cambridge Cyrenians	1,300
Cardiff Cyrenians	3,700
Coventry Cyrenians	4,950
Edinburgh, People's Palace	6,200
Exeter Shilhay	4,950
Glasgow, Kirkhaven	3,200
Guildford Cyrenians	2,500
Leeds Cyrenians	1,300
Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral Crypt	3,700
London, Bondway	13,550
London, Centrepoint	8,600
London, Theatre Girls' Club	8,600
Lowestoft Night Shelter	3,700
Manchester Night Shelter	8,600
Norwich Night Shelter	6,200
Nottingham, Help the Homeless	2,050
Oxford Cyrenians	7,400
Plymouth Night Shelter	3,700
Portsmouth, Harbour Community	1,800
Portsmouth, St. Petroc's Community Trust	4,400
Preston, Homeless in	3,700
Sheffield, Joint Standing Committee	6,200
Stockton Churches Mission to the Single Homeless	4,950
Stoke Potteries Housing Association	4,400
Swansea, SASH	4,400
Swindon Cyrenians	492
Taunton Association for the Homeless	4,950
Tyneside Cyrenians	4,950
Wolverhampton Overnight Shelter Group	5,400
Worcester, St. Paul's	3,700
B. Camberwell Replacement Scheme—topping-up (revenue) grants	
Circle Trust	15,203
Peter Bedford Trust	6,697
North Lambeth Day Centre	23,873

	£
Single Homeless Project	38,131
St. Mungo's Community Housing Association	4,578
Bondway	19,817
St. George's Community Trust	4,220
St. Giles' Centre	5,378
Homeless Action and Accommodation	838
Carr-Gomm Society Ltd.	2,140

Intermediate Treatment Initiative (Subhead K5(2))

	£
Barnsley Intermediate Treatment Association	72,000
Rainer Foundation	184,500
National Children's Homes	613,000
Youth Community Help Trust	40,625
Coventry Intermediate Treatment Association	69,897
Forum Weekend Club	48,000
Bradford Community Alternatives	88,000
CAYO in Sandwell	72,000
Save the Children Fund	72,000
St. Albans Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility	118,500
Inter-Action Milton Keynes	16,000
Halton Intermediate Treatment Scheme	45,000
Dr. Barnardo's	36,750
Croydon Guild of Voluntary Organisations	80,750
Community Service Volunteers (Kent)	307,000
Community Service Volunteers (Somerset)	33,500
Wandsworth Association for Youth	120,000
The Sobriety Project	60,000
Kirklees Enterprise for Youth	104,375
Leeds Voluntary Alternatives	90,000
Hastings and Rother Intensive IT Association	20,000
Bury Youth Enterprise	33,000
County Durham Youth Development Trust	328,500
Cleveland Alternatives for Young People	91,125
Alternatives in Fenland	19,500
Norfolk Children's Projects	106,250
Queensway Trust	99,500
Gloucestershire Trust for Young People at Risk	9,000
Lincolnshire Youth Activity Trust	77,000
West Indian Concern Ltd.	60,000
Vale Royal Development Group for Young Offenders	31,500
Chichester Diocesan Association	30,000
Peterborough Youth Trust	36,750
Cambridge Alternatives	44,130
PACT Ltd.	30,000
TARGET Ltd.	30,000
West Cumbria Sentencing Alternatives	30,000
Dreadnought Activities Centre	29,750
Barking and Dagenham Youth Trust	40,000
The Surrey Care Trust	45,000
NACRO	90,000

Drugs Misuse Initiative (Subheads F8 and F9)

	£
Alpha House	3,000
Barnet Borough Voluntary Service Council	27,658
Bradford Independent Drugs Misuse	45,000
East Dorset Drugs Advisory Service	17,594
Esher Association for the Prevention of Addiction	34,514
Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Standing Conference on Drugs Misuse	17,640
Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence	50,561
Leatherhead and District Association for the Prevention of Addiction	3,000
Ley Community	33,104
Merseyside Drugs Council	43,085
NACRO	36,398
Lifeline Project (North West)	36,647
Phoenix House	185,602
Stevenage Drugs Liaison Group	19,783
Tranx	27,944
Tranx Release	8,792
Turning Point	154,646

Opportunities for Volunteering (Subhead K7)

	£
Age Concern	955,000
British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centre	195,000
British Council of Churches	390,000
Children's Society	96,000
Community Service Volunteers	166,500
Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering General Fund	1,890,000
Dr. Barnardo's	105,250
MENCAP	117,500
National Association for Mental Health	195,000
National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	133,200
National Association of Leagues of Hospital Friends	50,150
Pre-School Playgroups Association	90,000
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation	195,000
Royal National Institute for the Blind	59,500
Spastics Society	27,000
The Panel of Four	65,000
King's Fund Centre (Subhead K2(2)) (year ending 31 December 1984)	325,000
Intermediate Treatment Fund (Subhead K5(1))	452,991
Family Fund (Subhead K3)	4,812,400
Under-Fives Initiative (Subhead K9)	
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations	372,543
Dr. Barnardo's	59,685
Children's Society	88,312
Family Service Units	79,022
Family Welfare Association	41,975
Gingerbread	259,980
Home Start Consultancy	205,759
National Childminding Association	273,289
National Children's Home	69,952
National Playbus Association	132,105
Pre-School Playgroups Association	63,351
Save the Children Fund	32,835
Toy Libraries Association	85,781
Voluntary Organisations Liaison Committee for Under-Fives	34,360
National Childcare Campaign	93,975
Tadworth Court Trust (Subhead K2(3))	1,004,000
Helping the Community to Care (Subhead K2(4))	
Age Concern	13,500
British Institute of Industrial Therapy	12,000
King's Fund Centre	20,984
MENCAP	50,000
National Children's Bureau	9,970
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	702
Nottingham Council for Voluntary Service	12,358
Save the Children Fund	82,000
Volunteer Centre	1,018
Social Work Training (Subhead H5)	
National Institute for Social Work	292,000

Cancer (West Cumbria)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in setting up the body referred to in recommendation 10(d) of the report of the independent advisory group chaired by Sir Douglas Black which investigated the possible increased incidence of cancer in West Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have decided to set up a committee on the medical aspects of radiation in the environment (COMARE). This will be an expert advisory committee with members chosen by the Chief Medical Officer for their medical and scientific expertise. It will offer Government independent medical and

scientific advice on the health effects of ionising and non ionising radiation in the environment whether natural or manmade. Government departments will be represented by assessors. The secretariat will be provided jointly by our Department and the National Radiological Protection Board.

Its terms of reference are to:

"assess and advise Government on the health effects of natural and manmade radiation in the environment and to assess the adequacy of the available data and the need for further research."

The committee will provide the "designated body" with significant health representation recommended by the Black advisory group. In reaching decisions about discharges of radioactivity from nuclear sites and related activities on environmental monitoring the authorising departments will give full weight to medical advice from the committee. This will ensure, as recommended by the Black advisory group, that the control of permitted discharges takes account of all relevant factors.

One of its main tasks will be to advise on the results of the work which was recommended in Sir Douglas Black's report, and to consider the health implications of any research results or other information which becomes available. I will make a further announcement when the chairman and members have been appointed.

Pensions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to him as to the number of persons in contracted-out pension schemes who are entitled to inflation-proofing of their pensions after retirement; and what information he has as to the estimated cost of this provision in the years *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1995, *(d)* 2000 and *(e)* 2010, both in money terms and as a proportion of the total cost of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 May 1985, c. *339-40*]: In the year ending 5 April 1983 approximately 9·8 million people paid some contributions at contracted-out rates.

The estimated cost of inflation-proofing the guaranteed minimum pension (GMP) portion of contracted-out occupational pensions is as follows:

Year	**£ million*
1985-86	30
1990-91	130
1995-96	400
2000-01	800
2010-11	1,900

*Expressed in terms of 1984-85 earnings. In each year the estimated costs are 20-25 per cent. of the total cost of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

The future cost of inflation proofing GMPs depends crucially on the assumptions about future levels of inflation. The above figures are based on the assumptions underlying the figures in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security". The main assumptions are given in annex B of paper 2 in volume 3.

Social Security Review

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has not published the findings of the research commissioned from Social and Community Planning Research into child benefit in the background papers to the "Green Paper on the "Reform of Social Security."

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 June 1985, c. *560*]: We did not publish this survey because of the decision to incorporate in Volume 3 of the Social Security Green Paper an extensive summary of the much wider survey conducted by Gallup of public attitudes to social security issues, including child benefit. We also arranged for the publication by Gallup of the complete survey.

The study by Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) was of a more limited character, involving group discussions and interviews with only 104 people, and was designed to give an indication of attitudes rather than statistical evidence. It did not therefore attempt any statistical analyses, though its findings on child benefit are consistent with those of the Gallup survey.

We have no objection to SCPR making the survey available if they wish; and in view of the hon. Member's interest I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library as soon as it is available.

Great Ormond Street Hospital (Cardiac Block)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimated cost and completion date of the works to make safe the cardiac block at Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 June 1985, c. *483*]: The estimated final cost is within the current approved sum of £12·5 million. The present forecast completion date is 18 August 1986.

Benefit Changes

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households will receive reduced housing benefit as a result of the changes to take effect on 25 November if they have *(a)* a pensioner, *(b)* a disabled person, *(c)* an unemployed person or *(d)* a young person up to 21 years, employed and unemployed, non-dependant, living with them; how much each one will lose; and how many households will lose benefit completely.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 8 July 1985, c. *367*]: I regret that an assessment of the work involved in providing this information has shown that it would entail disproportionate cost.

Tobacco Sachets

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information is available to him about the medical effects of the sale, promotion and consumption of Skoal Bandit tobacco sachets in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why the Chief Medical Officer has written to all doctors about the dangers of sucking tobacco contained in a sachet; and if he will make a statement;

(3) If he has yet reached a voluntary agreement with the producers of Skoal Bandits on the marketing of the product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: The Chief Medical Officer wrote to doctors following a recommendation by the Department's committee on

carcinogenicity, which considered that there was evidence that the use of non-smoked tobacco products within the mouth is causally associated with an increased risk of oral cancer. In his letter he advised that these products should not be used either by smokers trying to give up smoking, or by non-smokers because of the risk to health. The Government reached agreement with the manufacturers in April to restrict the marketing of Skoal Bandits. A copy of the agreement has been placed in the Library.

Treatment Complaints

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to ensure that the cases of complaints of ill-treatment to elderly and physically and mentally-handicapped patients mentioned in the annual report of the Health Service Commissioner are thoroughly investigated.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: We require health authorities to prepare a report at the time of any accident or other worrying incident and require authorities to investigate all complaints or incidents thoroughly, fairly and promptly. Health authorities may be called before the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to answer for their actions in cases investigated by the Health Service Commissioner. We study all the cases reported and consider whether we should give further guidance to all authorities in the light of them.

Urgent Needs Payments

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people received urgent needs payments in 1984 in each of *(a)* the London borough of Camden *(b)* the London borough of Barnet *(c)* Greater London, and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: The information requested is collected on a local office basis; as local office boundaries are not conterminous with local authorities or parliamentary constituencies, the information is not available in the form requested. The figures show the total number of urgent need decisions made by local offices serving any part of the areas in question in the year up to 9 April 1985.

Offices serving	**Single payments*	*Awards for living expenses*
London borough of Camden	538	4,270
London borough of Barnet	4	879
Greater London council area	3,097	46,769
Constituency of Holborn and St. Pancras	487	10,933

* These figures include awards and refusals.

Supplementary Single Payments

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments were made to residents of *(a)* Camden *(b)* Barnet *(c)* Greater London, and *(d)* Holborn and St. Pancras in 1984, and what was the average payment in each case.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: The information requested is collected on a local office basis; as local office boundaries are not conterminous with local authority boundaries or parliamentary constituencies, the information is not available in the form requested.

The figures show the total number of single payments awarded by local offices serving any part of the areas in question in the year up to 9 April 1985.

Offices serving	**Number of Single Payments*	*Average amount of payments (rounded)* £
London borough of Camden	19,932	103·00
London borough of Barnet	6,919	98·50
Greater London council area	283,764	92·50
Constituency of Holborn and St. Pancras	21,309	111·50

* Some claimants receive more than one payment.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 26 July 1985

WALES

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the percentage change in the level of housing subsidy to local authorities in Wales between 1979-80 and 1984-85 in real and cash terms.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The level of housing subsidies paid to local authorities in Wales has reduced by 88 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1984-85. This represents a reduction of 92 per cent. in real terms.

Refuse Collection

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many and which councils in Wales operate a refuse disposal collection through contracts with private companies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No waste disposal authorities in Wales operate a refuse collection service exclusively through contracts with the private sector. Carmarthen district, Blaenau Gwent, and Merthyr borough councils operate a partial collection service under contract with private companies. A wide variety of contractual relationships exist for some aspects of waste disposal.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average wage rate among young people participating in youth training scheme programmes in mid-Glamorgan and the Caerphilly constituency respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A standard allowance of £26·25 per week is currently paid to all participants in the youth training scheme. Information is not available on the extent to which in addition sponsors may be subsidising this allowance.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of young people leaving youth training scheme programmes in mid-Glamorgan and the Caerphilly constituency, respectively, find permanent employment at the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information is only available at Manpower Service Commission area office level. The results of a sample survey of youngsters who left youth training schemes in mid and south Glamorgan between July and September 1984 showed that 44 per cent. went into full-time employment.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the cost of the youth training scheme in mid-Glamorgan and the constituency of Caerphilly, respectively, in each year since its inception.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is only available at Manpower Services Commission area office level. The operational cost of the youth training scheme excluding administration in mid and south Glamorgan is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	6·641
1984-85	14·553
*1985-86	3·924

* To end June.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the take-up rate among relevant age groups of the youth training scheme in mid-Glamorgan and the Caerphilly constituency, respectively.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is not possible, given the difficulty of defining the potential client population to give accurate take-up rates. The Manpower Service Commission's programme for 1985-86 estimates that 4,195 16-year-olds, 537 17-year-olds and 192 older youngsters will enter the youth training scheme in mid-Glamorgan. By the end of June, 1,059 16-year-olds and 28 17-year-olds had entered the scheme. No older youngsters were undergoing training. Of those in training, 284 16-year-olds and 4 17-year-olds were in the Rhymney Valley. No information is available for the Caerphilly constituency.

CIVIL SERVICE

Unified Grading

Mr. Hayes asked the Minister for the Civil Service what progress he has made in extending unified grading in the Civil Service; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: At the beginning of last year a major simplification of the pay and grading structure in the senior management levels of the Civil Service took place with the introduction of unified grading down to the senior principal level (grade 6).

After careful examination, the Government have concluded that it would be right and worthwhile to extend unified grading to the principal level. This would remove formal demarcations between occupational groups, and make it easier to get the right people into the jobs for which they are best fitted, at a level at which it is particularly important to broaden experience and develop senior management talent.

The new unified grade 7 will contain over 11,000 staff who are currently in some 100 different grades. The positions of fringe bodies which normally follow Civil Service practice will again be considered on their merits.

The unions will be fully consulted about the implementation of this change and a good deal of preparatory work will need to be done. The Government hope, however, that it will be possible to implement this significant further reform by the end of the year. The necessary cost of aligning the pay of the grades concerned, including appropriate transitional arrangements, will be met from within Departments' planned public expenditure provisions.

THE ARTS

Acceptances in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether he will now make a statement regarding Her Majesty's Government's policy for payment in lieu of tax on works of art.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. and noble Friend the Minster for the Arts indicated in another place on 24 April, the Government have looked again at the arrangements whereby provision for acceptance in lieu is carried on the votes of the OAL and DOE. We have concluded that a basic provision of £2 million a year for acceptance in lieu should continue as at present, for the ordinary run of smaller cases. But recognising the difficulty of absorbing the unpredictable cost of large and important offers within a fixed annual provision, we intend in future that there should be recourse to the pubic expenditure Reserve, over and above the basic acceptance in lieu provision, for such cases when this is justified on merits.

The continuance of the basic provision does not indicate an absolute limit on what may be accepted in any one year. The Government will therefore also give the most serious consideration to all offers made, where they cannot be funded from the basic provision, provided that in the judgment of heritage Ministers and their expert advisers the heritage items on offer are of national importance so that a call on the Reserve may be merited. It will therefore be possible to accommodate these items in future without imposing an offsetting reduction in or detriment to the rest of the arts budget.

It is not possible to give an exact estimate of what might be accepted on such a basis in any one year, as too many unpredictables are involved. Looking simply at recent and current levels of acceptance in lieu offers, we would expect to call on the Reserve for around £10 million or so a year, taking one year with another. My right hon. and noble Friend emphasises strongly that this is an estimate; it is neither a target nor a limit, as in any given year the demand could be either less or more. He believes however that this arrangement will allow the intentions of the acceptance in lieu scheme to be given proper effect.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts whether the Government plan to make any changes in the rules governing the handling of income generated by national museums and galleries.

Mr. Waldegrave: As foreshadowed in its observations (Cmnd. 9127) on the Eighth Report, Session 1981-82, from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, the Government have reviewed the present system for the treatment of revenue generated by the nine national museums and galleries funded from the arts and libraries programme.

Broadly speaking, under the present system, an estimate is prepared of the gross provision to be made for each institution for its general running costs in the coming financial year; another estimate is made of the likely level of its receipts; and the second is subtracted from the first to produce the net vote provision. If the institution earns more than the expected receipts, it may spend the excess provided that it does so before the end of the financial year. Any excess money then remaining unspent must however be surrendered to the Exchequer. It may be "revoted" to the institution in a later year, but such revotes have to be met from within the arts and libraries programme determined for that year.

The Government intends to change this system to provide greater incentives for the national museums and galleries both to maximise their receipts (whether by the operations of their vote-financed trading activities such as shops, by charging for admission where appropriate, or in other ways) and to use these more effectively. This also should improve the institutions' ability to respond flexibly to the needs of their visitors, in hours opening and other things.

My right hon. and noble Friend shall consult the nine national museums and galleries for which he is responsible in the course of the Parliamentary Recess about proposals for a new system. The main features of these proposals are:

(a) a change from direct vote provision to grant-in-aid. The institutions will be able to carry over unspent balances at the end of the financial year within normal grant-in-aid rules;

(b) a new method of determining future annual grants, whereby the Government will in effect provide a given percentage of each institution's assessed running costs, and the institution will be expected to find the balance by its own efforts;

(c) acceptance by the Government that any receipts which an institution generates for itself, over and above its own target balance, will within normal grant-in-aid rules accrue to the benefit of the institution and will not be offset by any reduction in the amount of the Government grant for the year.

These changes should markedly improve the ability of the institutions to help themselves. When the consultations are complete, my right hon. and noble Friend will present his detailed proposals to Parliament. It will be his aim to introduce new arrangements at the start of the earliest practicable financial year, subject to any legislative or other administrative measures that may be necessary.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Salaries

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing present salaries of all those officers of the House of Commons and the House of Lords who will receive increases following acceptance of the Top Salaries Review Board proposals, showing the increases in each case.

Mr. Biffen: The present salaries of those officers of the House of Commons and the House of Lords who correspond to Civil Service Grades 1, 2 and 3 are as follows:

Department/Staff	*Present salary £*	*Corresponding Civil Service grade*
House of Lords		
Clerk of the Parliaments*	45,500	Grade 1
Clerk Assistant* Counsel to Chairman of Committees	36,500	Grade 2

Department/Staff	Present salary £	Corresponding Civil Service grade
Second Counsel to Chairman of Committees, Reading Clerk, Principal Clerks (3)	30,865	Grade 3
Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod	29,095	Grade 3
House of Commons		
2 Speaker's Counsel	30,865	Grade 3
Clerk of the House*	45,500	Grade 1
Clerk Assistant*	36,500	Grade 2
Clerk of Committees*	36,500	Grade 2
6 Principal Clerks-Grade 1	30,865	Grade 3
Serjeant at Arms	30,865	Grade 3
Librarian	30,865	Grade 3
Head of Administration Department	30,865	Grade 3

Note:

All salaries shown include £1,365 p.a. inner London weighting except those marked *.

The Treasury is currently promulgating the revised salaries for these grades and information will be available on request from the Libraries of both Houses in due course. Implementation of a Civil Service pay award for House of Commons staff would be made automatically under pay linkage arrangements agreed in 1954; formal authorisation of rates of pay for Officers of the House of Lords is a matter for the House of Lords Offices Committee.

Official Opposition (Public Funds)

Mr. Beith asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) by how much the amounts disbursed from public funds to the official Opposition in the form of benefits in kind, such as office machinery, postal services, telecommunications and travel have been increased in each of the last five years;

(2) whether, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 15 July, he will specify what office machinery, postal services, telecommunications, travel and other benefits are included in the annual sums of £1,747 and £53,970 provided for the official Opposition from public funds.

Mr. Biffen [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. 226]: The detail of the costs which have been incurred in providing services to the Official Opposition during 1984-85 is as follows:

	£
Use of the Government car service	31,458.20
House of Commons	
Office machinery, comprising: Ronescan Model 480 stencil cutter	861.51
Hire charges relating to Xerox photocopier	885.32
Cost of posting the Whip	8,908.32
House of Lords	
Cost of posting the Whip	13,157.72
Telephone rental charges (2 lines—222 3948/8663)	171.66
Telephone call charges (2 lines—222 3948/8663)	274.09

Despite an extensive search it is not possible, without employing disproportionate administrative effort, to provide, in total, the costs of these services in earlier years. What has been identified are the costs of using the Government car service and the costs of telecommunications.

These were:

	1981-82 £	1982-83 £	1983-84 £
Government car service	21,320	23,920	28,600
Telecommunications	364	494	623

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Famine Aid

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the tonnage and value of cereals which have been exported to famine areas from Great Britain during the past year; and what proportion of those exports was provided by *(a)* the national aid programme, *(b)* voluntary and charitable aid and *(c)* aid from the European Economic Community.

Mr. Raison: My Department does not keep records of the amounts of cereals provided to famine areas as food aid by voluntary and charitable organisations, nor of commercial exports. The tonnages and value of cereals procured in Britain as food aid for famine areas under the British bilateral aid programme and by the European Community are as follows:

Procurement in United Kingdom: October 1984—July 1985

	Quantity (Tonnes) (Wheat equivalent)	Approximate value f.o.b. (£ million)
United Kingdom	52,300	5·6
European Community	11,820	1·5

As well as the quantities of food aid procured in the United Kingdom under the bilateral aid programme, 74,500 tonnes of cereals (wheat equivalent) have been purchased for the same areas from other sources at a cost of £9·7 million.

St. Helena (Salary Review)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the last salary review on St. Helena took place; and if the salary commissioners' recommendations were implemented in full.

Mr. Raison: A salaries commissioner visited St. Helena from 25 October to 7 December 1984. His main recommendations concerning the introduction of a new key scale for salaries and a salaries award have been implemented, the effective date being 1 January 1985. The St. Helena Government are following up the more detailed recommendations about the structure and conditions of service of the public sector.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the average increase in public sector pay as a result of the last general salary review on St. Helena.

Mr. Raison: The average increase in public sector pay as a result of the 1984 salaries review was 21·8 per cent.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how frequently it is intended to conduct salary reviews on St. Helena in the future.

Mr. Raison: Future reviews of public service salaries will form part of the annual budgetary aid reviews.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the effects of the last salary review on St. Helena on the uprating of social welfare benefits.

Mr. Raison: Social welfare benefits have increased by 15 per cent. with effect from 1 January 1985.

RMS St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to improve conditions for fare-paying passengers on the crossing by the RMS St. Helena between St. Helena and Ascension Island.

Mr. Raison: I understand that the St. Helena Shipping Company is doing all it can to provide the best possible facilities on the RMS St. Helena, at a time of exceptionally high passenger demand on the inter-island service between Ascension Island and St. Helena. It is anticipated that the level of demand will decline after the next two or three voyages, as major construction work on Ascension Island is completed.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a table setting out the total United Kingdom overseas aid to the African continent for each year since 1975 in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Raison: The information requested is as follows:

Gross public expenditure on aid and bilateral aid to African continent
Current and constant 1984 prices
(using the United Kingdom GDP deflator)

Year	*Current prices* £000's	*Constant 1984 prices* £000's
1975	79,198	207,303
1976	107,336	244,860
1977	116,472	233,299
1978	176,698	318,493
1979	230,661	362,980
1980	256,965	337,652
1981	266,758	313,524
1982	247,161	271,093
1983	235,538	245,438
1984	265,769	265,769

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase United Kingdom aid to underdeveloped countries for 1985-86 by an amount sufficient to match increases made by other European countries and to meet the United Nations' target of 0·76 per cent. of gross national product.

Mr. Raison: The allocation for 1985-86 remains as published in the 1985 White Paper on Public Expenditure at £1,130 million.

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the United Kingdom's total expenditure on overseas aid as a proportion of gross national product in 1984-85; and what information he has as to the equivalent figures for the Netherlands, France and Norway, respectively.

Mr. Raison: The OECD publish figures of donors' aid performance on a calendar year basis. The figure for the United Kingdom in 1984 expressed as a percentage of GNP was 0·33 per cent. For technical reasons there are fluctuations in donors' aid performances unrelated to changes in actual aid expenditure. In aid spending terms the figure for 1984 was 0·35 per cent. This was the same as for 1983 and is close to the OECD average of 0·36 per cent. Equivalent figures for the Netherlands in 1984 are 1·02 per cent., France 0·77 per cent. (including aid to the Dependencies) and Norway 0·99 per cent.

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest estimate of the outturn on overseas aid expenditure for 1985-86; and what change in real terms this represents in comparison with the outturn figures for 1984-85.

Mr. Raison: The sum available for spending on the aid programme in 1985-86 is £1,205 million. This compares with a provisional outturn figure of £1,165 million in 1984-85. What change in cost terms this would represent depends on the rate of inflation over the rest of the year.

Famine Relief

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it remains the intention of the European Council to deliver 1,200,000 tons of food to the drought-stricken nations of northern and east Africa as was decided at the European Council in Milan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: It is of course the Community's intention to deliver the full 1·2 million tonnes of cereals or cereal equivalent pledged at the European Council in Dublin as rapidly as possible. But we have to take account of the congestion at the ports in the countries concerned. Together with other donors we are making every effort to improve internal distribution so that we can get the food moving more rapidly from the ports.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Joint Venture Programmes)

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list European Economic Community joint venture industrial programmes and itemise the financial contribution from the United Kingdom to each programme in *(a)* the last five years and *(b)* the last 10 years.

Mr. Channon: There are no community industrial programmes of the type described in the question.

Aid and Trade

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will revise the Government's policy on initiation within the aid and trade provision to enable the United Kingdom to initiate on all possible projects rather than attempt to match competitive terms already offered by other countries.

Mr. Channon: There is no initiation in suitable cases on the Government initiating within the aid and trade provision but, within limited resources, we must also retain scope to match the aid offers of competitors which could undermine the ability of our companies to win on merit.

Korea

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what extent United Kingdom garment, fabric, textile, and clothing exports to Korea are limited by import bans.

Mr. Channon: A variety of yarns, woven fabrics of wool and other animal hair, carpets and silk garments are still restricted import items in the Republic of Korea, and in these cases an import licence is only issued against a certificate of import recommendation from the designated Korean trade association or Ministry. The Korean authorities intend to remove a further range of these goods from the list of restricted items in July 1986.

Chemists (Retail Price Maintenance)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to abolish retail price maintenance for chemists.

Mr. Fletcher: No. Under the resale prices legislation, the Director-General of Fair Trading must demonstrate prima facie evidence of a material change in the relevant circumstances before he may apply to the restrictive practices court to review its judgment exempting ethical and proprietary pharmaceuticals from the general ban on resale price maintenance.

Steel

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the figures for the consumption of steel in the United Kingdom since 1979; and what is the estimate for 1985-86.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is as follows:

United Kingdom consumption of finished steel products

	million tonnes
1979	15·48
1980	12·77
1981	12·44
1982	12·30
1983	11·62
1984	11·44

Source: Department of Trade and Industry. Quarterly Inquiry into Steel Stocks and Consumption.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the latest figures for crude steel production and effective capacity for European Economic Community countries plus Japan, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is as follows:

	Crude steel production 1985 January-May million tonnes	*Production potential 1983 million tonnes*
Belgium	4·6	17·0
Denmark	0·2	0·9
France	8·3	28·8
Greece	*0·3	4·0
Irish Republic	0·1	0·3
Italy	10·3	39·6
Luxembourg	1·7	6·4
Netherlands	2·2	8·0
United Kingdom	6·7	24·5
West Germany	16·9	61·4
Japan	44·7	n.a.
USSR†	†154·3	n.a.
USA	34·3	135·0

*January-April.
†1984 as a whole.
Sources: International Iron and Steel Institute; ECSC investment in the Community coalmining and iron and steel industries; ECE steel market report.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will give the latest figures for employment costs per tonne of steel produced by the British Steel Corporation and the index of wholesale prices for steel in dollar terms.

Mr. Butcher: The British Steel Corporation's total employment costs were £50 per tonne of liquid steel in the financial year 1984-85. The index of producer prices for iron and steel in dollar terms was 92 in June 1985, based on 1980 = 100.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will give the latest figures for finished steel imports as a percentage of total deliveries to the United Kingdom market for *(a)* rods and bars, *(b)* wire rods, *(c)* other light rolled sections, *(d)* heavy rails, *(e)* other heavy rolled products, *(f)* plates, *(g)* sheets, *(h)* hot rolled strip, *(i)* cold rolled strip, *(j)* template and *(k)* tubes and pipes.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the available information:

United Kingdom Imports of Finished Steel as a Percentage of Total Deliveries to the United Kingdom Market*

	1985 Q1 per cent.
Rods and Bars	
For reinforcement	17
In coil	18
Straight lengths (hot rolled and cold reduced)	23
Sections (including rails)	
80 mm and over	10
Less than 80 mm	25
Plate (including wide coil under 3 mm thick)	31
Sheets (coated and uncoated)	40
Strip	
Hot rolled under 600 mm wide	11
Cold rolled under 500 mm wide	25
Tinplate and blackplate	20
Tubes and pipes all sizes	21

* Producers deliveries to United Kingdom consumers and stockholders, plus imports.
Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will give the latest figures

for crude steel produced per process worker in European Economic Community countries, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the available information.

Crude Steel Production per Man-Year

tonnes

	1984	*1985* Not seasonally adjusted*
Belgium	292	304
Denmark	343	296
France	216	240
Greece	224	†256
Ireland	237	315
Italy	294	332
Luxembourg	314	328
Netherlands	307	286
United Kingdom	244	263
West Germany	252	266
Japan	†360	n/a
USA	‡228	n/a

* Based on production and total employment in January-May 1985 and expressed at an annual rate.
† 1983.
‡ 1982.
Source: Eurostat; ECE steel market report.

Product Liability

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made on the draft European Commission directive on product liability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: The directive on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of all member states concerning liability for defective products was adopted yesterday by the Council of Ministers. I am very pleased that this long awaited measure of harmonisation and consumer protection has now been agreed. The directive was held up for several years over disagreements between member states about the "development risks" or "state of the art" defence, and financial limts on liability. But a package has now been agreed which allows us to introduce the regime we have been seeking to secure for so long. There will be a development risks defence but no total limit on liability, and although member states will be able to adopt different positions on these two points, the directive as a whole represents a very significant step towards harmonisation of European law in this field.

We must now implement the directive within three years, which we shall do after full consultations with all concerned. In ten years' time the operation of the directive will be reviewed to see if there is a need for even closer harmonisation.

Regional Grants (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what sums were paid in regional development grants to firms in the Grimsby travel-to-work area in each year since 1977.

Mr. Trippier: Payments of £25,000 or less under the old regional development grant scheme cannot be attributed to any unit smaller than a planning region. Grimsby travel-to-work area is not eligible for the new RDG scheme which was introduced on 29 November 1984. The totals of payments of regional development grant of over £25,000 in respect of assets on premises in the Grimsby travel-to-work area since 1977 are given in the following table.

Regional Development Grant (Part II of the Industrial Development Act 1982)

Year	*Grant paid £'000*
1977	541
1978	2,817
1979	1,036
1980	1,888
1981	3,426
1982	2,087
1983	2,435
1984	4,533
1985*	223

* January to June.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the total public expenditure incurred by each member state of the European Economic Community in support of the promotion and maintenance of overseas trade.

Mr. Channon: Information is not available to permit precise and reliable comparisons. The evidence suggests, however, that the range of services available to exporters through the British Overseas Trade Board are broadly comparable with those available to our European competitors.

COCOM (Agreements)

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry *(a)* what proportion of British exports are based on technology covered by the new COCOM agreements and *(b)* what percentage of such exports are based on research carried out or funded by United States institutions or corporations; and what estimates he has made for changes in the proportions of *(a)* and *(b)* above in each of the next three years.

Mr. Channon: The information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

Information Technology

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the National Economic Development Office about the statistical base used by his Department for the study of the information technology industry; and what reply he is making.

Mr. Butcher: I am unaware of any such representations by the National Economic Development Office.

British Overseas Trade Board (South Africa)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in the light of the imposition of emergency powers in South Africa, he will review the policy of supporting through the British Overseas Trade Board trade missions to South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: BOTB support for trade missions to South Africa continues to be available, as elsewhere.

Paper and Board

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the quantities of exports of paper and board from the United Kingdom to the rest of the European Economic Community in 1983 and 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The United Kingdom exported 248,000 metric tonnes of paper and board to the rest of the European Community in 1983, and 310,000 metric tonnes in 1984. (*Source:* SITC/R2 Group 641, less Sub-group 641.6 and Item 641.97, in the UK Overseas Trade Statistics.)

Sumrie Clothes plc

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the answer of 23 July, when he expects to be in a position to announce whether any action is to be taken in respect of alleged breaches of the Companies Act by Sumrie Clothes plc of Leeds.

Mr. Fletcher: As soon as possible.

Pharmaceuticals (Patents)

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he proposes to take to seek to restore the effective patent life of pharmaceutical products; what action he intends to take to stimulate the innovative sector of the pharmaceutical industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: A paper setting out the pharmaceutical industry's case for extending the patent life of pharmaceutical products has been referred to the Government's Standing Advisory Committee on Patents to obtain the views of industry generally. We are also seeking the views of the Department of Health and Social Security. As to other action that might be taken to stimulate the innovative sector of the pharmaceutical industry, this is primarily a matter for my colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Security which sponsors the pharmaceutical industry.

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the pharmaceutical industry relating to the licensing of right provisions of the Patents Act 1977; why the United Kingdom position remains different from the European Community matters in the context of the European patent convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: A paper has been received from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry on the issue of licence of right provisions of the Patents Act 1977.

The European patent convention provides for a patent term of 20 years. The 1977 Act brought United Kingdom patent law into line by providing the same term for patents granted under this Act. As a transitional provision, the 1977 Act extended the patent term entitlement of patents granted under the previous (1949) Patents Act from 16 to 20 years. However, during the extended period, 1949 Act patents are subject to licences of right to cater for competitors who had made plans on the basis that they would be free to use the inventions at the end of the 16-year term.

Tractors

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what information he has as to the percentage share of the tractor market held by Japanese imports in each of the member states of the EEC other than the United Kingdom;

(2) what was the percentage of imports of tractors contributed by Japanese imports to *(a)* Europe (EEC) and *(b)* the United Kingdom over the last years for which records are kept;

(3) what information he has as to the percentage share of the European tractor market currently held by Japanese imports.

Mr. Channon: Information on the total home markets is not available. Figures in respect of the import markets are in the table.

Imports of tractors from Japan*
Per cent of total imports†

	1981	*1982*	*1983*
Belgium/Luxembourg	3·1	2·6	2·3
Denmark	2·5	1·1	0·9
France	7·1	6·7	7·6
FR Germany	2·8	3·1	2·5
Greece	4·2	2·8	8·1
Ireland	0·2	0·1	0·1
Italy	3·4	1·4	1·3
Netherlands	0·8	1·2	0·5
United Kingdom	3·2	2·3	2·3
European Community (10)	4·4	3·8	4·1
Western Europe	4·4	3·7	4·3

* Standard International Trade Classification, Subgroup 722.4
† In value terms.
Source: OECD Trade Series C.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the percentage share of the tractor market held by Japanese imports in each of the European Economic Community member countries over the last 10 years;

(2) what is the percentage share of the British tractor market held by Japanese imports.

Mr. Channon: The share of the United Kingdom market was about 2 per cent. by value, in the year ending June 1984, the latest period for which there are figures. Information for other European Community countries is not available and figures for the United Kingdom market in earlier years are not immediately obtainable.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the percentage of the Japanese market for tractors held by *(a)* British imports to Japan, *(b)* other European imports and *(c)* United States imports.

Mr. Channon: Data on the Japanese market (including home production) are not available. The shares of Japanese imports are in the table.

Japanese imports of tractors 1984*

Share† from	*Per cent.*
United Kingdom	53

Share† from	Per cent.
Other Western European countries	40
United States of America	6

* Standard International Trade Classification, Subgroup 722.4.
† In value terms.
Source: OECD Trade Series C.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current level of tariffs on Japanese tractor imports into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: The rates of customs duty chargeable in 1985 on imports of tractors from Japan are:

Tariff Heading	Description	Rate per cent.
87.01	Tractors (other than those falling within heading 87.07), whether or not fitted with power take-offs, winches or pulleys:	
A.	Agricultural walking tractors, with either a spark ignition or a compression ignition engine, of a cylinder capacity of:	
I.	1,000 cm ^{3} or less	4·8
II.	More than 1,000 cm ^{3}	6·6
B.	Agricultural tractors (excluding walking tractors) and forestry tractors, wheeled:	10·9
C. Other:		
I.	Wheeled, for semi-trailers:	20·0
II.	Other:	11·8
87.07	Works trucks, mechanically propelled, of the types used in factories, warehouses, dock areas or airports for short distance transport or handling of goods (for example, platform trucks, fork lift trucks, and straddle carriers); tractors of the type used on railway station platforms; parts of the foregoing vehicles:	
C.	Other trucks: Tractors:	
I.	Fitted with self-actuated lifting equipment:	5·4
II.	Other:	6·9

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Tariff 1985.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current level of tariff on British exports of tractors into the Japanese market.

Mr. Channon: The bulk of British tractors imported into Japan are free of duty, the exception being those of four wheeled type road tractors with nominal horse power less than 50 hp not for agricultural use, which carry a duty of 5·8 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on what occasions in the last 10 years United Kingdom Ministers have discussed Japanese agricultural machinery tractor exports to the United Kingdom and EEC with Japanese ministers.

Mr. Channon: This information is not available in the form requested but in recent years British Ministers have had frequent contacts with Japanese Ministers on a variety of topics.

Japan (Imports)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what regular formal channels exist for discussing Japanese import levels into the United Kingdom with Japanese Government representatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: There are frequent discussions at Ministerial and official level between the United Kingdom and Japanese authorities, as well as regular talks between the European Community and Japan, on all aspects of our trade relations, including the trade imbalance.

Korean Goods (Fraudulent Marketing)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make representations to the Government of the United States of America seeking measures to prevent the Union Jack being used as a trade-mark and advertising logo for goods made in South Korea and marketed in the United States of America.

Mr. Pattie: Under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the United States of America and Republic of Korea are obliged to prohibit the use of national flags as trade marks without authorisation. If the hon. Member is able to provide specific instances of such use of the Union Jack, officials will take appropriate action.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make representations to the Government of the United States of America about measures to prevent South Korean goods being fraudulently marketed in the United States of America as having been made in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: In cases where South Korean goods are known to be fraudulently marketed as having been made in the United Kingdom representations are made to the Korean authorities. If there were known to be cases arising of such goods being sold in the United States of America the United States authorities would also be alerted.

Austrian Wine

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the total annual imports of Austrian table wines for sale in Britain in each of the last five years.

Mr. Channon: Available information relating to United Kingdom imports of wine from Austria is as follows:

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Value £000s (cif)	488	583	502	558	635
Volume (thousand litres)	935	1,048	867	970	909

Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Item 112.12 in the UK Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note: 1984 figures are provisional.

Radio Investigation Service

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the review of the radio investigation service has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The review of the radio investigation service has now been completed and the consequent action

document has been agreed. The review was thorough and detailed—containing 128 separate recommendations. A copy is being placed in the Library of both Houses.

The recommendations have been almost entirely accepted, a few with minor qualifications. Many of the recommendations on improving procedure and management control have already been implemented and action on the balance is well under way. A few which had broad application outside the RIS have been taken up in wider reviews of specific aspects of the work of the radio regulatory division of the Department of Trade and Industry. These relate to the organisation of international work and the division's outstations.

I am glad to say that as a result of the changes recommended more resources will be devoted to dealing with pollution of the radio spectrum by those who operate without licences and those who abuse their licence conditions. The staff of the RIS have already begun to step up enforcement action in this field and much more will follow. I strongly urge all those who may currently be operating without a licence or without proper regard to their licence conditions to put their position right as soon as possible. The penalties are severe and it is often necessary to seize and obtain equipment as evidence for prosecution. Moreover the penalty may not be of a once and for all nature. We do revoke the licences of people who persistently cause a nuisance to other radio users.

This increased enforcement activity will be undertaken by a RIS staff of 240 compared with 340 before the Department took over the running of the RIS. The reduction has been largely managed by recruiting only selectively to replace staff who elected to stay with BT and by natural wastage. The switch in resources to enforcement will be achieved by a phased withdrawal from the time-consuming and largely fruitless effort currently put into dealing with domestic TV and radio reception problems. The majority of cases of this sort dealt with by the RIS involve sets lacking adequate immunity, improperly tuned or maintained sets or are cases where an external aerial is lacking or of poor quality or where the reception problems are so intermittent as not to be observed by the RIS. In none of these cases can the RIS effect a cure although they can sometimes tell the complainant what his problem is and how it could be cured. Often people have had to wait many weeks for a visit an they are understandably unhappy when told that fault lies with their equipment an that they need to contact their dealer, manufacturer or service engineer.

The review committee recommends a number of steps to deal with the issue and I have decided as follows:

1. The Department will publish a comprehensive booklet with full colour illustrations enabling most people to carry out simply and safe diagnosis of their domestic TV or radio reception problems. There will be a technical section for TV dealers and repairers. The booklet will be available from post offices in about three weeks time.

2. BS 905 which provides minimum immunity standards for TV will be incorporated in legally binding regulations as soon as possible. This will make it an offence to sell, manufacture, or import TVs which do not comply with the standard.

3. With immediate effect a call-out charge of £21 will have to be paid before the RIS will pay a visit to diagnose the cause of domestic TV or radio reception problems. Requests received by post bearing a postmark of today's date or earlier will not attract this charge.

4. In addition visits will not be made unless the apparatus has an external aerial and a log of reception problems has been completed as required by the existing form used when requesting a visit from the RIS. A revised version of this form will be included with the new booklet.

5. I propose to copy the names and addresses of all those seeking assistance with TV reception problems to the National TV Licence and Record Office; I do not believe that any service at all should be offered to those who pay no licence fee.

6. With effect from 1 Janaury 1987 the RIS will only pay a visit to deal with domestic TV and radio reception problems when such a visit can be combined with other journeys and a dealer has provided a written report stating that he has been unable to effect a remedy.

7. With effect from 1 January 1988 (or one year after regulations have been made on BS 905) the RIS will only visit to diagnose reception problems caused to sets which comply with that standard.

8. With immediate effect, all business and service users will be charged a commercial rate for RIS advice and remedial work on their radio communications systems other than that related to RIS enforcement responsibilities.

In the short time the RIS has been incorporated in the Department I have been impressed by the vigour and efficiency the staff has shown in cleaning up the airwaves on a number of radio bands. I am confident that they will soon have a significant impact on the problems experienced by business users of radio.

I also believe that the best interests of the domestic users of TV and radio will be served by making available the new booklet which will help them diagnose their problems and by handing over this category of work to the private sector where it belongs. I hope that TV and radio repair businesses and manufacturers will take up the opportunity to provide an improved service to the consumer. My officials will be discussing this with appropriate trade organisations.

The RIS will be happy to organise training sessions to the trade on TV and radio reception problems when there is any significant demand.

Domestic Cookers

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made on making regulations to limit the maximum outside temperature of domestic gas and electric cookers.

Mr. Fletcher: In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon on 2 May, I said that I intended to have regulations ready in draft in June. This has not proved possible but discussions with industry, consumer and medical interests have led to a measure of agreement on the content of the proposed regulations and regulations will be laid before the House at the first possible opportunity.

Wide Area Paging

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received the Director-General of Oftel's advice on the future of bands I and III and on wide area paging; what conclusions he has reached in the light of this advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 June 1985, c. *506*]: Both my Department and Oftel have received a number of representations about the difficulties faced by prospective applicants for trunked private mobile radio networks in band III in completing their applications by the original deadlines.

I am anxious that no time should be lost in establishing pmr services in band III but it would be wrong to ignore

the comments that have been received. In the circumstances I have consulted the Director-General of Telecommunications and he has agreed to extend the period for receiving applications for national trunked pmr services to 1 October 1985 and for trunked pmr services in the London area to 1 November 1985. The Director-General of Telecommunications will still make his recommendations to me on national trunked pmr services by the end of the year. For the services in London he will make his recommendations by 1 February 1986. The date for making applications to my Department for local trunked pmr networks outside London will also be put back to 1 November.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Senior Lecturer Post

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has discussed with the University Grants Committee the recognition of the senior lecturer post as the career grade in universities.

Mr. Brooke: No.

Maintained Schools

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest available cost of employing teachers in maintained schools as a proportion of *(a)* total costs of such schools and *(b)* total costs excluding capital expenditure; and what were the comparable figures five and 10 years previously.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the following table:

Expenditure on the salaries of teaching staff in schools—England*

	As a percentage of total net recurrent and Capital expenditure on schools Per cent.	*As a percentage of total net recurrent expenditure on schools Per cent.*
1973-74	49·5	65·3
1978-79	56·5	63·6
1983-84	59·9	66·1

* Salaries include employers' contributions to National Insurance and Superannuation.

Finer Committee Report

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Dunn: There is no recommendation in the report on which action remains outstanding for the Department.

16 and 17-year-olds

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children aged 16 and 17 years are currently in the labour market and how many are *(a)* being educated and *(b)* under youth training schemes and so on.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall write to the hon. Member.

British Youth Council

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the present composition of the British Youth Council, the organisations represented and the number of delegates each has to the council; and if he will publish details of the involvement of youth sections of political parties in the British Youth Council.

Mr. Dunn: Details of organisations in membership of the British Youth Council at the last council meeting in March this year, together with the number of delegates each was entitled to send to that meeting are set out as follows, divided into three categories, non political organisations, local youth councils and party political organisations.

Member Organisation	*Delegates*
Non political organisations	
Anglican Young People's Association	2
Association of Jewish 6th Formers	2
Association for Jewish Youth	5
Bnei Akiva	2
Boys Brigade	7
Catholic Youth Service Council	10
Church of England Young People's Assembly	9
Church of Scotland: Department of Education	5
Eighteen Plus	3
English Speaking Union	2
Girls Brigade	6
Girls Brigade (Scotland)	3
Girl Guide Association	10
Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade	2
Methodist Association of Youth Clubs	7
National Association of Boys Clubs	7
National Association of Asian Youth	3
National Association of Youth Clubs	10
National Baptist Youth Assembly	6
National Federation Young Farmers Clubs	6
National Union of Miners (Scottish)	2
National Union of Students	10
Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied	4
Scottish Association Young Farmers Clubs	2
Scottish Girls Venture Corps	3
Scottish Young Men's Christian Association	5
Scottish Trades Union Council	6
Scout Association	10
Student Christian Movement	2
Union of Jewish Students	3
United Nations Association: Youth	2
Urdd Gobaith Cymru	6
United Reformed Church	6
Woodcraft Folk	4
Young Christian Workers	4
Young Friends Central Committee	2
Young Men's Christian Association	6
Young Women's Christian Association	5
Youth Hostel Association	7
Local Youth Councils (1 delegate per youth council)	
Barrow and District Youth Council	
Basildon Youth Council	
Bolton Council of Youth	
Bury St. Edmunds Youth Forum	
Chelmsford District Youth Council	
Croydon Youth Council	
Gateshead Youth Forum	
North East Derbyshire Youth Council	
North Tyneside Youth Forum	
Otley Youth Council	
Ryde Area Youth Forum	
Sutton Young People's Council	
Swindon Youth Council	
Telford Youth Council	
Walsall and District Youth Council	
Wansbeck Youth Council	

Member Organisation	Delegates
Party political organisations	
Labour Party Young Socialists	3
National League of Young Liberals	3
National Organisation of Labour Students	3
Social Democrat Party Students	3
Union of Liberal Students	3
Young Communist League	2
Young Fabians	2
Young Social Democrats	3

Hearing-Impaired Children

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether, following the announcement of the intention to consider regional and national planning in relation to the educational provision for hearing-impaired children, support for this exercise has been forthcoming from national voluntary organisations and local education authorities;

(2) why the discussion document "Provision for Hearing-Impaired Children in Special Schools," about regional and national planning, was restricted to a consideration of special schools;

(3) if he will make it his policy to consider plans for the development of special school provision, for the deaf within the context of the overall pattern of special educational provision;

(4) if he has considered the recommendations made by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf in regard to the planning of educational provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The responsibility for securing the provision of sufficient and suitable schools for their area lies with the individual local education authorities. In this instance, the Department initiated consultations because there are so few special schools for deaf and partially hearing pupils that some national co-ordination was needed. By involving the individual local authorities, regional conferences and voluntary bodies, it was possible to take account of local developments in special education other than in the special schools. My right hon. Friend is grateful to all the bodies which have co-operated so willingly over the past three years.

The document submitted on 20 May 1985 by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf makes a number of suggestions which go well beyond the scope of the present consultation. My right hon. Friend will certainly take account of its comments in coming to conclusions about the future organisation of special schools.

Wages and Salaries

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the changes which have taken place within *(a)* Stockport education authority, *(b)* Manchester education authority, and *(c)* local education authorities as a whole between 1978 and the last year for which figures are available in respect of (i) the total number of teaching staff employed and the wages bill in respect of such staff and (ii) the total number of non-teaching staff employed and the wages bill in respect of such staff.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect information about the number of non-teaching staff employed by local education authorities. The other information that has been requested is given in the following table:

	Stockport LEA	Manchester LEA	England
Number of teachers			
as at January 1979	2,672	5,786	459,516
as at January 1984	2,627	4,768	430,109
Teachers' Salaries (1983-84 Real Terms)			
1978-79 (£ million)	26·97	59·04	4,619·4
1983-84 (£ million)	28·40	52·22	4,751·5
Non-teaching Staff Salaries (1983-84 Real Terms)			
1978-79 (£ million)	3·97	12·32	814·77
1983-84 (£ million)	4·00	11·93	840·12

Notes:

1. The figures refer to Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools.

2. 1983-84 Real terms are the cash figures for 1978-79 adjusted by the Gross Domestic Product at Market Price Deflator with 1983-84=100.

National Council for Educational Standards

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the National Council for Educational Standards falls within his Department's guidelines for grant purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department has limited resources committed to providing grants for selected specific educational services and research, which are relevant to the development of the Government's educational policies. I announced last November the nature of research into the factors affecting standards in schools which the Department might be willing to fund if suitable proposals were submitted. The National Council for Educational Standards have not submitted a proposal in response to that announcement and have not received grant from the Department.

Migraine

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research his Department is currently sponsoring into the causes and treatment of migraine.

Mr. Brooke: The Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, is the main Government agency for the promotion of medical research in the United Kingdom. I understand that the MRC is currently supporting five research projects on and relevant to migraine. The council is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for support through its grants schemes in competition with other applicants.

In addition to the work supported by the MRC, research work on and relevant to migraine may also be conducted in universities and medical schools using funds allocated for teaching and research on the advice of the University Grants Committee but details of such work are not collected centrally.

"Reform of Social Security"

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what study his Department has made of the

effects the proposals in the Green Paper concerning the reform of social security in respect of student eligibility for housing and other benefits will have on student take-up of places and wastage rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend would not expect take-up or wastage rates to be affected by the implementation of the Green Paper proposals concerning the eligibility of students for housing and other benefits. These proposals are to be considered further by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, and both our Departments will participate with other interested Departments in discussion of any measures involving students.

Curriculum

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire North-East of 16 July, whether he is satisfied that no local education authorities are currently levying charges for the participation in activities which constitute part of the school curriculum, in contravention of section 61(1) of the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that all complaints about possible breaches of section 61 will be fully investigated. No such complaints in respect of action by LEAs are currently before the Department.

Deep Earth Sampling

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 8 July, *Official Report*, column *352*, if he will list the sources from which the Natural Environment Research Council is seeking contributions towards the United Kingdom's subscription to full membership of the Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling; what is Her Majesty's Government, policy towards the possibility of partially meeting the cost of the United Kingdom's subscription from public funds providing that a matching contribution can be obtained from other sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: While discussions continue it would be inappropriate to give further details of sources being approached, beyond those already given. My right hon. Friend hopes that it will prove possible to put together enough money from the public and private sectors to enable the United Kingdom to become a full member of the ocean drilling programme.

Surrey, South-West

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per child in real terms in each of the last five years in primary and secondary schools in Surrey, South-West on *(a)* books, *(b)* maintenance and repair and *(c)* equipment.

Mr. Dunn: Separate information about the expenditure by areas within local education authorities is not available centrally. The information for Surrey, however, is set out in the table.

Unit Costs (£) real terms
Surrey

Expenditure on	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Primary					
Books	4·2	4·4	3·9	4·4	4·4
Repairs and maintenance of buildings and grounds	33·4	32·5	21·6	32·1	34·2
Educational equipment	10·4	10·1	8·8	11·2	10·2
Secondary					
Books	8·5	7·7	7·8	8·7	11·4
Repairs and maintenance of buildings and grounds	43·6	43·5	26·3	39·4	39·6
Educational equipment	17·5	17·5	17·3	23·2	23·6

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average pupil to teacher ratio in primary and secondary schools for Surrey, South-West; and how this compares with the ratio during the last five years.

Mr. Dunn: Pupil/teacher ratios for south west Surrey are not available centrally. The pupil/teacher ratio in maintained primary and secondary schools in Surrey for the five years 1980 to 1984 are as follows:

Pupil/teacher ratios in maintained schools in Surrey

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Primary* schools	21·7	21·4	22·2	22·1	22·5
Secondary* schools	16·3	16·3	16·5	16·4	16·4

* Including middle as deemed.

British Academy

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from employers regarding the adequacy of notice given by the British Academy of employees who are recipients of post-graduate awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: None. The release of a particular student is a matter for the student to negotiate with the employer and with the university concerned. The distribution of studentships cannot be decided until the year's degree results are known.

School Meals

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have made the reduction in school meals costs which the Government's expenditure plans envisage.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's plans, framed in the light of the Education Act 1980, which gave local education authorities greater discretion over the service provided, envisaged a 35 per cent. reduction in cash expenditure on school meals between 1979-80 and 1983-84, the latest year for which out-turn figures are available. Five authorities have attained reductions in excess of that figure and several others have got close to it. They have achieved that result through a variety of measures, including efficiency savings, letting contracts to the private sector and exercising the discretion offered in the 1980 Act to provide meals only for those pupils to whom they are required to provide them free. If other local education authorities did more to make their school meals service cost-effective and to reduce its net cost, they would be able to maintain the standard of their education service at a lower cost to the rate-payer.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *310-311*, whether he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage changes in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates; and if he will provide similar information for the periods between 1980-81 and 1981-82 *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding these amounts.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: The percentage changes in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in the level of home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, provision for capital-in-recurrent expenditure and local authority rates for the periods 1981-82 to 1982-83 and 1982-83 to 1983-84 are given in columns (3) and (4) below. These figures also exclude additions made for the IT and new blood programmes. Similar information for the period 1980-81 to 1981-82 *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding these amounts is given in columns (1) and (2) below respectively. The percentage changes shown will in part reflect the withdrawal of the overseas student subsidy.

	Percentage change (Academic years)			
University	1980-81 to 1981-82 (1)	1980-81 to 1981-82 (2)	1981-82 to 1982-83 (3)	1982-83 to 1983-84 (4)
Aston	+1·9	−13·5	−1·0	−2·6
Bath	+7·3	+2·6	+7·1	+4·9
Birmingham	+1·0	−3·7	+3·4	+3·8
Bradford	−2·6	−14·0	−1·1	−2·4
Bristol	+4·4	−3·8	+4·2	+4·4
Brunel	+7·3	−4·0	+1·9	+2·9
Cambridge	+2·3	−0·1	+6·1	+4·6
City	+2·0	−7·0	+1·5	+2·5
Durham	+8·2	−0·4	+8·0	+5·8
East Anglia	+13·2	+8·2	+2·6	+0·2
Essex	−0·8	−6·2	+0·8	+2·2
Exeter	−3·2	−7·5	+7·1	+3·4
Hull	+4·9	−6·0	+3·4	+3·1
Keele	−4·6	−12·9	−2·9	−3·0
Kent	+5·6	−6·1	+2·5	+0·6
Lancaster	+0·8	−4·2	+4·4	+6·0
Leeds	+3·2	−3·1	+3·6	+4·2
Leicester	+6·6	−0·4	+6·0	+7·1
Liverpool	+1·3	−5·2	+3·4	+4·4
London Graduate School of Business Studies	+19·8	+27·0	+12·8	+12·6
London University	+5·3	−3·7	+3·4	+4·4
Loughborough	+3·7	−0·1	+1·1	+6·0
Manchester Business School	+3·0	−11·6	+2·0	0·0
Manchester	+5·9	−3·0	+1·4	+4·1
University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology	−6·9	−9·9	−3·7	+0·6
Newcastle	+4·8	−1·4	+6·2	+5·3
Nottingham	+5·1	−3·1	+5·3	+4·4
Oxford	+1·0	−1·5	+5·1	+5·7
Reading	+0·1	−2·2	+3·9	+3·2
Salford	−13·4	−19·9	−6·3	−7·2
Sheffield	+8·3	−1·9	+4·1	+5·0
Southampton	+4·3	−1·3	+5·1	+4·4
Surrey	−5·7	−8·9	+2·2	+1·4
Sussex	+0·1	−6·6	+2·7	+2·1
Warwick	+1·8	−2·0	+4·1	+4·0
York	+13·6	+2·0	+9·7	+6·1
Aberystwyth U.C.	+3·5	−4·5	+2·8	+2·7
Bangor U.C.	+5·5	−5·3	+6·0	+3·6
Cardiff U.C.	+0·1	−2·1	+3·9	+3·2
St. David's Lampeter	+12·9	−1·6	+6·5	+16·0
Swansea U.C.	+3·6	−4·6	+2·5	+3·3
University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology	−2·0	−7·0	+7·5	+1·3
Welsh National School of Medicine	+5·3	−1·9	+6·1	+7·7
Aberdeen	+4·7	−7·0	+2·6	+2·2
Dundee	+5·2	−4·3	+3·0	+3·7
Edinburgh	+8·5	−0·9	+5·0	+6·0
Glasgow	+12·4	−1·0	+7·2	+6·1
Heriot-Watt	+8·5	−2·0	+5·7	+5·3
St. Andrews	+7·9	−7·1	+3·5	+4·4
Stirling	−0·1	−10·2	+2·1	+3·4
Strathclyde	+14·2	−4·1	+4·6	+2·5

Note. Columns (2), (3) and (4) are on the same basis as each other; col. (1) is on the same basis as the figures in the reply of 24 June at cols. *310-311*.

EMPLOYMENT

Abbeystead Explosion

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Health and Safety Executive about the Abbeystead explosion; what other comments he has received; what response he is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend and I have not received representations from the Health and Safety

Executive. We received a number of comments during the inquiry and before the executive's report was published but have received none since then. I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) on 7 February 1985 when the report was published.

Unemployed Persons (Registration)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people in Stockport and in Greater Manchester had registered details of their skill and experience at jobcentres at the most recent date for which the information is available: and what proportion those numbers represented of the total registered as unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 7 June 1985 there were 43,745 jobseekers registered at jobcentres in the greater Manchester metropolitan county of whom 994 were registered at the Stockport jobcentre. These figures include a small number of employed people seeking a change of employment. Unemployed people are no longer required to register at the jobcentre as a condition of claiming benefit; nor is it necessary to register for employment in order to use the jobcentre. It should not be assumed that these figures represent all the jobseekers in the area who are actively looking for work. Large numbers of jobseekers regularly use the self-service display areas from where 65 per cent. of the vacancies notified to jobcentres are filled.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Ealing, North and the London borough of Ealing and of the Greater London Council area had registered details of their skills and experience at jobcentres at the most recent date for which the information is available; what proportion of those numbers represented of the total registered as unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Fishermen (Redundancy)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of fishermen contributing to the redundancy fund in 1975, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1982 and 1983 and the minimum individual total of contributions in each year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I regret that this information is not available. It is only since April 1982 that any employee has contributed to the redundancy fund. The fund has for most of its existence been financed by an allocation from the secondary class 1 earnings-related contributions paid by employers in respect of employed earners. From April 1982 there has been an allocation from the employee's contribution. The amounts paid respectively by the employer and the employee are currently 0·15 per cent. and 0·25 per cent. of earnings. There are no figures which would enable contributions by fishermen to be analysed separately.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many fishermen have *(a)* been made redundant and *(b)* receive compensation for redundancy since 1 January 1982, by ports; and how many ex gratia payments have been made by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No information is available on the number of fishermen made redundant or of redundancy payments made to fishermen separately, either in aggregate or by port, before July 1984. An ex gratia payment was made in one case in January 1985.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the code of practice and instructions given to officials dealing with fisherman's redundancy cases in 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982 and 1984.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have not been instructions relating specifically to fishermen's redundancy cases.

Grimsby (Redundancies)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundancies were notified to his Department in the Grimsby travel-to-work area in each year from 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in the Grimsby jobcentre area†—1979 to June 1985*

	Number
1979	nil
1980	1,005
1981	1,886
1982	880
1983	1,436
1984	1,081
1985‡	78

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† The Grimsby jobcentre area approximates very closely to the Grimsby travel-to-work area.

‡ January to June. Includes provisional figures for May and June 1985.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to seek to ensure that public sector employers match the percentage quota of registered disabled staff currently employed by the private sector.

Mr. Alan Clark: As my hon. Friend will know, Government departments on average employ a higher percentage of registered disabled persons than the private sector. As to other public sector employers, staff of the Manpower Services Commission regularly remind them of their duties and obligations under the quota scheme, both during contacts connected with the resettlement of individual registered disabled people and on regular visits to promote employment opportunities for disabled people generally. These efforts have been given added impetus by the publication of the code of practice on the employment of disabled people, which also reminds employers of their responsibilities under the scheme. In addition I wrote last November to Ministerial colleagues asking them to draw the code to the attention of the public sector organisations for which they are responsibile.

South West Surrey

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have registered as willing to work, giving details of their skills and experience, at jobcentres covering south west Surrey at the most recent convenient date; how many people were registered as unemployed for the purpose of benefit in the equivalent area at the same date; and what were the equivalent figures for the same day in 1984 and 1983.

Mr. Alan Clark: In the parliamentary constituency of South West Surrey 287 people were registered for employment at jobcentres on 7 June 1985, 380 at 8 June 1984, and 1,468 at 3 June 1983. These figures include some employed people seeking a change of employment and some unemployed people not claiming benefit. Since October 1982 there has been no requirement for jobseekers to register at the jobcentres either to use the facilities or as a condition of claiming unemployment benefit. The higher figure for 1983 reflects the protracted run-down of the stock of registrations following the introduction of voluntary registrations in October 1982.

The number of unemployed persons claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary allowances or national insurance credits in the South West Surrey parliamentary constituency on 13 June 1985 was 1,537, 1,542 at 14 June 1984 and 1,595 at 9 June 1983. It is a condition of receipt of these benefits or credits that a person be unemployed and capable and available for work.

Female Unemployment

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many females under 18 years have been unemployed since they left school; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many females aged under 18 years have been unemployed since they left school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 13 June 1985 there were 44,939 female unemployed school leavers claiming unemployment benefit in the United Kingdom. In addition there were 46,828 female non-claimant school leavers registered at careers offices. While these figures relate to people under 18 who have never had a job since leaving full-time education, not all of them will necessarily have been continuously unemployed since then, for example some may have had a period out of the labour force or had a place on the youth training scheme without a contract of employment.

Bathgate

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking in the light of the evidence given to the Cooper Committee by West Lothian district council on employment in the Bathgate travel-to-work area, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Alan Clark: I understand that my hon. Friend, the Under Secretary of State for Energy, will be writing to the hon. Member shortly about this document.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many men and women were in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment in summer 1979 and the latest date in the current year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the available information for employees in employment in Great Britain. The number of female employees working full-time and part-time are identified quarterly in the official estimates, but similar figures for male employees are only available for census of employment dates.

Employees in employment, Great Britain

(thousands)

	Males		*Females*	
	Full-time	*Part-time**	*Full-time*	*Part-time**
June 1978	12,396	704	5,486	3,688
June 1979	†13,183		5,585	3,870
September 1981	11,511	718	5,304	3,781
March 1985	†11,493		4,933	4,253

* In this table an employee is classed as part-time if he is normally employed for not more than 30 hours per week, excluding main meal breaks and overtime.

† Separate estimates for full-time and part-time employees are not available for these dates; the figures refer to all male employees.

The Labour Force Survey provides information on a different basis. The following table shows the 1979 and 1984 survey estimates for full-time and part-time male and female employees.

Employees—Great Britain

(thousands)

	Males		*Females*	
	*Full-time**	*Part-time**	*Full-time**	*Part-time**
Spring 1979	12,892	277	5,317	3,705
Spring 1984	11,197	452	5,016	3,959

* In this table an employee is shown as full-time or part-time according to whether he considers his as a full-time or part-time job.

Devon

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the employed labour force in December 1984 in Devon; and what was the corresponding figure for December 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department's regular statistics do not provide estimates of the employed labour force for areas smaller than regions.

The 1981 census of population recorded 368,570 people working (employees and self employed) in Devon in April 1981. Comparative figures will become available after the census in 1991.

Cheshire

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Tatton on Tuesday 23 July about job statistics, if he will list the information given in that reply by travel-to-work area and by parliamentary constituency in the county of Cheshire.

Mr. Alan Clark: Figures showing the number of registered jobseekers are only available for jobcentre areas

and cannot be given for the areas requested. Figures showing the number of unemployed claimants in travel-to-work areas and parliamentary constituencies on 13 June 1985 are published in tables 2.4 and 2.10 respectively of the Department's "Employment Gazette" for July, which is available in the Library.

Parental Leave

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he next expects to discuss the EEC draft directives on parental leave with other EEC ministers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No further Ministerial discussions of this proposal is arranged.

Wages Councils

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now give details of the responses to the consultative paper on wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There were 792 responses received. They were classified according to their support for (1) abolition; (2) major reform; (3) retention essentially of the present arrangements. On this basis the outcome was as follows:

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Organisations			
Employer organisations with seats on wages councils	13	34	4
Other employer organisations	14	22	—
Worker organisations with seats on wages councils	—	—	8
Other worker organisations	—	4	32
Other organisations	3	16	77
Individuals			
Individual employers in wages council industries	30	29	11
Individual workers in wages council industries*	1	1	287
Other individuals	11	20	175

* Includes petitions counted as single responses.

ENERGY

Coal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what effect the rise in the exchange rate against the United States dollar since the beginning of January has had on the £ sterling price of coal imported from the United States of America.

Mr. David Hunt: Where US coal is imported under existing contracts which specify a fixed US dollar price, the appreciation of £ sterling will reduce the £ sterling price of the coal.

Nuclear Materials (Safeguards)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the United Kingdom has used its prerogative under Article 14 of the United Kingdom-International Atomic Energy Agency-Euratom Agreement, Cmnd. 6730, March 1977, to withdraw safeguarded plutonium from safeguard, for defence purposes.

Mr. Goodlad: Plutonium has been withdrawn from safeguards under this article. The material in question did not come from civil reactors.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to inform Parliament as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency and Euratom whenever safeguarded material is withdrawn for defence purposes.

Mr. Goodlad: If safeguarded material is withdrawn from safeguards both Euratom and the IAEA are informed in accordance with the terms of United Kingdom safeguards agreements. The details are supplied to these organisations on a strictly confidential basis. They are not published and it would not be in the public interest to publish them.

British Gas

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* those individuals and organisations which have been appointed from outside Her Majesty's Government to advise his Department on the proposed privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Government have to date appointed four firms to advise on the proposed privatisation of the British Gas Corporation: N M Rothschild & Sons Limited as financial advisers; Slaughter & May as legal advisers; Touche Ross & Co as tax and accountancy advisers and Cazenove & Co as stockbrokers. In addition Price Waterhouse have been jointly appointed by the Government and British Gas to act as reporting accountants.

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Energy what follow-up action has been taken by his Department in response to the Deloitte Haskins and Sells efficiency study of British Gas; whether he and British Gas accept the detailed proposals on pages 8 to 23 of that study; and if he will place in the Library a progress report of steps taken towards implementation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) on 13 February 1984. Latest information on the corporation's record in securing efficiency improvements is contained in the 1984-85 annual report and accounts. Privatisation will mean a whole new emphasis on efficiency for the benefit of consumers, shareholders and employees alike.

Plutonium

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will give details of the market value of plutonium of different isotopic qualities per kilogram weight.

Mr. Goodlad: There are very few transactions involving plutonium and no standard market prices.

Coking Coal

Mr. Ron Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will have discussions with the chairman of the National Coal Board about its plans for the future development of United Kingdom coking coal deposits and the export potential of this commodity; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has as to the plans of the National Coal Board for developing coking coal deposits in the period from 1985 to 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: Assessment of the scope to develop coking coal deposits in the United Kingdom is a matter for the National Coal Board. The Government expect the board to maximise its long term profitability by securing those sales which are profitable on a continuing basis, whether at home or overseas.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total amount of coal in stock at collieries, power stations and elsewhere in March 1978, 1981, 1983, 1984 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures are published monthly in *Energy Trends*, copies of which are available in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Data Protection Act

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to make any orders pursuant to his powers under the Data Protection Act in respect of personal information concerning health and social work.

Mr. Waddington: Yes. The Department of Health and Social Security will be issuing a consultation paper in the autumn inviting views on the possible contents of an Order to be made under section 29(1) of the Data Protection Act 1984 dealing with subject access to health data. A similar paper on an Order to be made under section 29(2) in respect of subject access to personal information concerning social work was issued on 21 June 1985, and responses to this should be received by 30 September 1985. The responses to these consultation papers will be analysed and will be taken into account in the preparation of orders which I would expect to be made during the course of next year.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now announce the fee for registration under the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: The level of the fee prescribed for registration under the Data Protection Act will be dependent upon estimates of the total cost of running the registrar's office and the data protection tribunal, and the number of applicants for registration. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to announce the fee shortly.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now announce the maximum fee which data users may charge to data subjects for the required provision of information under the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: The provisions of the Data Protection Act giving an individual a right of access to information about himself held on computer will not come into force until November 1987. We therefore consider it too soon to fix the maximum fee which a data user will be entitled to charge an individual applying for access.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the number of registrations required under the Data Protection Act; and how this compares with the estimates made at the time of the passage through Parliament of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many registrations he expects to be returned in the initial six months of operation of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: It is very difficult to estimate the likely number of registrations under the Data Protection Act. It was assumed in the early stages of planning that 200,000 applications for registration might be made in the initial six month registration period, with 50,000 applications being made each year thereafter. The Data Protection Registrar has now had the opportunity to review these figures following discussion with a wide range of representative bodies and further study and I understand that he is now working on the assumption that he will receive 300,000 initial applications, with 90,000 per year thereafter. We accept this as the best estimate currently available.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the cost of implementing the Data Protection Act; and how this figure compares with his estimate at the time of the passage through Parliament of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Data Protection Bill estimated that the yearly costs of running the registrar's office and the tribunal would be £650,000 at 1983 prices. Discussions with the registrar after his appointment and revised assumptions made then about his workload caused this figure to be reviewed and his current budget for 1984-85 is £1·2 million.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what ways the Data Protection Registrar will monitor any personal data transferred between Government Departments or other organisations and the police or the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Waddington: The registrar will not conduct continuous monitoring of particular data users. If he receives complaints or if he has any other reason to believe that transfers of personal data are taking place which breach the requirements of the Data Protection Act or of the principles we would expect him to investigate the matter. Should it prove necessary the registrar may apply to a circuit judge for a warrant enabling him to gain access to the data and to any relevant documents. The registrar has the necessary powers to deal with data users involved in a breach of any of the provisions of the Act.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that, when personal data is transferred from Government Departments or other organisations to the police, such transfers are fully recorded and documented by the recipient police force.

Mr. Waddington: The police will be subject to the registration provisions of the Data Protection Act and we have no proposals to impose additional requirements on them. Each chief officer of police will register under the Act as a data user in respect of the personal data held by him and will be required to describe in his register entry the sources, including Government Departments or other organisations, from which he obtains his data.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the number of staff required to implement the Data Protection Act; and how this compares with the estimate made during the passage through Parliament of the Data Protection Bill.

Data Registrar

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make additional provision for staffing of the office of the Data Registrar.

Mr. Waddington: The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Data Protection Bill indicated that the registrar would initially need about 20 staff.

It was made clear during the passage of the Bill, however, that we would consider sympathetically any requests from the Registrar for more staff and as a result of discussions with him a staffing complement of 47 has been approved. A request for a further increase is being considered.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juvenile offenders have been sentenced to *(a)* detention centres and *(b)* attendance centres in each of the years since 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (for 1983 in volume 1, tables S1.1(B) and S1.1(C) for magistrates' courts and volume 2, tables S2.1(B) and S2.1(C) for the Crown Court). Some information covering the first half of 1984 was published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin, issue 12/85 "The Sentencing of Young Offenders under the Criminal Justice Act 1982: July 1983-June 1984" but information for the whole of 1984 is not yet available.

Brixton Prison (Strip Searches)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times and on what occasions, women in Brixton prison are strip searched.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend will write to the hon. Member.

Ancillary Services (Privatisation)

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress so far made in contracting out to private tender ancillary services within the prison department.

Mr. Mellor: Our aim is to contract out ancillary services to the private sector where it can be clearly demonstrated that it would be economically advantageous to do so, and where security conditions permit. Examples include contracts with the private sector for the movement of both prisoners and freight and the repair of vehicles the value of which is currently of the order of £6 million. In the principle training centres night security, catering and all domestic services are contracted out, and in many prison establishments services including hair cutting, window cleaning, refuse collection, dry cleaning, pest control and some laundry services are provided by means of private tender.

Abortions

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many abortions were performed over the last five years *(a)* in prison and other offenders' institutions and *(b)* on prisoners and other detained offenders.

Mr. Mellor: The termination of a pregnancy may be carried out only in a hospital administered by the National Health Service or in a place specifically approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. Where such a procedure is deemed by the prison medical officer to be clinically appropriate, and the statutory conditions are met, arrangements are made for it to be undertaken outside prison. Statistical information on such cases is not collected by the Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it remains his policy to prohibit the use of animals for the practice of microsurgical skills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is the Government's intention, as set out in paragraph 32(3) of the White Paper 'Scientific Procedures on Living Animals' (Cmnd. 9521), to make provision in new legislation to permit the use of live animals where necessary for the practice of microsurgery, subject to strict controls. The Home Secretary's permission will be required in every case, and he will give it only to qualified surgeons working on approved microsurgical courses, and using only rodents which are anaesthetised throughout the procedure and killed before the animal can recover consciousness.

One-parent Families

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Mellor: The implications for the magistrates' courts of the establishment of a family court are among the matters being considered by an inter-Departmental working group set up by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary. The working group intends to issue a consultative paper later in the year.

As a result of earlier consideration of other recommendations of the Finer committee affecting the responsibilities of the Department, recommendations 1 and 2 were rejected; recommendations 41, 52, 53 and 225 were implemented, in whole or in part.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the level of funding for joint boards controlling police services after the abolition of the metropolitan authorities.

Mr. Brittan: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 25 July about the expenditure levels I propose to set for the new joint police and fire and

civil defence authorities. The new police authorities will be funded from percepts within maxima to be prescribed in due course under part I of the Rates Act 1984 and from block grant, police specific grant and other receipts.

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure levels he proposes to set in respect of 1986-87 for the new joint police and fire and civil defence authorities in the metropolitan area, and the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority.

Mr. Brittan [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: I regret that the proposed expenditure levels for fire and civil defence were given incorrectly. The figures for fire are unchanged. The following should be substituted for the second table in the Answer.

£ million

	The figures are comprised of		
	Fire and Civil Defence	*Fire*	*Civil Defence*
Greater Manchester	37·886	37·803	0·083
Merseyside	26·755	26·684	0·071
South Yorkshire	18·702	18·630	0·072
Tyne and Wear	19·291	19·220	0·071
West Yorkshire	29·032	28·949	0·083
West Midlands	35·682	35·598	0·084
London	140·942	140·804	0·138

Immigration

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of people from *(a)* India and *(b)* Pakistan who have been refused entry into the United Kingdom during each of the last three years.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is published annually in table 1 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom" (Cmnd. 8944, 9246 and 9544 for 1982, 1983 and 1984 respectively).

Discharged Prisoners

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of discharged prisoners in any recent convenient period received *(a)* the standard discharge grant and *(b)* the higher rate discharge grant payable to homeless prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoners discharged from Liverpool, Birmingham and Pentonville prisons, respectively, in any recent convenient period received *(a)* the standard discharge grant and *(b)* the higher rate discharge grant, payable to homeless prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: For the three month period ending 30 June 1985 the following proportion of prisoners discharged received grants at:

	Liverpool per cent.	*Birmingham per cent.*	*Pentonville per cent.*
(a) Standard rate	30	25	29
(b) Higher rate	13	17	21

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department's study of regionalisation of the immigration and nationality department will be completed.

Mr. Waddington: The aim is to complete this study by the end of 1985.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of ethnic members of the Metropolitan police serving in W division and the ranks that they hold.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 24 July there were five, all constables, serving in 'W' district.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of cases of attack or racial harassment reported to the Metropolitan police during each of the last three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The figures for reported racial incidents in the Metropolitan police area from 1 May 1982 to 30 June 1985 are as follows:

	Number
1982 (from May to December*)	1,273
1983	1,280
1984	1,515
1985 (to 30 June) (Provisional)	705

* The definition was widened in May 1982 to include incidents which do not necessarily involve the commission of an offence. Figures collected for the first four months of 1982 are not comparable.

Association of Chief Police Officers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a list showing the current editions of all reports produced by the Association of Chief Police Officers which are available to him.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Seaside Resorts

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the operation of deregulation under the Shops Act as it applies to seaside resorts.

Mr. Mellor: Our plans for legislation to deregulate shop hours will mean that shopkeepers in seaside resorts will, in common with all other shopkeepers, be able to choose their own opening hours throughout the year. This will provide increased opportunities in seaside resorts for both shopkeepers and tourists.

Drugs

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the methods by which drugs confiscated by the courts following legal proceedings are disposed of.

Mr. Mellor: Confiscated drugs which are no longer needed in connection with legal proceedings are normally

destroyed by burning. Small quantities of seized drugs may be retained under secure conditions for training purposes.

Compensation

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce proposals for providing prompt compensation to victims of public disasters such as the Abbeystead explosion or the Bradford fire.

Mr. Mellor: I do not think that it would be appropriate to introduce arrangements for the payment of compensation from public funds in the circumstances to which the right hon. Member refers.

Police (Animal Food Cost)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list details of the cost of dog and horse food provided for the Metropolitan police in each year since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that information is not maintained in precisely the form requested. The available information for the financial years 1980-81 to 1984-85 is as follows:

Costs to the Metropolitan police of dog and horse feed etc; 1980-81 to 1984-85 (£000)

Financial year	*Dog and food and dog training and handling equipment*	*Horse feed and removal of horse manure from police stables*
1980-81	75	151
1981-82	84	160
1982-83	91	142
1983-84	108	155
1984-85	104	155

Information in comparable form is not available for 1979-80.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will state, for each year since 1979, the number of tons of oats consumed by Metropolitan police horses and the average annual intake of each horse.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that Metropolitan police horses are fed on a daily diet consisting of 3 kilogrammes of oats, 1kg of bran, 5½kg of hay, 6½kg of straw, 1kg of chaff, and ½kg of linseed per animal. The estimated total amount of feed consumed by all Metropolitan police horses in each year from 1979 to 1984 is as follows:

Estimated annual intake of feed by Metropolitan Police horses 1979 to 1984 (in metric tonnes)

	oats	*bran*	*hay*	*straw*	*chaff*	*linseed*
1979	199	66	365	431	66	33
1980	199	66	365	431	66	33
1981	196	65	359	424	65	32
1982	192	64	353	417	64	32
1983	192	64	353	417	64	32
1984	194	64	357	422	64	32

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of dog biscuits used each year since 1979 by the Metropolitan police dog unit and the average quantity of dog biscuits consumed by each dog in each of those years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that information is available only for the financial years 1983-84 and 1984-85, when the amount of dog biscuits bought by the force was 42 tonnes and 48 tonnes respectively. On average an adult dog consumes about 120 kg of dog biscuits in a year.

Miss Hilda Murrell

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether information has been given to him about the name of the client whose solicitors were interviewed by the Northumbria police in relation to Zeus Security, Sizewell B objectors and the case of Hilda Murrell.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As my noble Friend said on 26 June in another place at column 825, the Chief Constable of West Mercia does not consider it appropriate to disclose the identity of the client whose solicitors briefed Zeus Security Consultants in relation to the alleged Sizewell B connection in the death of Miss Hilda Murell.

Prison Workshop Closures

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals the Prison Board has to provide alternative activities to replace time out of cells lost by workshop closures.

Mr. Mellor: These proposals will be formulated in the course of the review which my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 12 July in reply to a Question by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) at column *560*.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officer instructor posts and supervisory disciplinary posts he estimates will be lost through the closure of prison workshops; what are the current costs of these posts; what is the establishment in each of these grades: and, at the latest convenient date, how many officers were placed in each grade.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 June 1985 there were 1,046 uniform and civilian instructors of all grades in post against a total authorised complement of 1,253, at a total annual cost of £15·6 million. There are no central records of the number of discipline officers tasked to supervise workshops.

It is not possible to assess the number of posts which will be lost until the review which my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 12 July in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) at column *560* has been completed.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to comply with the European standard minimum rules on the treatment of prisoners regarding work of a useful nature to keep prisoners actively employed for a normal working day in the light of the planned closure of prison workshops.

Mr. Mellor: The review which my right hon. and learned Friend has commissioned requires the Prison Department to examine on the ground how the present network of industrial workshops could be rationalised, while retaining the existing level of work and related activity for inmates. The European standard minimum rules will be kept in mind in the course of that review.

Prison Industries

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the conclusions of the Prison Board in respect of the long-term future of Prison Industries, following its review of the short and medium-term prospects.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 12 July at column *560*. The message to staff from the director general of the prison service made it clear that the proposals for rationalisation do not signal a reduced commitment on the part of Ministers or the Prison Board to prison industries. On the contrary they are designed to provide a sounder base from which to improve, and consolidate, the contribution that industries can, and do, make to the running of establishments and the occupation of inmates. The detailed application of these principles will be considered in the light of the review which my right hon. and learned Friend has announced.

Immigration Inquiry Bureau

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many telephone calls were made in each month to the immigration inquiry bureau in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and whether he has any information as to how many received the engaged tone.

Mr. Waddington: The number of calls answered by the immigration telephone inquiry bureau during the period July 1984-June 1985, and the number of callers recorded as having received the engaged tone during this period, are as follows:

	Calls Answered	*Callers receiving engaged tone*
1984		
July	17,721	22,351
August	21,282	13,745
September	14,796	18,722
October	15,047	23,561
November	17,768	22,476
December	11,305	9,922
1985		
January	14,847	10,451
February	13,526	25,066
March	15,937	30,701
April	12,856	19,574
May	15,573	17,096
June	14,186	22,144

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the new switchboard was installed in the immigration inquiry bureau.

Mr. Waddington: The new telephone system in the immigration and nationality department's offices at Lunar house, Croydon, including the telephone inquiry bureau, came into operation on 13 May this year.

Nationality Applications

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the estimated cost of processing nationality applications and what was the estimated income from nationality fees and from the interest accruing from fees, in the 1984-85 budget of the Immigration and Nationality Division.

Mr. Waddington: The information sought is contained in Annex D to the White Paper "British Nationality Fees" (Cmnd. 9183). Accounts for the year will be published in due course.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people by nationality were *(a)* admitted, *(b)* refused admission and *(c)* granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom in the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Waddington: The available information on non-European Community passengers admitted to and refused entry and removed from the United Kingdom in the first quarter of 1985 is given in the following table. Comprehensive information is not available on temporary admissions in the first quarter of 1985.

Commonwealth Citizens and Non-EC Foreign Nationals Admitted to or Refused and Removed from the United Kingdom, First Quarter 1985*

Nationality	*Admitted*	*Refused and Removed*
Australia	58,200	16
Bangladesh	5,070	150
Barbados	1,450	—
Canada	73,800	13
Cyprus	6,910	23
Ghana	7,260	284
Guyana	1,000	2
Hong Kong BOTC	11,000	33
India	42,100	464
Jamaica	5,300	14
Kenya	4,020	10
Malaysia	11,400	36
Malta	8,270	6
Mauritius	2,640	33
New Zealand	15,100	7
Nigeria	39,900	516
Sierra Leone	1,360	10
Singapore	4,580	2
Sri Lanka	5,110	72
Tanzania	2,040	17
Trinidad and Tobago	3,360	1
Uganda	1,490	7
Zambia	2,280	10
Zimbabwe	2,640	11
British Overseas Citizens	2,990	8
Other Commonwealth Countries	4,780	31
Commonwealth Total	324,000	1,776
Algeria	4,370	78
Argentina	4,390	12
Austria	18,400	7
Brazil	11,400	21
Bulgaria	650	4
Chile	2,660	8
China	2,630	71
Colombia	3,080	85
Cuba	130	1
Czechoslovakia	2,090	—
Egypt	9,620	11
Ethiopia	1,100	2
Finland	14,500	6
GDR	780	1
Hungary	2,320	2
Indonesia	1,990	4
Iran	13,700	142
Iraq	3,790	33
Israel	19,300	24

Nationality	Admitted	Refused and Removed
Japan	83,600	8
Jordan	4,990	10
Kuwait	6,140	1
Lebanon	8,250	14
Libya	640	25
Mexico	4,190	4
Morocco	3,020	107
Norway	48,600	8
Pakistan	20,200	321
Peru	1,680	6
Philippines	4,730	32
Poland	6,830	41
Portugal	16,400	50
Romania	630	4
Saudi Arabia	9,980	13
Somalia	320	—
South Africa	17,200	17
Spain	56,900	92
Sudan	2,960	17
Sweden	71,600	27
Switzerland	41,100	11
Syria	3,000	10
Thailand	3,220	6
Tunisia	2,680	26
Turkey	10,200	76
USA	451,000	114
USSR	1,260	14
Uruguay	590	1
Venezuela	1,840	2
Yugoslavia	6,380	22
Other foreign Countries	28,900	80
Stateless	12,400	110
Non-EC Foreign Total	1,050,000	1,781
Total Non-EC Countries	1,370,000	3,557

* Excluding a small number of admissions because of late returns from Glasgow.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are currently working on nationality applications in B4 Division of his Department.

Mr. Waddington: In the week beginning 22 July 1985 there were 233 full and part-time staff in post in the nationality division. Of these, the equivalent of 212 staff were engaged full time on processing applications.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many appeals against *(a)* refusal of entry clearance and *(b)* refusal to revoke or vary leave to enter or remain were (i) determined and (ii) successful in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: Information provided by the immigration appleals secretariat on the number of appeals allowed and dismissed is given in the following table.

Appeals against refusal to grant entry clearance or refusal to vary leave to enter or remain allowed and dismissed in 1984
Number of persons

	Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Total determined
Adjudicators			
(a) refusal to grant entry clearance	2,224	4,074	6,298
(b) refusal to vary leave	203	1,394	1,597
Tribunal			
(a) refusal to grant entry clearance	202	148	350
(b) refusal to vary leave	50	73	123
of which—			
by Secretary of State to Tribunal			
(a) refusal to grant entry clearance	13	6	19
refusal to vary leave	10	1	11

Citizenship

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for citizenship were *(a)* received, *(b)* granted and *(c)* outstanding for each month since March 1983.

Mr. Waddington: The information is being collated and I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many grants of citizenship were made for *(a)* registration with entitlement of adults, *(b)* registration of minors and *(c)* naturalisation between April 1984 and March 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The information is being collated and I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Deportation Appeals

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many appeals against deportation were *(a)* determined and *(b)* allowed in each year since 1979.

Mr. Waddington: The following information, which has been obtained from the appellate authorities, shows the decisions taken in the years in question in respect of appeals to adjudicators against the decision to make a deportation order.

Appeals to adjudictors agains the decision to make a deportation order

Year	Allowed	Dismissed
1979	18	355
1980	27	310
1981	19	257
1982	38	269
1983	38	395
1984	57	323

I regret that the equivalent figures for decisions by the immigration appeals tribunal are not readily available.

Immigration Appeal Adjudications

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of immigration appeal adjudicators; how many of these are drawn from the ethnic minorities; and what ages they are.

Mr. Waddington: There are 14 full-time adjudicators and 47 part-time adjudicators. One full-time adjudicator is from the ethnic minorities as are at least four of the part-time adjudicators. Information as to the ages of the adjudicators is given in the table.

Ages of immigration appeal adjudicators at 25 July 1985

Age	*35 to 39*	*40 to 44*	*45 to 49*	*50 to 54*	*55 to 59*	*60 to 64*	*65 to 69*	*70 to 72*
Full-time adjudicators (includes Chief Adjudicator)	—	—	—	2	5	3	4	—
Part-time adjudicators	1	5	3	7	7	11	9	4

Immediate Settlement Applications

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the refusal rates for applications for immediate settlement in 1984 in *(a)* Dhaka, *(b)* Islamabad, *(c)* Bombay and *(d)* New Delhi from (i) wives, (ii) children, (iii) other dependent relatives, (iv) others and (v) in total.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is given in the following table:

Refusal rates for applications for entry clearance for immediate settlement decided in 1984*

Indian sub-continent *Percentages*

	Wives	*Children*	*Other dependent relatives*	*Others*	*Total*
Dhaka	38	51	65	†	48
Islamabad	22	32	58	‡67	30
Bombay	1	9	36	—	11
New Delhi	5	28	53	‡ 7	23

* Applications refused initially as a percentage of applications decided (ie granted initially or on appeal or refused initially).
† Refusal rate not calculated for five or fewer decisions.
‡ Refusal rate based on fewer than 15 decisions.

Passenger Statistics

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing by nationality the number of *(a)* passengers admitted, *(b)* visitors admitted for six months, *(c)* visitors admitted for other than six months, *(d)* passengers refused and *(e)* passengers detained in the United Kingdom during 1984.

Mr. Waddington: The readily available information on the numbers of passengers admitted and refused and on visitors admitted by nationality in 1984 is given in table 1 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1984" (Cmnd. 9844). For the available information on the detention of passengers by nationality, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to a question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 29 April 1985 at columns 21-24.

Bail Hostels

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vacant places there were in bail hostels in London *(a)* for the last month when figures were available and *(b)* in the 12 months preceding that period.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 June this year in London there were 16 places vacant in bail hostels and 51 in probation hostels, which also take persons on bail.

In the 12 months ended 30 June there was a daily average of 26 places vacant in bail hostels and 49 in probation hostels.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places there are currently in bail hostels in London.

Mr. Mellor: In London there are currently 102 places in bail hostels and 204 places in probation hostels, which also take persons on bail.

Firearms

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement defining an open certificate in the context of the administration of the Firearms Act 1968 and his recent working party's report dated April 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his previous question on 27 June at column *456*.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding his recent discussions with the Association of Chief Police Officers concerning recent representations in favour of stricter controls on shotguns and on the conclusions reached following those discussions.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department keeps in close and continuing touch with the association about firearms matters, including the desirability and practicality of stricter shotgun controls. We have not yet reached any conclusions on whether stricter shotgun controls should be introduced, save that my right hon. and learned Friend has decided to amend the firearms rules in due course to require the holder of a shotgun certificate to notify the chief officer of police of any change in his permanent address.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish any evidence submitted to the working party on the administration of the Firearms Act 1968 regarding the correlation between the strictness of controls on shotguns and the incidence of the criminal use of such weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. Only a few incidental references were made to this in evidence submitted to the working party.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the formation of shooting sportspersons liaison groups in

each police authority area, to carry out the suggestions put forward by his recent working party in paragraph 25 of the report dated April 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is for chief officers of police, taking into account paragraph 25 of the working party report, to decide on the extent and manner of consultations necessary before inserting territorial restrictions in firearm certificates.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement as to the definition of vermin used in the recent report dated April 1984 by his working party into the administration of the Firearms Act 1968; and whether it is intended to cover general pests such as crows, foxes, mink, marauding dogs and so on;

(2) if he will make a statement as to the definition of deerstalking used in the recent report dated April 1984 by his working party into the administration of the Firearms Act 1968; and whether it is intended to cover deer control, vermin, foxes and marauding dogs;

(3) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly on 5 June, *Official Report*, column *159*, on the Firearms Act 1968, if he will make a statement giving his definition of general sporting purposes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent he monitors the administration by police forces of the Firearms Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department is kept informed by chief officers of police, shooting organisations and firearms users amongst others and guidance is offered as and when appropriate. We also set up a Working Party in 1982 to achieve greater consistency of practice amongst police forces and to streamline procedures.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any recent representations advocating further restrictions and controls on shotguns.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his previous question on 2 July at column *95*.

Customs Resources

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will have discussions with representatives of tour operators regarding arrangements for the provision of customs and immigration staff and facilities at entry and departure points in the British Isles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The group on tourism and leisure which met under the chairmanship of my noble Friend the Minister without Portfolio published its report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs" on 22 July. As announced in paragraph 61 of that report the Government

"is looking at ways of giving higher priority to manpower adjustment where the costs of providing extra facilities are fully met by commercial operators".

My officials will be following this up with those concerned in the light also of the related recommendation by the Home Affairs Committee in its report on the immigration and nationality department (6th report, 1984-85).

The provision of customs staff and facilities is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Special Quota Voucher Holders

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special quota voucher holders arrived in Britain from India in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: Comprehensive information is not available on the origin of the 1,240 special voucher holders accepted for settlement on arrival in the United Kingdom in 1984. Six hundred vouchers were issued in 1984 against the quota for India.

Safety Regulations

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the updating of safety regulations for cinemas and other public places.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly be consulting interested organisations on revisions to the Cinematograph (Safety) Regulations 1955 which take account of changes which have taken place in film exhibiting since 1955. So far as other public places of entertainment are concerned, the safety requirements are, in the main, controlled by conditions imposed in the licence which can be updated at the discretion of the licensing authority.

Imprisonment Statistics

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by petty sessional division the percentage of those appearing before the courts of male and female adult offenders who were sentenced to periods of imprisonment by magistrates courts during 1984.

Mr. Mellor: I will write to the hon. Member.

Rape

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the percentage of men found guilty of rape and referred for psychiatric treatment for each of the last five years for which statistics are available;

(2) if he will list the proportion of allegations of rape which the police have *(a)* investigated and *(b)* pressed charges on, for the last five years for which statistics are available;

(3) what is the average sentence given to a convicted rapist;

(4) if he will list the number of people convicted of rape for each of the last five years for which statistics are available, broken down into the following age groups: under 21, 21 to 30, 31 to 40, 41 to 50, 51 to 60 and over 60 years.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information on offences of rape is published annually in 'Criminal Statistics, England and Wales' for recorded offences in table 2.9 of the issue for 1983 (Cmnd. 9349); for proceedings and sentences at magistrates' courts and the Crown Court in tables S1.1(A) and S2.1(A) of the supplementary tables; for the age groups of those in table S4.1(A): and for the distribution of the lengths of prison

sentences in table S2.4. The figures for rape include some offences other than under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, including offences of aiding and abetting and attempts. No information is readily available centrally on any allegations of rape not investigated by the police or on men found guilty and referred for psychiatric treatment.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research Her Majesty's Government have sponsored into the extent of sexual assaults and rapes not reported to the police.

Mr. Mellor: The British crime survey of 1984, which gathered information about people's experience of crime from a sample of 11,000 households in England and Wales, included questions designed to measure the extent of sexual assaults on females (including rape), both those reported to the police and those not reported. The first report of this survey "Taking Account of Crime: Key Findings from the Second British Crime Survey" by Mike Hough and Pat Mayhew was published earlier this month as Home Office Research Study No. 85. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the number of people who have been victims of rape for each of the last five years for which statistics are available, broken down into the following age groups: under 21, 21 to 30, 31 to 40, 41 to 50, 51 to 60 and over 60 years;

(2) if he will list the number of reported rapes for each of the last five years for which statistics are available, broken down into days of the week upon which the alleged offence occurred.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally. However, some information on the ages of victims of rape in 1973 is to be found in 'Sexual Offences, Consent and Sentencing', Home Office Research Study No. 54 (Table B.2).

Police (Doctors)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the proportion of male and female doctors employed by each police force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police surgeons are appointed by police authorities and no central record is maintained.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to encourage the appointment of more women doctors by the police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The appointment of police surgeons is the responsibility of police authorities and we have not thought it necessary to advise them on the way in which they should exercise this responsibility.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men have been found guilty of incest for each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many such men have committed more than one such offence;

(2) how many men have been found guilty of sex with a minor for each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(3) how many men have been found guilty of sex with a minor in each of the last five years have been related to the victim.

Mr. Mellor: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Police (Arrests and Stops)

Mr. Silkin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) *(a)* what was the total number of arrests from 1 January 1984 to 1 July 1984 including a breakdown by age, gender and ethnic origin, *(b)* the total number of charges from 1 January 1984 to 1 July 1984, including a breakdown by age, gender, ethnic origin and charge, and *(c)* the total number of stops resulting in a charge, from 1 January 1984 to 1 July 1984, including a breakdown of age, gender and ethnic origin in P district of the Metropolitan police;

(2) of the total number of stops not resulting in a charge from 1 January 1984 to 1 July 1984 in P district of the Metropolitan police, what was the proportion of stops as a result of reasonable suspicion of *(a)* possession of drugs, *(b)* possession of an offensive weapon, *(c)* possession of stolen goods and *(d)* others, including a breakdown.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that information on stops, including reasons for such stops is collected centrally only annually and information for part of the year could only be provided at disproportionate cost. I will write to the hon. Member about the parts of his question relating to arrests and charges.

P District

Mr. Silkin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much of the budget of P district of the Metropolitan police was spent outside P district during 1983-84 and 1984-85, respectively.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Districts of the Metropolitan police do not have separate budgets.

Alhaji Umaru Dikko

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision on the application for the extradition to Nigeria of Alhaji Umaru Dikko.

Mr. Mellor: The extradition request remains under consideration. I am not yet in a position to say when a decision will be made.

Miners' Dispute

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many telexes were sent by the permanent under-secretary in his Department, Sir Brian Cubbon, to police forces during the recent miners' dispute; and what was the purpose of the telexes.

Mr. Brittan: One such telex was sent, to chief officers of police in areas affected by the miners' dispute. Its purpose was to draw attention to public statements of mine.

Straw and Stubble Burning

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those district councils

which have *(a)* adopted the 1984 model byelaw relating to straw and stubble burning and *(b)* adopted or will adopt before this summer's harvest, the 1985 model byelaw.

Mr. Mellor: Two hundred and ten local authorities have adopted the 1984 straw and stubble burning byelaws, and to date 11 authorities are in the process of adopting the 1985 model byelaws circulated to local authorities on 21 June. The local authorities are as follows:

(a) Authorities which have adopted the 1984 byelaws

Adur district council
Arun district council
Ashford borough council
Ashfield district council
Aylesbury Vale district council
Babergh district council
Barking and Dagenham London borough council
Bassetlaw district council
Basildon district council
Basingstoke and Dean borough council
Berwick upon Tweed borough council
Blaby district council
Blyth Valley borough council
Bolsover district council
Boston borough council
Boothferry district council
Bracknell district council
Braintree district council
Breckland district council
Brecknock borough council
Brentwood district council
Bridgnorth district council
Brighton district council
Bromley London borough council
Broadland district council
Broxtowe borough council
Cambridge city council
Cannock Chase district council
Canterbury city council
Castle Morpeth borough council
Castle Point district council
Charnwood borough council
Chelmsford borough council
Cherwell district council
Chesterfield borough council
Chester-le-Street district council
Chichester district council
Chiltern district council
Cleethorpes borough council
Colchester borough council
Corby district council
Dacorum district council
Darlington borough council
Dartford borough council
Daventry district council
Derwentside district council
Dover district council
Dudley metropolitan borough council
Durham city council
Easington district council
East Cambridgeshire district council
East Devon district council
East Hampshire district council
East Hertfordshire district council
East Lindsey district council
East Northants district council
East Yorkshire borough council
Eden district council
Elmbridge borough council
Ellesmere Port and Neston borough council
Enfield London borough council
Epping Forest district council
Fareham borough council
Fenland district council
Forest Heath district council
Gateshead city council
Gedling borough council
Gillingham borough council
Glanford borough council
Gosport borough council
Gravesham borough council
Great Yarmouth borough council
Hambleton district council
Harborough district council
Harlow district council
Harrogate borough council
Hart district council
Hartlepool borough council
Havant borough council
Havering London borough council
Hertsmere borough council
Hinkley and Bosworth borough council
Holderness borough council
Halton borough council
Horsham district council
Hove borough council
Huntingdon district council
Ipswich borough council
Kennet district council
Kettering borough council
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk borough council
Leeds City council
Leominster district council
Lewes district council
Lincoln City council
Lichfield district council
Luton borough council
Maidstone borough council
Maldon district council
Mansfield district council
Medina borough council
Melton borough council
Middlesbrough borough council
Mid-Bedfordshire district council
Mid-Suffolk district council
Milton Keynes borough council
Mole Valley district council
Montgomery district council
Newark district council
Newbury district council
Newcastle Under Lyme district council
Newcastle Upon Tyne city council
New Forest district council
Newport borough council
Northampton borough council
Northavon district council
North Bedfordshire borough council
North Cornwall district council
North Dorset district council
North East Derbyshire district council
North Hertfordshire district council
North Kesteven district council
North Norfolk district council
North Tyneside borough council
North Warwickshire borough council
North West Leicestershire district council
North Wiltshire district council
Nuneaton and Bedworth borough council
Oadby and Wigston borough council
Peterborough city council
Plymouth city council
Redbridge London borough council
Redditch borough council
Richmondshire city council
Rochester-upon-Medway city council
Rochford district council
Rotherham borough council
Rugby borough council
Runnymede borough council
Rushcliffe borough council
Rutland district council
Ryedale district council
St. Albans city and district council
St. Edmundsbury district council
Scunthorpe borough council
Scarborough borough council
Sedgefield district council
Sedgemoor district council
Selby district council

Sevenoaks district council
Shepway district council
South Bedfordshire district council
South Bucks district council
South Cambridgeshire district council
South Derbyshire district council
South Hams district council
South Herefordshire district council
South Holland district council
South Kesteven district council
South Norfolk district council
South Northamptonshire district council
South Oxfordshire district council
South Tyneside borough council
Southend-on-Sea borough council
South Wight borough council
Stafford borough council
Stevenage borough council
Stratford on Avon district council
Suffolk Coastal district council
Sunderland borough council
Surrey Heath borough council
Swale district council
Tamworth borough council
Tandridge district council
Tendring district council
Test Valley Borough Council
Thamesdown Borough Council
Thanet District Council
Thurrock Borough Council
Tonbridge and Malling District Council
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Tynedale District Council
Uttlesford District Council
Vale Royal District Council
Vale of White Horse District Council
Wakefield City Council
Wansbeck District Council
Warrington Borough Council
Warwick District Council
Waveney District Council
Waverley Borough Council
Wealden District Council
Wellingborough Borough Council
Welwyn Hatfield District Council
West Derbyshire District Council
West Dorset District Council
West Lindsey District Council
West Oxfordshire District Council
West Somerset District Council
West Wiltshire District Council
Wimborne District Council
Winchester City Council
Windsor and Maidenhead Royal Borough Council
Woodspring District Council
Worcester City Council
Worthing Borough Council
Wychavon District Council
Wyre Forest District Council
Yeovil District Council

(b) Authorities which are in process of adopting 1985 byelaws

Aylesbury Vale District Council
Basildon District Council
Charnwood Borough Council
Chelmsford Borough Council
City of Plymouth
East Hertfordshire District Council
Maldon District Council
North Devon District Council
Sedgefield District Council
South Wight Borough Council
Wansdyke District Council

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what precise steps his Department has taken to monitor the effectiveness of the 1984 model bye-law dealing with straw and stubble burning; what plans he has for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Police (Industrial Disputes)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis on police operations in connection with the current industrial dispute at London and Essex Newspapers, London E.17; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the police attended the premises at the request of the occupier to prevent any possible breach of the peace. A trespasser left peacefully at the request of the police.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions are given to the Metropolitan police about entering private commercial property to act on behalf of employers in industrial disputes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The police do not act on behalf of any party to an industrial dispute but they have a general duty to uphold the law which may lead to their involvement in incidents connected with an industrial dispute. Various statutory powers of entry exist, and there are common law powers for the police to enter property to deal with or prevent a breach of the peace and save life or prevent serious damage to property.

Dental Students

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether, pursuant to his statement of 26 March, *Official Report*, columns *228-29*, dental students accepted before 1 April for entry in October will be allowed to stay and work when their training is complete;

(2) whether, pursuant to his statement of 26 March, *Official Report*, columns *228-29*, overseas dental students now in training in the United Kingdom will be allowed to stay and work when their training is complete.

Mr. Waddington: Overseas dental students may remain here for up to four years on completion of their studies to undergo post-graduate training in hospital. Those wishing to take salaried posts in general practice will normally require the approval of the Department of Employment or, if proposing to work as a principal, will need to qualify for admission as a self-employed person.

Under the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules laid before Parliament on 26 March (HC 293), only those overseas nationals who had sought or been granted permission to work in the United Kingdom as dentists on or before 1 April 1985 will continue to be allowed to take professional appointments without restriction.

Extradition Treaty

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the re-negotiation of the extradition treaty with Italy of 1873.

Mr. Mellor: Following my right hon. and learned Friend's meeting in Rome in February with the Italian Minister of Justice, preliminary discussions have taken place between officials of both Governments with a view

to preparing a revised extradition treaty. In particular, we consider that the list of offences for which extradition can be granted should be updated to include certain terrorist and drug offences.

Video Classification

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will designate persons as the authority responsible for making arrangements for the classification of video works under the Video Recordings Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: Pursuant to the proposals for designation laid before Parliament on 14 June 1985, I have today designated, under section 4(1) of the Video Recordings Act 1984, the Earl of Harewood, the Lord Birkett and Miss Monica Sims, respectively the president and vice-presidents of the British Board of Film Classification, as the authority responsible for making arrangements for the matters set out in that section of the Act. The board will be responsible for determining whether or not video works are suitable to be classified and for carrying out the other arrangements specified in section 4(1) of the Video Recordings Act.

I have today written to each member of the authority attaching a copy of the notice of designation and I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library. Also attached to the letter are the Video Appeals Committee Provisions containing the arrangements for appeals, in accordance with section 4(3) of the Act, against determinations by the board, with which I am satisfied, and the tariff of fees which I have approved for the purposes of section 4(5) and (6) of the Act.

Hospital Radio

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for the future of hospital radio of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the development of community radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Life Sentences

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of people who were serving a life prison sentence and have been released on licence and have been recalled to prison in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police (Liaison)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will identify those London boroughs where consultation in the police liaison and consultation committees has been rejected by the local authority or where there are no plans to establish a consultation or liaison scheme.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. *230*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis intends, in pursuance of his duty under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, to make arrangements for consultation between the community and the police in each borough and district within the Metropolitan police district, taking account of the guidance issued by my right hon. and learned Friend last January. As required by the Act, he is consulting borough and district Councils as to the arrangements that would be appropriate in each area. A number of councils are still considering their response. Of those that have responded, none has rejected the possibility of participating in consultative arrangements; but Hackney, Haringey, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets have made proposals which the commissioner considers to be unacceptable because they do not conform to my right hon. and learned Friend's guidance. The Metropolitan police are to have further discussions with these councils.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the London boroughs and district councils within the Metropolitan police district which currently co-operate in police liaison and consultation committees and who service such a structure in their area; when each structure was established; what is the composition of each committee; and how many elected members serve on the committees.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. *230*]: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that arrangements for consultation between the police and the community, broadly conforming to the guidance issued by my right hon. and learned Friend under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, are now operating in 26 boroughs and districts within the Metropolitan police district. The latest available information about these arrangements is given in the following table:

Borough	*Serviced by*	*Date Established*	*Composition of Membership*	*Number of Elected Members*
Barking and Dagenham	Local Authority	24–5– 1984	4 LAs 4 Police 2 MPs 2 GLC 13 CGs	8
Barnet	Local Authority	29–2–1984	6 LA 3 Police 4 MPs 20 CGs	10

Borough	Serviced by	Date Established	Composition of Membership	Number of Elected Members
Bexley	Local Authority	25–6–1984	6 LA 3 Police 3 MPs 3 GLC 17 CGs	12
Brent	Local Authority	15–12–1984	5 LA 4 Police 3 MPs 3 GLC 70 CGs	11
Broxbourne	Police	10–5–1984	4 LA 3 Police 1 MP 6 CGs	5
Croydon	Local Authority	28–2–1982	5 LA 4 Police 4 MPs 23 CGs	9
Ealing	Local Authority	17–2–1983	5 LA 5 Police 17 CGs	5
Enfield	Local Authority	4–10–1982	5 LA 4 Police 3 MPs 1 GLC 17 CGs	9
Epping Forest	Local Authority	22–7–1983	4 LA 4 Police 1 MP 14 CGs	5
Epsom and Ewell	Local Authority	15–12–1982	8 LA 1 MP 1 MEP 1 County Councillor 3 Police 11 CGs	11
Hammersmith and Fulham	Local Authority	18–7–1983	5 LA 5 Police 3 MPs 12 CGs	8
Harrow	Local Authority	24–11–1982	4 LA 3 Police 1 MP 1 GLC 16 CGs	6
Hertsmere	Local Authority	22–2–1983	4 LA 2 Police 1 MP 11 CGs	5
Hounslow	Local Authority	22–2–1982	4 LA 4 LA officers 3 Police 2 MPs 2 GLC 9 CGs	8
Islington	Local Authority	4–2–1985	10 LA 5 Police 2 MPs 3 GLC 14 CGs	15
Kensington and Chelsea	Local Authority	29–1–1985	6 LA 3 Police 2 MPs 2 GLC 12 CGs	10
Kingston	Local Authority	23–9–1982	6 LA 4 Police 21 CGs	6
Lambeth	Independent Secretariat	12–3–1982	4 LA 4 Police 3 MPs 2 GLC 47 CGs 2 Statutory Agencies	9

Borough	Serviced by	Date Established	Composition of Membership	Number of Elected Members
Merton	Local Authority	3–12–1982	6 LA 3 Police 1 MP 1 GLC 16 CGs 1 Chief Executive 1 Probation Officer	8
Reigate and Banstead	Local Authority	15–9–1983	7 LA 2 Police 2 MPs 5 CGs	9
Richmond-upon-Thames	Local Authority	13–4–1983	5 LA 4 Police 7 CGs	5
Spelthorne	Local Authority	25–6–1985	5 LA 3 LA officers 4 Police 1 County Councillor 7 CGs	
Sutton	Independent Secretariat	13–10–1982	7 LA 4 Police 17 CGs	7
Waltham Forest	Local Authority	23–6–1983	7 LA 4 Police 3 MPs 3 GLC 19 CGs	13
Wandsworth	Local Authority	8–9–1983	7 LA 4 Police 3 MPs 16 CGs	10
City of Westminster (has sub-groups)	Local Authority	26–6–1984	5 LA 3 Police 2 MPs 3 GLC 17 CGs 1 Probation Officer 1 Education Officer	10

LA=Local Authority Councillors.
GC=Community Groups.
GLC=Greater London Council Members.
MEPs=Member of the European Parliament.
MPs=Members of Parliament.

Emergency Centres

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those local authorities which have since 1 December 1983 received approvals for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining an emergency centre pursuant to regulation 5(1)(c) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those local authorities which have since 1 December 1983 received approvals for grant aid for the purpose of establishing, equipping or maintaining an emergency centre pursuant to Regulation 4(1)(b) of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985, c. *291*]: Listed are those county councils and district councils for which approval has been given under Regulations 4(1)(b) and 5(1)(c) respectively of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983, for grant aid on schemes to establish, equip or improve premises as emergency centres. The information is correct as at 22 July 1985.

County Councils for which Grant Aid Approval for Emergency Centres has been Given since 1 December 1983

Cambridgeshire
Cumbria
Gwent
Isle of Wight
Lancashire
Norfolk
Northumberland
Oxfordshire
South Glamorgan

District councils for which Grant Aid Approval for Emergency Centres has been Given Since 1 December 1983 (by county)

Avon
Bath
Bedfordshire
South Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Chiltern
South Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
East Cambridgeshire
South Cambridgeshire
Cornwall
North Cornwall
Cumbria
South Lakeland

Devon
Plymouth City
Dorset
Bournemouth
Poole
Durham
Easington
Teesdale
Dyfed
Carmarthen
Essex
Brentwood
Castle Point
Epping
Thurrock
Gloucestershire
Cotswold
Humberside
Cleethorpes
Kent
Dover
Thanet
Tonbridge and Malling
Swale
Isle of Wight
Medina
Lancashire
Chorley
Fylde
Leicestershire
Charnwood
Oadby and Wigston
Lincolnshire
South Kesteven
Norfolk
South Norfolk
West Norfolk
Northumberland
Tynedale
Nottinghamshire
Mansfield
Oxfordshire
Cherwell
Oxford City
Somerset
Taunton Deane
Staffordshire
Lichfield
Suffolk
Mid Suffolk
Surrey
Runnymede
Spelthorne
Surrey Heath
Waverley
East Sussex
Lewes
West Sussex
Chichester
Shropshire
Shrewsbury and Atcham
North Yorkshire
Hambleton
Harrogate
Richmondshire
Selby

Interview Waiting Time

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present waiting time for interview of husbands or wives wishing to enter the United Kingdom from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

The waiting time in months at the end of June was:

	Bangladesh (Dhaka)	*India New Delhi*	*India Bombay*	*Pakistan (Islamabad)*
Husbands	23	14	6	11·75
Second wives or with children over 10 or reapplicants	23	14	6	11·75
Priority*	6	2	2	3
First wives with children under 10 (Dhaka only)	6	—	—	—
Newly married wives (Dhaka only)	2 weeks	—	—	—

* Priority interviews are given to wives with no children and wives whose children are under 10 where it is the first marriage of both partners.

Overseas Prisons

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women from the United Kingdom at present serving prison sentences in prisons overseas.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

The information is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Ewe Hoggs

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many ewe hoggs were included for the first time in applications for ewe premium in the current year.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested will not be available until the details on claim figures are processed for payment by computer, which will be done next year, after the European Commission have set the final rate.

Silage Walls

Mr. Leigh asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department gives about the safe use of silage walls.

Mrs. Fenner: The Ministry publishes advisory leaflets about several aspects of silage, including the construction of silos. In addition farmers are urged to seek expert advice from building specialists in the Ministry's agricultural development and advisory service on the design and safe construction of tower and bunker silos since they are subject to considerable and variable stresses in normal use.

Cereals

Mr. Leigh asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied that the current level of export credit guarantees for United Kingdom cereals enables United Kingdom grain traders to compete on equal terms with their competitors.

Mr. MacGregor: The competitiveness of United Kingdom cereals depends upon a wide range of factors. During the 1984-85 season to date the United Kingdom has exported a record 3·5 million tonnes of barley, and achieved wheat exports of 2 million tonnes in an over-supplied and highly competitive world market. These figures indicate that United Kingdom grain exporters compete effectively in world markets.

Racehorses

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions exist on transfers of racehorses from the Continent to the United Kingdom for particular race-meetings.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department licenses the importation of racehorses from Western European countries provided they meet detailed animal health conditions designed to ensure that both the animals in question and the premises from which they originate are free of significant contagious or infectious diseases.

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of the further representations he has received since his statement of 18 July, *Official Report*, column 417, he will reconsider his policy regarding Government financial support for the Aujeszky's disease eradication fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The representations which I have received since my statement do not provide grounds for reconsidering my conclusion that I could not agree to Government financial support being given to the costs of the campaign.

Milk Production

Mr. Nicholson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the amount of milk produced in the first three months of the 1985 quota year; what is the comparison with 1983 levels for the same period; and what percentage above or below quota productions is at present.

Mr. MacGregor: In the period April to June 1985 deliveries to the Milk Marketing Board in England and Wales were 3407·3 million litres compared with 3781·8 million litres in the same period in 1983. On the basis of these figures wholesale production to the end of June was running approximately 0·7 per cent. below quota.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of intervention stocks of barley, breadmaking wheat, feed wheat, and oilseed rape, respectively, held by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce at the end of the 1984-85 crop year.

Mr. MacGregor: The following is the value of the cereals stocks held by the Intervention Board on 30 June 1985, based on the buying-in prices applicable on that date.

	£ million
Barley	104
Wheat of breadmaking quality	8
Feedwheat	364
Oilseed Rape	Nil

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what stocks of barley, breadmaking wheat, feed wheat, and oilseed rape, respectively, were held in *(a)* intervention stores and *(b)* in private stores at the end of the 1984-85 crop year; and what were the comparable figures for 1983-84.

Mr. MacGregor: Stocks of barley, breadmaking wheat, feedwheat and oilseed rape held in intervention stores, including commercial stores used for that purpose, on 30 June 1985, the latest date for which information is available, and on 30 June 1984 were the following:

	Stocks (metric tonnes)	
	30 June 1984	*30 June 1985*
Barley	72,017	917,290
Wheat of breadmaking quality	94,551	69,252
Feedwheat	8	3,222,105
Oilseed Rape	Nil	Nil

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the locations of privately owned stores which are to be used by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce for the storage of grain in the coming year, giving the capacity of each store and the level of payments from public funds for their use; and if he will indicate which of these stores are additional to 1984's provision.

Mr. MacGregor: Storage for intervention grain in the coming year will be taken up as required, and its location, capacity and cost is not yet known.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the reply of the Minister of State to the hon. Member for Warrington, North on 23 July concerning intervention stores for wheat, if he will list the uses of wheat sold from intervention.

Mr. MacGregor: Wheat has been sold from intervention stocks in the United Kingdom for milling into flour for export as food aid; and on to the home market probably for milling into flour and for use in animal feed.

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of intervention stocks in *(a)* public storage and *(b)* assisted private storage for the United Kingdom, for the latest available dates, 12 months ago and five years ago, for the following commodities: butter, skimmed milk powder, wheat, barley and beef.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

Metric tonnes

	Butter	*Skimmed milk powder*	*Wheat*	*Barley*	*Beef*
Intervention Stocks					
30 June 1985	180,000	36,000	3,291,000	917,000	58,000
30 June 1984	155,000	172,000	95,000	72,000	16,000
30 June 1980	30,000	703	2,000	14,000	14,000

	Butter	Skimmed milk powder	Wheat	Barley	Beef
Stocks in Assisted Private Storage					
30 June 1985	9,000	Nil	Nil	Nil	15,000
30 June 1984	17,000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
30 June 1980	4,000	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Strang asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what position Her Majesty's Government will adopt towards proposals to extend the moratorium on dumping of all nuclear waste at sea at the London dumping convention in September.

Mr. MacGregor: I am not aware that any such proposal has been made.

Contaminated Wine

Sir John Farr asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the steps he has taken to warn the public of the dangers of buying certain table wines at the present time;

(2) how many instances have been traced in Britain of Austrian wine diluted with an anti-freeze ingredient being offered for sale to the public; and where these bottles have been traced;

(3) what guidance he is offering to the public on the risks of buying certain table wine at the current time;

(4) what information he has about the extent to which Austrian wines diluted with an anti-freeze ingredient have been imported for sale in Britain; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whether he has received any representations about compensation arrangements for members of the public and retailers who have purchased polluted Austrian table wines.

Mr. Jopling: On 11 July my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services issued a public warning advising against the sale and consumption of three types of Austrian white wine which had been contaminated with di-ethylene glycol, which is normally an anti-freeze ingredient. My Department carried out further inquiries to determine the extent of the problem and by 18 July it became evident that the potential contamination was more widespread than the original three types. I therefore issued advice to trade associations advising their members to withdraw all Austrian white wine from sale and reminding them that it is a criminal offence under regulations made under the Food Act to offer for sale any wine containing di-ethylene glycol. This advice was also issued publicly on 19 July and at the same time my right hon. Friend re-iterated his earlier public warning. My Department continued its investigation and it is now apparent that all Austrian wines—red, rose and white—must be regarded as suspect and I have therefore, on 25 July, extended advice accordingly.

Around 80 samples of Austrian wine in the United Kingdom had been analysed by midday 25 July either by my Food Laboratory or by public analysts. By then 14 positive instances of contaminated wine had been recorded; only one of these was from a bottle actually purchased by a consumer, in South Yorkshire. Further samples are being tested and it is not yet possible to say what proportion of the total Austrian wine imported into the United Kingdom has been contaminated. I have received no representations from retailers or members of the public on the subject of compensation, which would be a matter for the customer and his supplier. My advice to distributors and retailers remains not to sell or offer for sale any Austrian wine of whatever type unless the batch concerned has been previously tested and shown to be clear of contamination.

Sir John Farr asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had on the dangers associated with consuming certain Austrian table wines and the necessary remedial medical antidote.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

Our officials have been in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, representatives of the trade, the Commission of the European Communities and the Austrian Trade Commission concerning the addition of diethylene glycol to certain Austrian wines. The medical advice available to us is that harmful effects from consuming wines containing the chemical at the levels reported are unlikely to occur but that some ill effects might be possible in exceptional circumstances. The question of any medical treatment necessary in the unlikely event of ill effects occurring would be for the individual doctor to decide. Our Department has issued advice that, as a precautionary measure, the public should not drink any of the suspect wines pending the results of tests currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Beef

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of beef have been sold by the Intervention Board in the last 12 months.

Mr. MacGregor: In the 12 months ending 30 June 1985 the Intervention Board sold 7,200 tonnes of beef.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the difference between the average guaranteed price and the average market price for home-killed sheepmeat in each year since 1973 and in 1985 to date, together with any additional payments to hill farmers and others on account of sheepmeat or wool production and financed directly or indirectly out of public funds.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: From 1973 to October 1980 support arrangements for sheep were provided under the United Kingdom's fat

sheep guarantee scheme. The following figures show the difference between the average market price and the guaranteed price in the relevant marketing years.

	p/kg
1973-74	+14·0
1974-75	—
1975-76	—
1976-77	+20·0
1977-78	+9·0
1978-79	+13·0
1979-80	+10·0

These arrangements were superseded on 20 October 1980 by the European Community's sheepmeat regime. Since then support levels have been set by the Council of Ministers and expenditure has been reimbursed from Community funds. The following figures show the difference between the average market price and the guide price in the relevant marketing years.

	p/kg
1981-82	−18·0
1982-83	−56·0
1983-84	−75·0
1984-85	−43·0

Information is not yet available for 1985.

Because the change in arrangements occurred during 1980 there is no comparable figure for 1980-81. However, the difference between the average market price in that year and an average of the guaranteed and guide prices is −15·0 p/kg.

The remainder of the information requested is contained in the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1985" for the most recent years for which data is available and in previous reviews for earlier years. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Service

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister if she will give the figures for each of the last 10 years for which they are available, both numerically and as a percentage of the whole class, of those leaving each of the top three grades of the Civil Service for reasons other than normal retirement, redundancy or ill health.

The Prime Minister: Statistics of voluntary resignations from the three grades are tabulated as follows. These figures should be read in conjunction with the comments in paragraphs 46-53 of the recent report of the Review Body on Top Salaries (Cmnd. 9525).

Non-Industrial Home Civil Service
Voluntary Resignations from Open Structure Grades for the period 1975 to 1984

	1975	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Permanent Secretary										
Staff in post at 1 January	42	44	44	42	41	42	41	40	37	40
Voluntary resignations	0	1	2	2	1	1	0	1	2	2
Rate per cent.	0	2·3	4·5	4·8	2·4	2·4	0	2·5	5·4	5·0
Deputy Secretary										
Staff in post at 1 January	156	156	156	156	158	158	151	143	134	137
Voluntary resignations	3	3	2	4	1	4	2	2	3	—
Rate per cent.	1·9	1·9	1·3	2·6	0·6	2·5	1·3	1·4	2·2	—
Under Secretary										
Staff in post at 1 January	633	637	632	615	614	615	579	554	524	505
Voluntary resignations	1	9	10	8	11	6	7	9	15	6
Rate per cent.	0·2	1·4	1·6	1·3	1·8	1·0	1·2	1·6	2·9	1·2
All Staff										
Staff in post at 1 January	831	837	832	813	814	814	771	737	695	682
Voluntary resignations	4	13	14	14	13	11	9	12	20	8
Rate per cent.	0·5	1·5	1·7	1·7	1·6	1·3	1·2	1·6	2·9	1·2

* Data for 1984 are provisional at present.
Source: Internal records, "Civil Service Statistics" and Mandate.

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister what evidence she has that civil servants are leaving the profession prematurely because of dissatisfaction with salary levels.

The Prime Minister: In 1984 it is estimated that the voluntary resignation rate from the Civil Service was 4·4 per cent., compared with 4·2 per cent. in 1983. Reasons for leaving, in so far as they are known, cover a wide field, including both better pay and prospects offered in the new employment, and also other factors. I also refer my hon. Friend to the recent report of the Review Body on Top Salaries (Cmnd. 9525), paragraphs 46-53 which deal with this on the basis of evidence they took on this question.

Mr. Best asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement of the state of morale in the Civil Service.

The Prime Minister: Paragraph 54 of the eighth report of the Review Body on Top Salaries (Cmnd. 9525) reports that morale in the Civil Service is unfortunately at a low ebb for reasons set out in paragraph 55. It is our earnest hope that this situation will be rectified.

Privatisation

Mr. Blair asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all the privatised undertakings in which Her Majesty's Government now hold a golden share; if she will indicate which Department is responsible for exercising the rights attached to the golden share; and if she will place a copy of each memorandum of association together with appropriate supplementary documentation in the Library.

The Prime Minister: The Government at present hold special shares in the undertakings listed:

Company	*Rights exercised by on on behalf of*
Amersham International plc	Secretary of State for Energy
British Aerospace plc	Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
British Telecommunications plc	Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Britoil plc	Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury
Cable and Wireless plc	Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury
Enterprise Oil plc	Secretary of State for Energy
Jaguar plc	Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Sealink UK Ltd	Secretary of State for Transport

I am arranging for copies of the relevant sections from the articles of association for each company to be placed in the Library of the House today.

South Africa

Mr. Hancock asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government propose to make representations to the South African Government about the imposition of a state of emergency in South Africa; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As the joint statement by Foreign Ministers issued in Brussels on 22 July made clear, we share the deep concern of our partners at the effects of the declaration of a state of emergency in South Africa, which underlines the urgent need for fundamental reform. We look to the South African Government to lift the state of emergency as soon as possible.

Rosehill Estate, Walsall

Mr. Winnick asked the Prime Minister if she will receive a deputation of tenants from the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, Walsall, to discuss the inability of the local authority to undertake work necessary to improve conditions on the estate; an if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A deputation of tenants from the Rosehill estate has already met officials from the Department of the Environment at the Department's offices on 18 July. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has subsequently written to the hon. Member about the issues raised at that meeting. While I understand the concern of the hon. Member I do not think there would be much purpose in me seeing a further deputation of council tenants.

European Council of Foreign Ministers

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister when and in what circumstances qualified majority voting was introduced into meetings of the European Council of Finance Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The voting rules of the Council of Ministers are laid down in the EEC treaty and were therefore accepted by the United Kingdom on accession. The use of unanimous, qualified majority or simple majority voting is indicated in the individual articles which contain provisions for Council action. Finance Ministers' Councils follow the same voting rules as all others. Decisions on the budget are taken by qualified majority by virtue of article 203 of the treaty.

Trustee Savings Banks

Mr. Wilson asked the Prime Minister if *(a)* between May 1979 and June 1983 and *(b)* since June 1983, she or her office have been in correspondence with Sir John Read, chairman of the Trustee Savings Bank Central Board, or any other representative of or consultant for the Trustee Savings Bank Central Board or the Trustee Savings Bank England and Wales, on the question of the flotation of trustee savings banks.

The Prime Minister: It is not my usual practice to reveal the existence or not of correspondence with third parties.

Mr. Wilson: asked the Prime Minister what meetings have taken place since June 1983 between herself and Sir John Read, chairman of the Trustee Savings Bank Central Board.

The Prime Minister: There have been no such meetings in relation to the Trustee Savings bank.

Washington (Visit)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Prime Minister what is the total estimated cost to public funds of her visit to Washington on 25 and 26 July; on what basis the total costs have been apportioned as between her official and non-official engagements during the visit; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Pensions (Nurses and Midwives)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Prime Minister if she will place a copy of her reply to the letter from the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council dated 23 July concerning, inter alia, the calculation of pensions, in the Library.

The Prime Minister: No, it is not my practice to make public correspondence that has been sent to me.

TRANSPORT

Transport Industries (Output and Employment)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the changes in output and employment in each of the transport industries for 1963 to 1973, 1973 to May 1979, and May 1979 to the latest available date.

Mr. Ridley: Following is the available information for the United Kingdom.

Table 1*(a)* provides the percentage change in the index of output between each of the calendar years specified. Table 1*(b)* gives the percentage change in the number of employees in employment between June in each of these years. Both sets of figures are analysed according to the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification. Figures for May are not available for either series.

Table 1a: Index numbers of output at constant factor cost United Kingdom
percentage change between calendar years

	1963-73† per cent.	*1973-79 per cent.*	*1979-84‡ per cent.*
1980 SIC class			
71 Railways	*	−5	−20
72 Other inland transport	+33	+1	+3
74 Sea transport	+55	−30	−36
75 Air transport	+223	†+56	+2
76 Supporting services to transport	n/a	+12	+9

Source: Central Statistical Office.

Table 1b: Employees in employment United Kingdom
percentage change between June each year

	1963-73† percentage	*1973-79 percentage*	*1979-84 percentage*
1980 SIC class			
71 Railways	−41	−8	−16
72 Other inland transport	−7	−6	−15
74 Sea transport	−29	−14	−44
75 Air transport	+77	+17	−18
75 Supporting services to transport	−42	−1	−20

Source: Department of Employment.
* Less than 0·5 per cent.
† Changes in table have been calculated using the "best-fit" of Minimum List of Headings (MLH) of the 1968 SIC.
‡ Provisional.
Notes:
1. Under SIC, own account road haulage is classified to the industry carrying out the work, which in most cases would not be one of the SIC classes above.
2. Employment figures exclude self employed.
3. Strikes affect comparisons in some cases. For example, there was a lorry drivers' strike in 1979 and the miners' strike in 1984 affected freight transport.

Manchester International Airport

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the privatisation of Manchester airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As stated in the White Paper on airports policy (Cmnd. 9542) published on 5 June, we intend to introduce legislation requiring the larger local authority-owned airports — which would include Manchester — to be formed into companies. Although we shall encourage local authority owners to introduce private capital into their airports, I have no plans to legislate to require this.

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the usage of British Airways Manchester to New York air service in comparison with the total potential market for the route within the north of England.

Mr. Michael Spicer: New international services take time to establish. BA began service between Manchester and New York only on 1 April 1985 and it would be premature to attempt any assessment at this stage.

British Airways (Privatisation)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications of the settlement reached between British Airways and the Laker Airways liquidator for the viability and timing of the proposed privatisation of British Airways.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The settlement of the Laker liquidator's action clears one hurdle in the way of the privatisation of British Airways. The Government intend that privatisation should take place as soon as possible, but there are legal issues arising out of US anti-trust law still to be resolved before a date can be set.

Fire-retardant Materials

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider requiring the use of fire-retardant materials in the construction of all newly-built coach, bus and train seating; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have already put to the bus and coach industry proposals to require seats and other soft material on new coaches to be of fire-retardant material and I hope it will be possible to bring forward draft regulations later this year.

Statutory responsibility for the safe design of railway rolling stock rests with the operators themselves, and their fire safety measures include the use of fire-retardant materials. A draft British standard code of practice for fire prevention in rolling stock, based on extensive testing, has recently been produced under the chairmanship of the Railway Inspectorate.

Helicopters

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority regarding the need for new regulations to cover the crash worthiness of civil helicopters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the Civil Aviation Authority regularly to discuss a range of matters. The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for airworthiness matters, and as recommended in last year's report of the helicopter airworthiness review panel they are reviewing all aspects of helicopter airworthiness with authorities overseas, both in the USA and in Europe. This review is currently concentrating on the subject of human tolerance to impact and to the acceleration forces in a crash. The CAA and overseas airworthiness authorities will use the results of the review to reassess helicopter design criteria and safety regulations, with a view to ensuring that occupants have as good a chance as possible of surviving a crash.

Aircraft Safety

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority the possibility of conducting new trials to test safety standards for passengers escaping from aircraft in lifejackets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CAA has statutory responsibility for the testing of passenger evacuation standards on aircraft. I understand it has received no comments to suggest there are any deficiencies in the present arrangements for conducting trials of passenger evacuation for airworthiness certification purposes. However, it keeps these matters under constant review.

Unroadworthy Vehicles

Mr. Pollock asked the Secretary of State for Transport what figures are available for the last convenient period of the number of vehicles found to be in an unroadworthy condition as revealed by MOT testing.

Mrs. Chalker: Based on a 2 per cent. sample of tests carried out at MOT testing garages in 1984 the estimated numbers of vehicles which failed the test were:

		Percentage of the number tested
Motor cycles	241,300	26
Cars and other passenger vehicles	5,195,700	39
Light goods vehicles	100,505	39

American Airlines

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a decision regarding American Airlines' application to operate daily flights between Manchester and Chicago.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Consultations with the United States Government about this application are due to take place in early August. As soon as an agreement has been reached it will be announced.

Seat Belts

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to encourage the manufacturers of car seat belts to produce belts with a similar type of release operation for use in times of emergency.

Mrs. Chalker: The design of seat belt release mechanisms has, since 1977, been covered by a European standard which requires a button or similar device of a minimum size and coloured red. The mechanism is in a standard position between the front seat and readily accessible in an emergency.

Coaches (Parking)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Government expect to be able to announce the findings of the review of the need for both on and off-street parking facilities for coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have given a commitment, in the report "Pleasure, Leisure and Jobs", to a review of the scope for making use of publicly owned land, outside local authority control, for off-street coach parking in connection with tourism and leisure. Any initiatives identified in time for the 1986 season will be announced as soon as possible.

On-street parking is a matter for the Greater London council and the boroughs as the traffic authorities. I understand that the GLC is looking at possibilities for increasing facilities for on-street coach parking, and expects to have proposals in the autumn.

Regional Airports

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had discussions with representatives of British airlines regarding the proposed emphasis on regional airports in international negotiations on traffic rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The White Paper on airports policy (Cmnd. 954) made it clear that we are ready to discuss with airlines and airport authorities their plans for developing new routes. Such discussions have already taken place and are continuing in relation to Manchester services.

Transport (Safety)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with existing safety regulations for publicly and privately owned and operated transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Detailed safety regulations cover many aspects of transport operation by road, rail, air and sea, and apply to both public and privately owned operations. By international standards we have an excellent transport safety record, but there are of course many improvements under consideration which will require amendments to the regulations.

Vehicle Registration

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of road vehicle registration prefixes showing the local area for which each is issued; and if he will undertake a simplification of the system in such a way as to provide a clearer identification of the place of registration of a vehicle.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This information is most readily available in commercially produced publications and I have asked for copies to be made available in the Library shortly. The registration number format was reviewed in 1982 following an extensive consultation exercise and I see no need for further changes at this time.

Kirkhamgate-Dishforth Motorway

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to make a decision on the route of the Kirkhamgate-Dishforth motorway; and what are the reasons for the delay in reaching a decision on the inspector's report.

Mrs. Chalker: The public inquiry into the proposals lasted for over a year and it has taken us longer than expected to give full consideration to all the points in the inspector's long and detailed report. However, I expect to announce a decision in the autumn.

M3 (Construction Costs)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer by the Minister of State on Thursday 25 July, when the junctions and flyover at the start of the M3 were constructed; whether the pressure on the walls retaining the motorway embankments and the strength of the carriageways through the junction were matters considered and approved by his Department at the design stage; whether the £3 million cost is additional to the contract price; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall write to my hon. and learned Friend.

SCOTLAND

Mantegna Picture

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what help he is giving the National Gallery for Scotland over the acquisition of the Mantegna picture.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend increased the purchase grants of the National Galleries of Scotland by 13 per cent. this year. The trustees have allocated all the resources they would normally spend on old master paintings to the Mantegna and will be prepared to augment this sum from the limited trust funds at their disposal. An application for help has been made to the national heritage memorial fund, the other main source of Government help. The trustees hope that the balance needed to save this signal masterpiece for the nation will be provided by other benefactors.

Council House Building

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate for the number of council houses to be built in Scotland in 1985; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Younger: It is not my practice to forecast annual house completions at this stage in the year.

Housing Starts

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of housing starts in Scotland in the public and private sectors, respectively, for 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Younger: The information requested is as follows:

Housing Starts

Year	*Public sector*	*Private sector*
1983	3,891	15,267
1984	3,710	14,623

These figures update those shown in table 2 of the Scottish Development Department Statistical Bulletin HSIU No. 13-Q4(84) "Housing Trends in Scotland: Quarter ended 31 December 1984" which was published in May 1985.

One-parent Families

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Ancram: *Recommendations 54 and 59 to 63* are the only parts of the Finer committee report which are specifically directed to the situation in Scotland.

Recommendation 54: since 1979 the Civil Judicial Statistics have been published in a form suggested by the working party on civil judicial statistics which took account of the Finer committee's recommendations.

Recommendations 59 and 61: these recommendations relate to the institution of a system of administrative orders and to family courts. The Government have stated that they have no plans to reconsider these recommendations which were rejected by the previous Government.

Recommendation 60: the Divorce (Scotland) Act 1976 established irretrievable breakdown of marriage as the sole ground of divorce and applied the same criteria for actions of separation. Since 1 May 1984 the sheriff court and the Court of Session have had concurrent jurisdiction in divorce actions under the Divorce Jurisdiction, Court Fees and Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1983.

Recommendation 62: the recently enacted Family Law (Scotland) Act makes fresh and important provision in the law of Scotland regarding aliment, in accordance with the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission.

Recommendation 63: the considerations underlying this recommendation continue to be borne in mind. The Scottish Law Commission has reviewed certain key areas of Scots family law which were discussed in the Finer report. Its report on occupancy rights in the matrimonial home and domestic violence formed the basis for the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981. The recommendations contained in the commission's report on aliment and financial provision have been enacted in the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985. The Government are considering the commission's report on illegitimacy.

Milk Production

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the amount of milk produced in the first three months of the 1985 quota year; what is the comparison with 1983 levels for the same period; and what percentage above or below quota production is at present.

Mr. John MacKay: No figures are available on the volume of milk produced for direct sale during the first three months of 1985-86 quota year. Wholesale deliveries totalled 373·5 million litres compared to deliveries of 398·5 million litres in the same period in 1983-84, before quotas were introduced. It is estimated that deliveries as a whole were about 2 per cent. above quota.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will maintain the current Scottish share of the milk production quota.

Mr. John MacKay: The distribution of total quota within the United Kingdom and the quota of individual producers was established at the outset of quotas last year, on the basis of historical levels of production and trends.

Any alteration in that basic distribution would affect producers' quotas and this is not proposed.

Refuse Collection

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and which councils in Scotland operate a refuse disposal collection through contract with private companies.

Mr. Ancram: Comprehensive information is not held centrally. I understand, however, that no district councils in Scotland operate their refuse collection services wholly through private companies, although some limited arrangements of this kind may exist in rural areas and on outlying islands. Clydebank, Hamilton, Kilmarnock and Loudoun, Eastwood and Dumbarton district councils contract out virtually all of their refuse disposal services to private companies.

Peterhead Harbours Bill

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he introduced the Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill before the transcript of the evidence given at the recent parliamentary inquiry was made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Younger: I am required by statute to submit a provisional order to Parliament in a confirmation Bill as soon as conveniently may be following an inquiry into such an order. There is no statutory requirement relating to the transcript of evidence. If, as seems likely, the Bill has to be reintroduced in November, the transcript may, however, be expected to be available.

Islands Councils

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to announce his response to the report of Sir David Montgomery's committee on the functions of the islands councils.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 23 July 1985. A copy of my detailed response to the committee's recommendations has been placed in the Library.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the locations of privately owned stores which are to be used by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce for the storage of grain in the coming year, giving the capacity of each store and the level of payments from public funds for their use; and if he will indicate which of these stores are additional to 1984's provision.

Mr. John MacKay: Storage in Scotland for intervention grain in the coming year will be taken up as required. Locations, capacities and costs are not yet known.

Torness Power Station

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that Torness power station will not be commissioned until all appropriate safety checks have been satisfactorily completed by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am advised by the Health and Safety Commission that the commissioning of Torness nuclear power station cannot commence until a consent has been issued by the Health and Safety Executive on the advice of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. The consent will not be issued until the inspectorate is satisfied that it is safe to commission the station.

Children (Prison Detention)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the current operation of unruly certificates procedure for the detaining of children in prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Children remanded or committed for trial in custody are normally located in accommodation provided by local authorities. Children over 14 will only be remanded to a penal establishment where a court has certified that they are unruly or depraved. The remand of children in penal establishments occurs only exceptionally. There were 130 such "unruly" certificates issued in 1984 (a reduction of 10 per cent. from the figure for 1983).

Improved procedures for consultation aimed at minimising the use of "unruly" certificates were introduced in 1984 and I am not aware of any problems. It is a requirement of prison rules that remand inmates are, so far as possible kept apart from convicted inmates. Children remanded in a penal establishment are so far as possible kept apart form other inmates on remand.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the average length of time children were held in prison on unruly certificates in each of the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984; and what were the maximum and minimum lengths of stay in prison on unruly certificates in these same years.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

	Average stay (days)	*Minimum stay (days)*	*Maximum stay (days*
1983	26	1	108
1984	30	1	163

The figures for years prior to 1983 are not available in the form requested.

Dunblane Bypass

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) why the announcement of the line of route of the Dunblane bypass has been delayed; and on how many occasions deadlines set by his Department have been missed since the project was first mooted;

(2) if he will now announce the line of route of the Dunblane bypass;

(3) when he expects to begin construction of the Dunblane bypass.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department has only now received the consultants' draft report on alternative routes for the bypass, and is giving urgent consideration to its conclusions. I hope it will be possible to publish draft orders for the preferred route before the end of 1985.

It was originally expected that the draft orders would be published in the early summer of this year, but this has not proved possible because of difficulties which the consultants met in completing their studies. The progress of the scheme will depend on how quickly the statutory procedures can be completed and on the availability of finance.

Planning Zones

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of submissions he received in response to his consultation paper on simplified planning zones; and how many bodies were in favour of the proposals in his paper.

Mr. Ancram: Thirty responses were received to the consultation paper issued by the Scottish Development

Department on 17 May 1984. General support for the concept of simplified planning zones was expressed in 10 of the responses, although some of these included comments on the details of the proposals. Four responses did not contain views either in favour or against the concept of simplified planning zones.

Housing (Shared Ownership Schemes)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the allocation and outturn of expenditure by the Housing Corporation in Scotland on shared ownership schemes in each of the years for which figures are available, indicating the names and numbers of housing associations participating.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Allocation** £ million	*Expenditure** £ million
1981-82	1·9	1·9
1982-83	5·3	5·3
1983-84†	4·0	0·3
1984-85	3·3	3·3

* The figures represent the proportion of the total programme cost to be met from Housing Corporation funds; this can vary according to the funding method used and the average percentage share of the lenders sold initially.

† The majority of the 1983-84 programme was carried forward to early 1984-85 at the request of the Housing Corporation.

Participating Housing Associations	*Programme(s)*
Link Housing Association	All programmes
Lowlands Housing Society	All programmes
Port of Leith Housing Association	All programmes
Shetlaven Housing Association	1982-83
Langmuir Housing Association	1982-83 and 1984-85
Grampian Housing Association	1984-85
Hillcrest Housing Association	1984-85

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the amount of money which will be spent on the assisted places scheme in Scotland in the current financial year; and what are the planned limits of expenditure in subsequent years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 21 March 1985 to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) at column 607-8.

Scottish National Camps Association

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what grants have been allocated for the current financial year to the Scottish National Camps Association; and what were the grants for the last three financial years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

	Recurrent grant £	*Capital grant* £
1982-83	85,200	—
1983-84	92,016	24,796
1984-85	94,778	—
1985-86	85,000	—

Tertiary Education Advisory Committee

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to receive the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Committee.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The position has not changed since my written answer of 17 July 1985 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) at column *83*.

The chairman of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council has informed my right hon. Friend that the council expects to submit its report on the future strategy for higher education in Scotland by about the end of October.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table for the estimated number of additional workers in jobs as employees created from the beginning of 1983 to the end of 1984 after making allowance for the additional number of second jobs and the additional number of places on temporary employment schemes.

Mr. Allan Stewart: [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: The number of employees in employment in Scotland rose by over 11,000 between December 1982 and December 1984. It is estimated that over the same period the number of participants in special employment and training schemes included in the employees in employment estimates fell by over 13,000. There are no estimates of changes in the number of second jobs over this period.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public sector jobs there are, at the latest available date in the rural areas of Scotland; and how many there were in 1979.

Mr. Younger [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: The information requested is not available. However, estimates of the number of employees in major parts of the public sector in the area of the Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, Highlands, Islands areas and Tayside local authorities (the Scottish regions which cover most of rural Scotland) are set out in the table.

	1979	*1985*
Non-industrial civil service (at 1 January)	7,850	7,750
Local government (at March)*	74,370	75,600
National health service (at 30 September)	37,050	†39,552

* The 1979 estimate has been adjusted to take account of certain employees first counted on 1981. The 1985 estimate is provisional.

† This estimate relates to September 1984.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Expenditure

Mr. Merchant asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the cost to the Government in the fiscal years 1979-80 to 1984-85 of *(a)* mortgage interest relief, *(b)* tax allowances on pension contributions, *(c)* regional subsidies, *(d)* enterprise zones (rates and tax reliefs) and *(e)* the business expansion scheme (business start-up scheme), respectively;

(2) what was total Government expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product in each of the years

from 1979-80 to 1984-85; and what proportion *(a)* mortgage interest relief, *(b)* tax allowances on pension contributions, *(c)* regional subsidies, *(d)* rates and tax relief, associated with enterprise zones and *(e)* the business expansion scheme or business start-up scheme, represent, respectively, of the total.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Job Creation Cost

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the most recent estimates of the cost per job created by *(a)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(b)* the loan guarantee scheme, *(c)* the business expansion scheme and *(d)* regional development grants.

Mr. Peter Rees: The schemes have very different purposes and different means of operation. Estimates of the cost per job of the different schemes are therefore not directly comparable.

Contingency Reserve

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present level of the contingency reserve; and what payments have been made from the reserve since January.

Mr. Peter Rees: The public expenditure planning total of £134·2 billion for 1985-86 includes a reserve of £5 billion. It is too early in the financial year to estimate the outturn for the planning total; but the reserve, which was increased from £3 billion to £5 billion at the time of the budget, is expected to be adequate to meet claims on it. An estimate for the outturn on the public expenditure planning total in 1984-85, and hence the claims on the reserve in that year, was published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Economic Policy

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received about the presentation by his Department of Her Majesty's Government's economic policy; and what replies he has sent.

Mr. Peter Rees: Neither my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, nor I have received since the Budget any letters on the presentation of the Government's economic policy.

Taxation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1985-86, taking account of the proposed child benefit rate for November 1985, the information on tax break-even points, tax-free income and tax thresholds contained in his answer of 6 December 1984 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, (Dr. McDonald) *Official Report*, columns *246-7*.

Mr. Moore: Latest estimates for 1984-85 and 1985-86 are as follows:

	Threshold at current prices	*Threshold at 1949-50 prices*	*Threshold as percentage of average manual earnings*	*Tax free income at current prices*	*Tax free income at 1949-50 prices*	*Tax free income as percentage of average income*	*Break-even point at current prices*	*Break-even point at 1949-50 prices*	*Break-even point as percentage of average manual earnings*
	£	*Index 1949-50 = 100*	*Percentage*	£	*Index 1949-50 = 100*	*Percentage*	£	*Index 1949-50 = 100*	*Percentage*
Single person									
1984-85	2,005	134·9	24·0	2,005	134·9	24·0	2,005	134·9	24·0
1985-86	2,205	140·4	24·7	2,205	140·4	24·7	2,205	140·4	24·7
Married man without children									
1984-85	3,155	132·6	37·8	3,155	132·6	37·8	3,155	132·6	37·8
1985-86	3,455	137·8	38·7	3,455	137·8	38·7	3,455	137·8	38·7
Married man with 2 children									
1984-85	3,155	93·5	37·8	3,844	98·4	42·3	5,453	117·6	65·4
1985-86	3,455	86·8	38·7	4,173	101·0	43·3	5,849	119·3	65·5
Married man with 4 children									
1984-85	3,155	62·6	37·8	4,534	83·3	46·6	7,750	110·5	92·9
1985-86	3,455	65·0	38·7	4,891	85·2	47·2	8,242	111·2	92·4

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his latest estimate of the proportion of revenue from taxation accounted for by the different categories of tax on the same basis as in his written answer dated 25 November 1983, *Official Report*, columns *315-6*; and if he will provide similar figures for 1979 and 1973.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess, therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Inland Revenue (Performance Bonus Scheme)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Association

of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes, through the council of the Civil Service unions on the performance bonus scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: None.

EC Budget

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he made of the assumptions made by the European Commission for the 1986 preliminary draft budget for the level of world cereal prices and the exchange rate of the United States dollar to the European currency unit; and what is his policy towards the assumptions and their effect on the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We shall be scrutinising the Commission's assumptions about the ecu:dollar exchange rate and world cereal prices very closely in the discussions about their preliminary draft Budget for 1986 which are just beginning in preparation for the Budget Council in September. The Government will also continue to press in the Agriculture Council for a policy of price restraint for cereals which would help to reduce Community expenditure in this sector.

Variable Import Levies

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* the figures for 1984, 1985 and 1986, in thousand million European currency units, total Community receipts of variable import levies charged on third country imports, by principal agricultural commodity, namely; wheat, butter, beef, and so on and by NIMEX chapter.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this detailed information is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

EC Expenditure

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the fastest growing areas of Government expenditure by broad policy area since Community accession for the total time period and for any convenient sub-periods within the total, comparing these with the growth in agricultural spending by Her Majesty's Government both gross and net of Community refunds, as appropriate, expressed in pound million sterling and compound percentage rates of change.

Mr. Peter Rees: Figures for the main components of the public expenditure planning total, which show an increase over the period 1973-74 to 1984-85, are as follows:

£ billion

	Cash		*Real terms**		*Percentage change between 1973-74 and 1984-85 in real terms**
	1973-74	*1984-85*	*1973-74*	*1984-85*	
					per cent.
Social Security	5·8	38·0	20·9	36·4	+74
Law and Order	0·8	5·3	3·1	5·0	+63
Health and Personal Social Services	3·0	15·8	10·7	15·1	+41
Defence	3·4	17·1	12·5	16·3	+31
Other	16·3	53·5	59·0	51·2	−13
Planning Total	29·3	129·7	106·1	124·1	+17
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food†	0·4	2·1	1·6	2·0	+23

Refunds from the European Community are in respect of the UK's net contribution to the Community Budget as a whole and cannot be attributed directly to agricultural expenditure. Figures are for gross agricultural spending.

* Calculated using cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator (base year, 1983-84).

† Excluding domestic agricultural spending under the responsibility of the territorial departments.

Mr. Shersby asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report*, for 1984, 1985 and estimates for 1986, in thousand million European currency units *(a)* total spending by the European Communities, *(b)* total spending by each Community institution, *(c)* the main policy categories for expenditure by the European Commission and *(d)* the total of own resources and resources raised by loans from the member states.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Maintenance Payments (Tax Relief)

Ms. Richardson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sum eligible for tax relief as maintenance payments; how many taxpayers get this relief; and what is the average annual amount on which relief is given.

Mr. Moore: It is estimated that, in 1985-86, £100 million for alimony and £500 million for small maintenance payments will be eligible for tax relief involving 50,000 and 475,000 taxpayers respectively with respective average annual amounts of £2,000 and £1,050.

One-parent Families (Finer Committee)

Ms. Harman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Pension and Life Assurance Funds

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures for 1983 and 1984 of the growth in pension and life assurance funds on the same basis as that given in his written answer dated 7 March 1984, *Official Report*, column *581*; and what information he has for these and the earlier years of the percentage invested outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Taxation and National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of tax and national insurance payable in 1985-86 on the same basis as that given in his answer of 5 April 1984, *Official Report*, columns *629-630*.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount deducted by way of interest before charging corporation tax in the current financial year in cash terms and as a proportion of trading profits; and if he will provide an estimate for manufacturing industry and for the corporate sector less production industries.

Mr. Moore: The figures of interest paid by companies and public corporations appear in tables 5.1 and 6.2 respectively of the "National Income Blue Book", together with gross profits. The charge to corporation tax in the current financial year is largely determined by profits, interest, etc. in 1984 and these figures will appear in the 1985 "National Income Blue Book" to be published in September. Figures up to 1983 were published in the 1984 issue. Apart from the separation of the company totals into industrial and commercial companies (table 5.4) and financial companies and institutions (table 5.5), there is no industrial breakdown.

Petroleum Revenue

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average amount of petroleum revenue and other taxes on a barrel of North sea oil as a percentage of the total price at present in the case of a field on which development and depreciation charges have already been exhausted.

Mr. Moore: The average amount of tax and royalties as a percentage of the gross value of North sea oil depends on factors such as the level of operating costs and the amount of production in each chargeable period. The marginal tax and royalty rate for a barrel of oil produced this year from a mature oil field which is paying full rates of tax, assuming no change in operating costs, is 87 per cent.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a list showing, for each port in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall *(a)* the number of Customs and Excise staff directly employed on customs duties and *(b)* the number of boats available for their use;

(2) if he will describe the nature and scope of 24-hour coverage of ports in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall by Customs and Excise staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 for each organisation treated as a nationalised industry in at least one year the actual or planned figures, as appropriate, for capital requirements and financing in a form identical to table 5.1 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9428-II;

(2) if he will publish tables for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86, comparable with table 5.1 in the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9428-II, showing entries or blanks as appropriate for those organisations which have been treated as nationalised industries in at least one of those years.

Mr. Peter Rees: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table in cash terms showing the successive estimates for nationalised industries' total external finance, as in the bottom line of table 5.1 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9428-II, in annual public expenditure White Paper since Cmnd. 7439, together with the eventual outturn.

Mr. Peter Rees: Precise comparisons cannot be made between planned and outturn external finance figures because of a number of changes which have taken place in the composition of the nationalised industry sector and of external finance. Available information is as follows:

£ million cash

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Cmnd. 7439*	2,155	3,183	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cmnd. 7841*†	—	2,688	2,011	1,068	326	−682	—	—	—	—

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	£ million cash 1987-88
Cmnd. 8175*	—	—	2,967	2,284	1,046	73	—	—	—	—
Cmnd. 8494‡	—	—	—	3,393	2,739	2,570	2,100	—	—	—
Cmnd. 8789†	—	—	—	—	2,253	2,625	2,261	1,803	—	—
Cmnd. 9143¶	—	—	—	—	—	2,500	1,881	1,145	91	—
Cmnd. 9428●	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,211	1,319	178	−110
Outturn■	2,020	2,613	2,900	3,254	1,852	2,285	3,859	—	—	—

Notes:

1. For each White Paper the first figure shows estimated outturn for the then current year. Figures for the following years show expenditure plans.
2. Figures exclude definitional changes in external finance.

* In Cmnds. 7439, 7841, 8175 expenditure plans were presented on a volume basis. These figures have been converted to cash using GDP deflators.

† Figures for British Aerospace excluded beyond 1979-80 from this and subsequent White Papers.

‡ Figures for National Freight Company excluded from 1981-82. Figures for BNOC and British Transport Docks Board excluded from 1983-84. In subsequent White Papers figures for BNOC are included but from 1983-84 take account of disposal of former exploration and production interests. Civil Aviation Authority figures included for the first time.

¶ Water Authorities included for the first time.

● Figures for BT and British Airways excluded from 1985-86 and for British Shipbuilders (Warshipbuilding Division) and the National Bus Company from 1986-87. London Regional Transport figures included for the first time.

■ Outturn figures are taken from Cmnd. 9428 for years to 1983-84 but CAA is only included from 1983-84 and Water Authorities from 1984-85. Privatised industries are included up to the point of privatisation. The 1984-85 outturn is taken from Cmnd. 9569, the 1984-85 Cash Limits Provisional Outturn White Paper.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table in cash terms showing, for each of the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 for each of the organisations which has been included in at least one year in the equivalent of table 5.3 of the public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9428-II, those asset sales not included in the special sale of assets programme; whether these proceeds have directly accrued to the Exchequer or have remained in the relevant businesses; and, where these have been set, if he will publish the target proceeds from such asset sales which have been set in the appropriate investment and Financing Review.

Mr. Peter Rees: All industries dispose of fixed assets which are surplus to operational requirements. The receipts from such sales, and other asset disposals which do not score as special sales of assets, are retained by the industry concerned, adding to its internal resources. The level of such asset sales, by industry, for the years requested has been:

£ million*	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	†1984-85
National Coal Board	28	21	24	22	24	22
Electricity (England and Wales)	16	10	17	21	23	28
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board	—	—	1	1	1	5
South of Scotland Electricity Board	—	1	1	1	1	2
British Gas Corporation	8	7	7	7	13	95
British National Oil Corporation	—	—	—	—	—	—
British Steel Corporation	21	59	66	68	17	50
British Telecom	77	—	—	—	—	—
Post Office	19	9	7	3	6	5
National Girobank	—	—	—	—	—	—
British Airways Board	11	15	15	77	11	31
British Airports Authority	—	—	—	—	1	—
British Railways Board	31	48	34	99	99	160
British Transport Docks Board	1	1	1	—	—	—
British Waterways Board	—	—	—	—	—	2
National Freight Company Ltd	10	17	18	—	—	—
National Bus Company	4	11	6	6	7	8
Scottish Transport Group	1	1	—	—	1	1
British Aerospace	—	—	—	—	—	—
British Shipbuilders	3	2	2	2	13	1
Civil Aviation Authority	—	—	1	—	—	—
Water (England and Wales)	10	13	16	11	13	20
Enterprise Oil	—	—	—	—	—	—

* Rounded to nearest £ million. Where industries have been privatised the figures given relate to the period up to privatisation.

† Provisional outturn.

Although the potential for such asset sales is taken into account in the setting of external financing limits, formal disposal targets are not set.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table of special asset sales for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86, providing individual items under each of the sub-headings *(a)* privatised nationalised industries and public shareholdings, *(b)* other asset sales and *(c)* revenue offsets.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 1 July 1985, at columns *41-2*, which covers the years 1979-80 to 1984-85. So far in 1985-86, the residual shareholding in

British Aerospace has been sold, and there has been the second instalment payable in respect of the British Telecom sale.

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* those organisations treated as nationalised industries with negative external financing limits; and if he will place appropriate documentation in the Library, indicating the amounts involved, the terms on which such deposits are made and any Government guidelines on this subject matter.

Mr. Peter Rees: Table 5.5 of the 1985 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) gives a list of nationalised industries and their 1985-86 external financing limits (EFLs). The further information requested by the hon. Member is to be found in appendices 4 and 7 to the first report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, session 1983-84 (HC 170). Copies of this report and the 1985 public expenditure White Paper are available in the Library.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which nationalised industries present their annual accounts on a current cost basis and which on a historic cost basis; and whether it is his policy to secure a greater degree of uniformity.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: All nationalised industries currently produce main or supplementary accounts on a current cost basis. In 1984, current cost main accounts were produced by the Electricity Council, Central Electricity Generating Board, British Gas Corporation, Post Office and British Airports Authority. Nationalised industries have rightly given prominence in their accounts to the effect of changing prices. Wherever appropriate, the Government's policy is to encourage progress towards greater uniformity in nationalised industries' financial reporting.

British Gas Corporation

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the financial targets, *(b)* the external financing limits and *(c)* the performance aims, which have been set for the British Gas Corporation since 1972; and if he will provide comparable outturn figures.

Mr. Peter Rees: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Drugs

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing, for each year since 1979 *(a)* the number and *(b)* the estimated value of seizures of smuggled drugs by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, excluding seizures at London Heathrow airport.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list showing for each port and airport, excluding London Heathrow airport *(a)* the number and *(b)* the estimated value of seizures of smuggled drugs by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise during 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Moreover, it would not be in the public interest for this information to be disclosed.

Water Authorities

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the financial targets, *(b)* external financing limits and *(c)* the performance aims which have been set for the regional water authorities since the publication of Cmnd. 7131 for nationalised industries.

Mr. Peter Rees: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the financial targets, *(b)* the external financing limits, and *(c)* the performance aims, which have been set for the Electricity Council, the Central Electricity Generating Board and area boards since the publication of Cmnd. 7131.

Mr. Peter Rees: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Objects in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement before the House rises for the summer recess on Vote arrangements governing the acceptance of works of art and museum objects in lieu of tax.

Mr. Peter Rees: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones).

Sterling

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the new central rate for sterling against other exchange rate mechanism currencies and the ecu.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Notional central rates against sterling (since 22 July 1985)*

	Rate
ECU	1,8008
Deutschemark	4·03089
French franc	12·3607
Italian lira	2,738·28
Dutch guilder	4·54174
Belgian franc	80·7330
Danish Krone	14·6378
Irish punt	1·30481

* ie, amount of currency per £1

Personal Data (Transfers)

Dr. Marek asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that, when personal

data are transferred from Government Departments or other organisations to the Inland Revenue, such transfers are fully recorded and documented by the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Moore: It would not be practicable for the Inland Revenue to record and document each occasion on which personal data are transferred to the Department by a third party. The Inland Revenue is, however, setting up a registration system under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Strang asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total of overseas investment for each of the last four quarters; and what were the comparable figures six years ago.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Overseas investment for the second quarter of 1985 is not yet available. The figures for United Kingdom private investment overseas for the four previous quarters and the corresponding quarters six years ago will be found on page 83 of the June edition of "Economic Trends", published by the CSO. However, the portfolio investment component of the figure for the first quarter of 1985 is revised in the Institutional Investment press notice, published by the CSO on 19 July 1985.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his Department has any objection in principle to the Trustee Savings bank central board giving full discount on shares to the present depositors of trustee savings banks when the trustee savings banks are floated as public limited companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government consider that this is a matter for the TSB central board to decide, and the TSB Act 1985 makes due provision for the board to do so.

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any Minister or official in his Department participated in any way in the working groups established by Trustee Savings bank central board to examine matters connected with the possible flotation of trustee savings banks.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No Treasury Minister or official has participated in working groups set up by the Trustee Savings bank central board for this purpose. The Treasury and the central board did, however, work closely in preparing the recent legislation.

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a timetable showing the dates of formal meetings between Ministers and representatives of the Trustee Savings bank central board on the issue of floating the trustee savings banks as a public limited company.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

Mr. Wilson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if Ministers of his Department or officials ever asked the trustees of the Trustee Savings bank Scotland, in written form or verbally, if they had obtained legal opinion on who owns a trustee savings bank;

(2) when his Department was first aware that the Trustee Savings bank central board had obtained a legal opinion from John Murray QC on the question of ownership of a trustee savings bank in Scotland;

(3) if his Department has at any time since May 1979 contributed any view to any Trustee Savings bank central board or subsidiary working group on the question of the correct legal handling of the produce of the trustee savings banks in the event that trustee savings banks are transformed to public limited companies;

(4) how many times *(a)* between April 1979 and July 1983 and *(b)* since July 1983 the Ministers in his Department met official representatives of the Trustee Savings banks central board;

(5) if Ministers in his Department or officials ever asked the Trustee Savings bank central board, in written form or verbally, if they had obtained legal opinion on the question, in Scottish law, of who owns a trustee savings bank;

(6) what study was made by Ministers in his Department and officials of the rules of the Trustee Savings bank, Scotland, and in particular rule 3(3) before embarking on enabling legislation aimed at the reorganisation of the trustee savings banks into a public limited company;

(7) how many times *(a)* between April 1979 and July 1983 and *(b)* since July 1983 Ministers in his Department have met trustees of the Trustee Savings bank, Scotland;

(8) how many meetings there were at official-only level between his Department and Trustee Savings bank central board members or representatives between April 1979 and July 1983; and how many meetings were held at this level between July 1983 and the present date;

(9) when his Department received a copy of the legal opinion of John Murray QC, first handed to the Trustee Savings bank central board in April 1979;

(10) when he reached the conclusion that in Scots law a trustee savings bank was not owned by its depositors; and if he will make a statement;

(11) if he has sought advice from outside the Government as to the compatibility of the flotation of trustee savings banks, as it might affect the rights of depositors, with the United Kingdom's international treaty obligations; and if he will make a statement;

(12) if at any meetings between the former Economic Secretary to the Treasury, or his successor, or himself and representatives of any body within the trustee savings bank movement, the questions of ownership of a trustee savings bank were raised; and if he will make a statement;

(13) if he will make a statement on the letter dated 27 April 1982 received by his Department from an authorised person on the Trustee savings bank central board; whose signature was on the letter; and what reference the letter made to legal opinion regarding the ownership in Scots law of a trustee savings bank;

(14) if any requests were received from any working group of the Trustee Savings bank central board or a subsidiary of the central board for Treasury or ministerial guidance or advice on questions of the ownership of a trustee savings bank or the right of any category of person or persons to the produce of a trustee savings bank; and if he will make a statement;

(15) if his Department is any way contributed to Mr. David Thorn's committee's consideration of produce, in connection with the Trustee Savings bank central board's objective to float the trustee savings banks; and if he will make a statement;

(16) if he will list the meetings between Ministers in his Department and the Trustee Savings banks central board in July 1983; and if he will state the purpose of the meetings and outline any action taken by his Department as a result.

(17) when his Department reached the conclusion that in the event of the flotation of the trustee savings banks there was no liability to depositors in respect of produce;

(18) if his Department received any preliminary findings of any working groups or committees of the Trustee Savings bank central board on the issues surrounding the proposition to float trustee savings banks; and if he will make a statement;

(19) if it is his practice to commission opinion from senior counsel on matters appertaining to the affairs or prospects of the Trustee Savings bank, Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(20) if he received any representations from the Trustee Savings bank central board or the trustees of the Trustee Saving bank Scotland requesting him to obtain a legal opinion on who, in Scots law, owns a trustee Savings bank; and if he will make a statement;

(21) what monitoring functions his Department exercises in respect of the Trustee Savings bank central board's operations; and if he will make a statement;

(22) how much his Department spent from public funds in obtaining outside legal opinion on the ownership in Scots law of a trustee savings bank; who was commissioned, and when, to provide the opinion or opinions; what was the answer on ownership; and if he will cause the opinion or opinions to be placed in the Library;

(23) if his Department at any time intimated to the Trustee Savings bank central board that it was Her Majesty's Government's view that, in Scots law, depositors own a trustee savings bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Private Health Insurance Companies

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Revenue of the tax concessions to private health insurance companies.

Mr. Moore: It is not possible to distinguish private health insurance companies from other types of insurance company. Insurance of any sort if not a qualifying activity under the business expansion schemes.

Private Hospitals and Clinics

Mr. Dobson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost to the Revenue of tax concessions involving the establishment of private hospitals and clinics.

Mr. Moore: The hon. Member may have in mind tax relief under the business expansion scheme. About £4 million of the £100 million invested under the scheme in 1983-84 went into companies operating nursing homes or private hospitals. Information for 1984-85 is as yet too incomplete to provide a reliable estimate. At an average level of relief of 50 per cent., this represents about £2 million revenue cost.

Asset Sales Programme

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each of the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 and by identifiable item within the public expenditure programme, those asset sales which are excluded from the special asset sales programme; and if he will relate those figures to the information contained in the annual public expenditure White Papers and the national income accounts Blue Book.

Mr. Peter Rees: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the reasons for increasing the minimum premium bond to £10;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of the increase in the minimum premium bond to £10 on the sale of bonds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Privatisation

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will place in the Library details of the number and proportion of shares in public corporations privatised during the period 1979 to the present issued at quotation to employee shareholders and the details and costs of the schemes which were funded by *(a)* the company and *(b)* the Exchequer; and if he will state which Vote the Exchequer funding was accounted under;

(2) if he will place in the Library a list giving the dates of all privatisation share issues from 1979 to the present, distinguishing between those issued by tender and those at fixed prices, together with details of schemes for promoting small shareholding, and the cost of such schemes including details of the initial allocation of shares by size band in all cases, the percentage of applications received under each size band, an analysis by size band of the compilation of the share register and the latest available figures.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Capital Transfer Tax

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Government expect to be able to announce the findings of the inquiry into the arrangements for accepting works of art in lieu of capital transfer tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Rees: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones).

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Pendry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will examine the circumstances under which, under the enterprise allowance scheme, unemployed people who have set up their own successful business and who are in receipt of the £40 per week allowance, may have to repay the whole amount because of the effect of the rules of assessment to income tax under schedule D, case I and the incidence of class IV national insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Departmental Committees of Inquiry

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make it his practice to place in the Library an annual report of the number and nature of departmental committees of inquiry established by his Department;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of providing the information requested by the hon. Member for Enfield, North about departmental committees of inquiry referred to in the replies of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *141-42* and 24 July;

(3) if he is satisfied with the manner in which records relating to departmental committees of inquiry established by his Department are maintained.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy in the Library.

Asset Valuation

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Government take to satisfy themselves regarding the procedures and practices adopted for asset valuation in the electricity supply, gas and water industries, and, in particular, that they provide a satisfactory basis for reporting profitability and setting financial targets.

Mr. Peter Rees: The policies and methods used to value assets are set out in the industries' annual reports and accounts. The industries' auditors, who are appointed by the relevant Secretary of State, report whether in their opinion the accounts, which include values for assets, have been properly prepared in order to show a true and fair view of the profit for the period. Financial targets are based on the asset values given in the accounts.

Directors

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those privatised enterprises in which the Government are entitled to appoint directors; if he will give the names and terms of office of those so appointed; if he will indicate the occasions on which those Government directors have conferred with Her Majesty's Government in their capacity as Government directors; if he will place copies of their job descriptions, terms of reference and letters of appointment in the Library; and what part these directors play, where appropriate, in ensuring that the safeguards enshrined in golden shares are being, and will prospectively be, adhered to.

Mr. Moore: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many jobs have been created by the business expansion scheme; and what is the average cost of each job created.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985, c. *44*]: I regret the delay in providing a reply. No official estimate is available of the number of new jobs created as a result of investment under the business expansion scheme. However, some 12,000 people were employed in 495 of the companies in which investment was made in 1983-84: similar information about the other companies, over 100, in which investment was made is not available. The revenue cost of the scheme in that year is estimated at £50 million. It is too early to provide information in respect of 1984-85 investments.

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average failure rate among firms who have received support from the business expansion scheme; and how these figures compare with the average failure rate of small businesses in general.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 July 1985]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Dewar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies in Scotland benefited from assistance under the business expansion scheme in the last year for which records are available; and what proportion of *(a)* the total number of United Kingdom payments made under the scheme were in Scotland.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*,4 July 1985, c. *264*]: I regret the delay in providing a reply. The latest estimates are that in 1983-84 investment of just over £100 million was made under the scheme in just over 600 companies. Of these, 51 companies were in Scotland and these companies between them raised £4·6 million under the scheme. Detailed information in respect of 1984-85 is not yet available.

Average Earnings

Mrs. Roe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of minutes or hours of work a male manual labourer on average earnings needed to complete in each of the years 1975 to 1985, respectively, in order to earn the average retail price in that year of the following items *(a)* weekly rent of a three-bedroomed council dwelling, *(b)* weekly mortgage repayment on a newly built semi-detached house, *(c)* five gallons of petrol, *(d)* monthly second class railway season ticket Brighton-Victoria, *(e)* large loaf of bread, *(f)* 20 cigarettes, *(g)* one pint of beer, *(h)* one bottle of whisky, *(i)* dinner for two in a restaurant, *(j)* a dishwasher, *(k)* a pair of shoes, *(l)* oil central heating for a three-bedroomed dwelling for one week and *(m)* two pounds of lamb.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 July 1985, c. *42*]: I regret that this information could not be supplied in full except at disproportionate cost.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table on the same lines as given in his reply of 6 March 1984, *Official Report*, column *501* of the estimated percentage of each income band benefiting from mortgage interest relief *(a)* with investment income and *(b)* without.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. *258*]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will bring up to date the figures in his written reply dated 27 March 1984, *Official Report*, columns *105-6*, concerning the mortgage advances and the price of dwellings together with the estimated average cost of mortgage interest tax relief per mortgagee in the current financial year and the assumed average rate of interest;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* single persons, *(b)* married persons with one earner and *(c)* married persons with two earners each aged (i) under 65 years and (ii) 65 years and over, the estimated number of incomes in each income range starting at a lower limit of £2,000, and the total tax, as a proportion of total income, excluding family income supplement.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. *259*]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Age Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the yield from the abolition of age allowances for *(a)* married couples and *(b)* single persons; and if he will include in each case the cost of abolishing the income limit by abolishing the clawback.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. *258*]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Taxable Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated number of earning wives and *(a)* the number of taxpaying wives ranged by the couples' joint taxable income and of wives ranged by wife's income, on the same basis as in his predecessor's written answer dated 28 March 1983, *Official Report*, column *59*.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 July 1985, c. *258*]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Married Women

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table on the lines of his predecessor's written answer dated 28 March 1983, *Official Report*, column *59*, showing the number and cost of wives' earnings election at various levels of joint total income under the existing tax regime and under an alternative which provided for *(a)* an increase in married and single allowances to £4,500 and £2,250, respectively, *(b)* two reduced rate bands of £1,000 at 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. respectively, *(c)* a standard rate band of £5,000 at 30 per cent, followed by *(d)* three higher rate bands of £4,000 and four of £5,000 all in 5 percentage point steps, but making no provision for any other allowances.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, c. *286*]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Early Leaver Entitlements

Mr. Walters asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to introduce fiscal incentives to seek to encourage pension organisations to preserve and revalue early leaver entitlements.

Mr. Peter Rees [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: The Social Security Bill 1985 will require pension schemes to revalue the deferred pensions of early leavers by the increase of prices up to 5 per cent. per annum compound, and it is intended that this will take effect from 1 January 1986 for pension rights accrued on or after 1 January 1985.

Married and Single Person Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost to the Exchequer of raising the married and single person allowances to £4,500 and £2,250, respectively; and how much of this would represent a parallel increase in the wife's earnings allowance.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Income Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue is raised through income tax on the difference between the relevant personal allowance and *(a)* £4,500 for a married person and *(b)* £2,250 for a single person.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: I regret that it has not been possible to provide an answer before the summer recess. Therefore, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much revenue is lost by *(a)* wife's earnings election and *(b)* wife's earnings allowance;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated cost of wife's earnings allowance by tax unit income bands in the current financial year.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his replies*, 22 July 1985]: The information is as follows:

(a) The cost of the wife's earnings election is estimated to be £200 million in a full year at 1985-86 levels of income.

(b) The following table shows the latest estimates of the cost of the wife's earned income allowance in a full year at 1985-86 levels of income and allowances.

Range of joint taxable income (1985-86) (lower limit) £	*Cost of wife's earned income allowance* £ million
0	0
2,000	0
3,000	5
4,000	30
5,000	80
6,000	120
7,000	130
8,000	170
9,000	210
10,000	540
12,000	760
15,000	720
20,000	450
30,000	85
Total	3,300

Occupational Pension Funds

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will clarify the present practice of the Inland Revenue concerning surpluses that may arise in occupational pension funds.

Mr. Moore: I am happy to take this opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding that may have arisen concerning the Inland Revenue's attitude towards pension scheme refunds.

Occupational pension schemes which are approved by the Inland Revenue benefit from tax reliefs and exemptions. Not only do contributions to the fund attract relief but, once invested, those contributions can build up free of tax. Furthermore, on retirement an employee may, if the rules of the scheme so permit, commute a significant part of the pension and take it as a tax-free lump sum. In return, schemes must satisfy certain conditions which are intended, broadly speaking, to ensure that such arrangements are set up to establish retirement benefits, and for no other purpose.

One of these conditions is that the funds should be alienated from the employer. This is to protect the interests of the scheme members. Another condition is that contributions to the scheme should not be excessive. This is to protect the Exchequer: without such a control, companies could park spare profits in their scheme and so defer, perhaps for many years, a corporation tax liability. So schemes are required to provide the Inland Revenue with an actuarial valuation of their assets every three or five years.

Even with expert actuarial advice it can be difficult to establish the correct level of contributions. Pension schemes are very long-term arrangements. And most promise pension rights linked to length of service and final salary. If the actuary's assumptions about investment returns turn out to be too pessimistic, schemes can easily become temporarily over-funded.

Where a surplus is not too large, the Revenue is usually able to accept it until the next valuation is due, as a temporary fluctuation in the long-term fortunes of the scheme. If special measures are needed, a small temporary reduction in contributions — usually employers' contributions—is generally enough to reduce the surplus to an acceptable level by the time of the next valuation. If that is insufficient, a reduction in the long-term contribution rate may be all that is needed. But where the surplus is very large, in relation to the scheme's liabilities, immediate action may be required if the exempt approved status of the scheme is not to be put at risk. This may take the form of improvements in scheme benefits (although the Revenue no longer insist on this in all cases) or a complete suspension of contributions by the employer and, if necessary, the employees.

If a complete contributions holiday for a period of, say, five years would still fail to achieve the desired result the Revenue might require part of all of the surplus to be refunded to the employer. But such cases will be very rare: no one should assume that a refund will automatically be permitted if a surplus would remain after a five year contributions holiday.

The crucial question is not whether a surplus is large enough to qualify for permission to be refunded. On the contrary, the question is whether the surplus is so large that special measures must be taken to deal with it—and, if so, what those measures should be.

The employer's financial position does not become relevant for these purposes until the question for decision is whether or not a surplus can be reduced to an acceptable level by means of a complete contribution holiday for five years. In some cases, the appropriate remedy might be a longer contributions holiday. In other, a refund might be a preferable solution.

Finally, I should like to make it clear that these considerations will apply equally to continuing schemes and to schemes which are wound up and then replaced by a new scheme. Clearly there is no reason to object to the reconstruction of a company's pension scheme. But if, as part of that reconstruction, funds are extracted by the company, the Revenue reserve the right to withhold approval of the new scheme—or, if it has already been approved, to withdraw such approval.

Loans

Dr. Twinn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he proposes to make any changes to the loan terms and facilities offered by the National Loans Fund and the Public Works Loan Board.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We have recently completed a review of the terms and facilities offered by the National Loans Fund and the Public Works Loan Board, and decided to make certain improvements in lending arrangements. These are designed to reduce interest rates for borrowers, and to increase the flexibility of the facilities offered.

Interest rates charged on NLF lending are governed by section 5 of the National Loans Act 1968 as amended by the Finance Acts 1982 and 1983. There is no room for a reduction in fixed interest rates from the levels charged at present, which already reflect the minimum rates consistent with the Act. However, we have concluded that interest rates on variable rate loans made by the NLF and PWLB can and should be reduced. In future the rates on variable loans will be calculated on a formula designed to reflect more closely the rates at which the Government itself could borrow. This will be calculated by reference to eligible bill rates and inter-bank rates. NLF temporary lending and deposit rates will also in future be based on this formula. The new rates will apply as soon as the necessary arrangements for calculating and monitoring the revised variable rate formula can be put in place.

Further changes are being made to improve the flexibility of NLF variable rate facilities. The maturity range will be extended to 1-10 years (previously 3-5 years); provision will be made for one and six month roll-over periods (previously three months only); and there will be an option to convert to fixed rate terms at any roll-over point. New arrangements for premature repayment for refinancing existing loans, including conversion from fixed to variable interest rates, will be introduced. The minimum advance from the NLF temporary lending facility will be reduced from £5 million to £1 million.

DEFENCE

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any accidents involving B47 aircraft have occurred at Royal Air Force, Greenham common since 1955.

Mr. Lee: During the period 1954-64, when B47s were based at RAF Greenham common, the United States authorities have stated that there were two accidents. The first occurred in February 1958 when a parked B47 was hit by a taxi-ing training aircraft. The second occurred in February 1963 when a B47 crashed on landing.

Military Aircraft (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any accidents involving United States air force aircraft carrying nuclear weapons have occurred in the United Kingdom since 1955;

(2) whether any accidents involving United States air force or Royal Air Force aircraft resulting in the release into the atmosphere, into water or into the ground of radioactive materials have occurred in the United Kingdom since 1955.

Mr. Lee: There have been no such accidents involving RAF aircraft, and the United States authorities have confirmed that there have been no such accidents involving USAF aircraft either.

Gurkha Garrison, Hong Kong

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to pay an official visit to the Gurkha garrison in Hong Kong.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to pay such a visit.

Housing Stock

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give more details of the plans to reduce Ministry of Defence owned housing stock in Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence is currently not in a position to give more details of the plans to reduce its housing stock in Portsmouth, Fareham and Gosport. Ministry of Defence officials met the Department of the Environment Minister for Housing and Construction on 24 July 1985 to discuss the possibility of making available to Gosport borough council a number of houses on the Rowner Estate. A further statement will be made once detailed plans have been finalised.

Hermetic Metal

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by his Department in 1984-85 on the purchase of hermetic metal packages for hybrid micro-electronic circuits; and what was the value of such supplies from United Kingdom manufacturers.

Mr. Butler: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Crown Proceedings Act

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men or women or their families have made representations to his Department regarding section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1974, either *(a)* individually, *(b)* through a representative or *(c)* through their Member of Parliament in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: Since 1979 my Department has received a total of 13 representations by former members of the armed forces and the families of current and former members about the general effect of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. The figures broken down by year are:

Year	*Number*
1982	1 (individually)
1984	5 (four individually and one individually and through a Member of Parliament)
1985*	7 (all through Members of Parliament)

* To date.

These figures do not include parliamentary questions or inquiries relating to individual cases. The figure for 1985 includes one case originally raised in 1984 and also included in the figure for that year.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the current review of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1974 began; when it is expected to be completed; what form it has taken; whether evidence was sought from men orwomen or their families disabled or killed whilst in the forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: An interdepartmental working group of officials from the Ministry of Defence and other Government Departments concerned was established in October 1983 to review the operation and effects of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. The working group's findings are currently being considered by my

right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and an announcement will be made as soon as decisions are taken.

While the working group did not take evidence in a formal way, it did take account of all the views which have been expressed both by former members of the armed forces and the families of current and former members who have written to the Ministry of Defence during the review, and by members of the public, and not least by Members of Parliament.

Medical Services

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what co-operation there is between private hospitals and Army medical services in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas of the south-east district.

Mr. Lee: There are no formal arrangements between private hospitals and the army medical services in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas. Occasionally service patients are referred to private hospitals for investigations using equipment which is not readily available elsewhere.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what categories of medical services are currently provided by civilians for Army personnel in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas of the south-east district.

Mr. Lee: None. However, in an emergency, a service man could be admitted to a local NHS hospital.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian personnel are employed in ancillary and administrative roles in the provision of medical services to the Army in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas of the south-east district.

Mr. Lee: There are currently 256 civilian personnel employed in ancillary and administrative roles in the provision of defence medical services in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what Army medical centres there are in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas of the south-east district;

(2) what medical services are provided by Army medical centres in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas of the south-east district.

Mr. Lee: In these areas there is a medical reception station at RMA Sandhurst and nine unit medical centres, all of which provide primary medical care of service personnel; examples are routine medical procedures, immunological procedures, routine needs and examinations etc., medical cover for sporting events and military exercises. The Cambridge military hospital, Aldershot provides a full range of secondary medical care.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what co-operation there is between National Health Service and Army medical services in the Frimley, Aldershot and Camberley areas of the south-east district.

Mr. Lee: The Cambridge military hospital accepts for treatment a large number of civilians from the Aldershot, Farnham, Farnborough and Fleet areas. There is also some liaison with Frimley Park hospital regarding paediatrics, medical surgery, dermatology, psychiatric and psychological cases.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration he has given to the use by his Department of National Health Service resources and services.

Mr. Lee: The primary care of service men is almost always provided by the defence medical services, and this arrangement will continue.

There is considerable co-operation between service hospitals and the NHS at local level and there is no intention to make this interchange the subject of direct central control.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration he has given to the use by his Department of private sector medical resources and services.

Mr. Lee: Service doctors and other staff are required for war and they must be trained professionally and militarily for their war role. The care of service patients in peace is a fundamental element of that training and cannot be contracted out to the private sector. It is not, therefore, practical for private sector medical services to play a part in the medical support of the armed services except in a very limited way, such as providing occasional facilities for investigations not otherwise available in service hospitals or the NHS. However, doctors, nurses and other medical personnel employed in the private sector are more than welcome to apply to join the TA or other reserve formations.

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the defence medical services which was recently submitted to him by Sir Henry Yellowlees;

(2) what were the main findings and recommendations of the report on defence medical services which was recently submitted to him by Sir Henry Yellowlees.

Mr. Lee: A statement on the first part of Sir Henry Yellowlees' report is provided in the statement on the Defence Estimates 1985 Part 1 paragraph 528. Further to that, details of the recommendations in the second part and the current position, are contained in the House of Commons Defence Committee's report on commitments and resources and Defence Estimates 1985-86 Volume III dated 10 June 1985. It is not appropriate to place a copy of Sir Henry Yellowlees' report in the Library.

Prosthetic Services

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration he has given to the recommendation in exercise Lean Look, (DOGD 85/03) that prosthetic services should be transferred from the Royal Army Dental Corps to contractors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The position remains as set out in the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) on 17 June 1985 at column 38.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been convicted of criminal offences.

Mr. Lee: Information covering all types of criminal offences is not available. However, since 1970 nine UDR

members or ex-members have been convicted of murder and six of manslaughter. In addition, some 90 have been convicted of assault since 1978. The great majority of these offences were of a domestic nature.

Hercules Aircraft

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the cost to date and the estimated cost to the end of the calendar year of the use of Hercules aircraft in Ethiopia.

Mr. Lee: The cost of the airlift operation from November 1984 to the end of July 1985 is estimated to be £13·5 million, of which £9 million is being met by the Ministry of Defence and £4·5 million by the Overseas Development Administration. The cost of continuing the airlift operation until the end of the calendar year is estimated at £7·5 million, to be divided equally between the Ministry of Defence and the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence, why the cost of the use of Hercules aircraft in Ethiopia comes out of the defence budget.

Mr. Lee: As an exceptional case, it was agreed that the Ministry of Defence would fund the whole cost of the airlift operation in Ethiopia for the initial deployment of three months. When the deployment was subsequently extended it was agreed that the cost would be shared equally by the Ministry of Defence and the Overseas Development Administration.

Army Records

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet reached a decision on the proposal to relocate the Army manning and record and regimental pay offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: I regret that I am not yet in a position to make a statement about the proposals to relocate the Army's manning and record offices and regimental pay offices but I hope to be able to do so shortly and will of course inform my hon. Friend and others of the decision that has been reached then.

Boarding School Allowance

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet received the report of the interdepartmental study of the effects on service men and other Government employees of the giving of boarding school allowance for tax purposes.

Mr. Lee: We have made some progress in this matter but interdepartmental studies are not yet complete.

Polaris

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether paragraphs 45-46 of Defence Open Government Document 80/23, about Polaris, remain valid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The possibility of extending the useful life of our existing Polaris force well into the next century was considered, along with a range of other options, during the detailed evaluation which led to the Government's decision to purchase Trident as the successor to the current United Kingdom strategic deterrent force. The main aspects of that evaluation process were set out in Defence Open Government Document 80/23, which still remains essentially valid today.

In order to ensure that the Polaris force, now improved by the Chevaline programme, will continue to provide a credible deterrent until the mid-1990s when it is to be replaced by Trident, we are currently engaged in a missile remotoring programme. This programme has demonstrated many of the potential problems and expense of a project unique to the United Kingdom; nevertheless, we are confident that the outcome will be successful and that the remotored missiles will have a substantial life expectancy. It could be argued that the new motors might have provided a core stock for a future strategic missile system based on the Polaris model, but the missile motors are only one element of the missile, and of course a smaller proportion of the total weapon system.

To maintain the Polaris system as a credible deterrent beyond the turn of the century, it would have been necessary to replace all other missile associated components together with aging sub-systems such as guidance, fire control, missile launching and test equipment and to renew the whole range of related shore support and training equipments. It would also have been necessary to buy additional Chevaline elements to support the force, and to extend the life of missile processing facilities at the Clyde submarine base.

Even if a United Kingdom replacement programme on these lines proved successful, the overall weapon system effectiveness would not have given a sufficient assurance of credibility much beyond the 1990s. Because the range of a Polaris A3 missile is so much less than that of Trident D5, submarines equipped with a Polaris-based system would have been constrained to operate in a much smaller sea area, in the face of Soviet anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, which are expected to improve over the next decade.

In addition, the Soviet Union is currently making substantial improvements to its anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defences within the provisions of the 1972 ABM treaty, as amended by the 1974 protocol. Unless these improvements fall well short of our expectations, the capability of the Chevaline payload will prove inadequate to overcome the ABM defences we expect to see deployed in the mid-1990s.

It would also be misleading to suppose that a force based on Polaris could be deployed without replacing the Resolution class submarines, which would all be over 30 years old by the turn of the century. The fact remains that by the next century we will require improved sonars and a modern propulsion system based on the new pressurised water reactor (PWR2) to enable us to stay ahead of developing Soviet ASW capabilities and to maintain the standards of invulnerability required from a strategic nuclear deterrent. Only a new class of submarine can meet this requirement.

As we indicated in DOGD 82/1, even if we had opted for a smaller missile than Trident D5 it would still have made sense to construct a submarine hull of sufficient size to cater for a larger missile at some time in the future. Moreover, we have had no capability in the production of strategic weapon systems since the 1960s, and the research

and development programmes and subsequent flight trials would have taken a great deal of time and would have entailed considerable risks.

Doubts might also have been cast on the credibility of a unique United Kingdom system. For all these reasons it is therefore doubtful whether the capital cost of a new Polaris missile-based system would have been any cheaper than our Trident D5 force, and through-life running costs would almost certainly have been considerably higher, all this for a much less effective system.

With Trident D5 we will be continuing the highly successful co-operation with the United States which we have enjoyed for over two decades. It is our safest, wisest and most cost-effective course.

Secretary of State (Visit to Washington)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost to public funds of his visit to Washington on 22 July.

Mr. Heseltine: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Valuation

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those of his Department's establishments and properties of which a valuation has been undertaken during the last 12 months.

Mr. Lee: Valuations were made of the following factories before they were vested in Royal Ordnance plc on 2 January 1985.

Birtley
Bishopton
Blackburn
Bridgwater
Chorley
Enfield
Featherstone
Glascoed
Leeds
Nottingham
Patricroft
Powfoot
Radway Green
Summerfield
Wrexcot
Waltham Abbey (South)

In addition, informal valuations for management purposes are provided by the Property Services Agency as necessary.

RAF Trainers

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria upon which he based his total acquisition costs in assessing the costs of the Tucano and PC 9 Royal Air Force trainers.

Mr. Butler: The total acquisition costs used in assessing the bids for the Tucano and PC9 comprised the purchase price of 130 aircraft, two forward fuselages for simulators, and technical publications, together with the cost of initial spares, ground support equipment, additional simulator facilities, reserve engines and a small contingency.

Nimrod

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he or any other Ministers in his Department have any plans to visit Woodford in October or November to observe the detailed procedures of the Nimrod return to works programme; and if he will make a statement on the progress of this work in terms of quality, accuracy and speed.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to him on 23 October last year at column 550; we still have no plans for a Nimrod return to works programme.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many companies which have expressed interest in the dockyard franchise are foreign-owned.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 18 March 1985 at column 412, which applies to all those firms who have expressed interest.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his invitation to private companies to tender for the royal dockyard franchise will precede the passage of legislation on the dockyards.

Mr. Lee: On present plans the Ministry hopes to be in a position to invite companies to tender for the operation of the royal dockyards by the spring of next year. This will depend on progress in a number of areas, including the stage reached on the necessary legislation. There would be no question of the Ministry entering into any contractual commitments for the commercial management of the dockyards until Royal Assent has been obtained.

Royal Ordnance plc

Mr. Eggar asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether an external financing limit for 1985-86 and a financial objective have been set for Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Butler: An external financing limit of £50 million for 1985-86 has been set for Royal Ordnance plc. This will be met from the Reserve and will therefore not add to planned public expenditure. I have also agreed with the company a financial objective of a 5 per cent. real rate of return on average capital employed on a current cost basis.

Piracy

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's part in the suppression of piracy in the Gulf of Thailand.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom is striving, with others, to help combat the scourge of piracy against boat refugees in the Gulf of Thailand. Since 1982 we have made annual contributions, totalling £335,000, to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for use in the Thai Government's anti-piracy programme. Although the incidence of piracy remains distressingly high, there has been a welcome fall in the rate of attacks since the programme's inception.

Defence Situation Centre

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans to alter the location or facilities of the defence situation centre.

Mr. Butler [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: It is not the practice to disclose details of operational matters of this sort.

Radiation Tests

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the Royal Navy ships involved in radiation tests between 1950 and 1956.

Mr. Butler [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: The Royal Navy ships involved in radiation tests between 1950 and 1956 were:

HMS Implacable;
HMS Rapid;
HMS Royalist;
HMS Sirius.

The tests consisted in the main of measuring the attenuation provided by parts of a ship to radiation from a source of radioactive cobalt. This allowed the protection afforded against both radiation flash and radioactive contamination to be determined.

In addition, a number of Royal Navy ships were involved in the British atmospheric nuclear weapon test programme, and some of these required decontamination, as I explained in my reply to the hon. Member yesterday. Of these, only HMS Diana was exposed to radioactive fallout in order to test radiation protection arrangements.

ENVIRONMENT

Families and Housing (Statistics)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest figures for the numbers and proportions of *(a)* one-parent families and *(b)* two-parent families living in (i) private rented housing, (ii) local authority housing, (iii) owner-occupied housing with a mortgage, (iv) owner-occupied housing owned outright, (v) shared accommodation and (vi) housing association accommodation, respectively.

Sir George Young: The latest available information is for 1981 and 1982 and shows percentages of one-parent families and other families with dependent children in different tenure groups in Great Britain. The information was published in the report "General Household Survey 1982", a copy of which is in the Library.

Portsmouth City Council (Urban Aid)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much traditional urban aid Portsmouth city council has received in the years since 1978.

Sir George Young: For the years from 1977-78 to 1985-86 inclusive, Portsmouth city council's estimated project expenditure approved under the traditional urban programme totalled £2,057,157, of which 75 per cent. is being met by Government.

The yearly breakdown is:

	£
1977-78	91,563
1978-79	99,657
1979-80	99,164
1980-81	166,817
1981-82	216,995
1982-83	323,701
1983-84	353,390
1984-85	445,270
1985-86	260,702

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to convert the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission into a private trust fund along the lines of the National Trust or National Heritage Fund.

Mr. Macfarlane: No.

Local Authorities (Contracts)

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to introduce the legislation announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) on 18 April, *Official Report*, column 520, affecting the awarding of contracts by local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on 10 July by my right hon. Friend at column 466.

Housing Renewal (Portsmouth)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Portsmouth city council has approached his Department for any help from the urban housing renewal unit; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The head of the urban housing renewal unit, Peter Emms, wrote to the chief executive of Portsmouth city council on 24 June offering the unit's services. He has not yet received a reply.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware from my letter to him of 10 July of the great importance which the Government attach to the unit's work in helping local authorities tackle their rundown estates. The unit can offer an expert, independent and individual assessment of the problems, and suggest a package of measures for dealing with them. The unit can also help authorities to make full use of private and public sector funding opportunities. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give the unit his full support.

Council Houses

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the number of council houses sold in the London borough of Wandsworth in each of the last five years and the number of council houses built in the borough during the same period.

Sir George Young: The number of council house sales completed by the London borough of Wandsworth in the years 1980-81 to 1983-84 appear in issues 62, 63, 67 and 71, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics"; there were 1,780 sales in 1984-85. In the five years 1980-81 to 1984-85 inclusive, 1,706 council house dwellings were completed for the borough.

House Conversions

Sir John Page asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the planning and environmental issues arising over the conversion of smaller terraced and semi-detached houses into two flats.

Mr. Macfarlane: The division of houses into flats can often make a useful contribution to the supply of dwellings. Guidance on the planning issues raised — principally, traffic and parking — is contained in paragraph 9 and 10 of development control policy note 2, which should be read with paragraph 14 of annex 1 to Circular 22/80.

Council House Sales

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table of public sector housing sales, analysed by sector, for each of the years 1979-80 to 1984-85, giving separate columns for *(a)* gross proceeds, *(b)* net proceeds, *(c)* estimated market value and *(d)* estimated replacement cost.

Sir George Young: The following tables give estimates of the market value, the selling price and the initial payments received for sales of council houses by English local authorities and new towns. Corresponding information for sales by housing associations is not held centrally by the Department.

£ million

	Market value	*Selling price (market value less discount)*	*Initial payments received*
Local authorities			
1979-80	760	500	130
1980-81	1,090	670	200
1981-82	2,160	1,260	520
1982-83	3,070	1,770	1,020
1983-84	2,260	1,320	920
1984-85	1,980	1,110	800
New Towns			
1979-80	n/a	18	4
1980-81	44	29	7
1981-82	56	39	16
1982-83	61	43	29
1983-84	60	50	44
1984-85	62	49	45

The Department does not collect information on the replacement costs of public sector dwellings which have been sold. The average construction tender cost of land for council houses in 1984-85 was £27,000.

Explosion (Abbeystead)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will make available interim financial assistance to victims of the Abbeystead explosion while their independent claims are being pursued.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I share the hon. Member's concern about the plight of the victims of the Abbeystead disaster. They have my deepest sympathy. But as claims for compensation are now before the courts it would be wrong for the Government to take any action which could affect the natural outcome of these proceedings, however well-intentioned it might be. It is therefore not possible for special financial assistance to be made available in addition to what is provided to those in need through the normal channels of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Song Birds

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of the increase in the number of magpies and carrion crows in England and Wales, and the effect of this on the song bird population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Estimates based upon the common bird census carried out each year by the British Trust for Ornithology indicate that the magpie population has increased by over one third in the past 20 years while the carrion crow population has about doubled in the same period.

A 1983 study of magpies found that eggs and young birds form an insignificant part of the species diet and this is likely to be true of the crow. There is no scientific evidence that predation by magpies and crows has a marked effect on song-bird population.

Rosehill Estate, Walsall

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will arrange in the near future to visit the Rosehill estate in Willenhall, Walsall, following the deputation seen by his officials on 18 July; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if it is intended for officials from his Department to visit the Rosehill estate, Willenhall, Walsall; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 24 July. The Department's regional housing controller will visit the Rosehill estate as soon as practicable. I hope to be able to do so myself at some future date.

Outside Toilets

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of dwellings in the west midlands region which have only outside toilets; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The latest available information relates to households present on census night in 1981 and is in table 7 of housing and households volume, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings his Department has held with local authorities to discuss resources in the current and next financial year for local authorities to improve dwellings which have only outside toilets.

Sir George Young: My Department meets all local authorities who wish to do so once a year to discuss resources for housing investment in the following financial year. There are also additional meetings as necessary on particular topics during the course of the year. I understand that no meetings have been held specifically on resources for the improvement of dwellings which have only outside toilets.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which Ministers in his Department have, in the past 12 months, visited dwellings where there are only outside toilets; when the visits occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: My ministerial colleagues and I have visited many dwellings during the past 12 months in the course of our duties. Some of the areas we have visited have had substandard housing. I am not able to give figures for the number of dwellings with only outside WCs.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available extra resources to local authorities in order that pre-war dwellings with only outside toilets are fully improved within the present and next financial year.

Sir George Young: Resources are allocated annually to each local authority for housing investment as a whole, following discussions with individual authorities of their housing investment programmes. It is for individual authorities to decide how best to apply those resources.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department gives to local authorities regarding the improvement of their dwellings with only outside toilets; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Department does not give any specific advice to local authorities on such matters. It is up to individual authorities to determine their own work and expenditure priorities, within the resources available to them.

Ministerial Duties

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the duties undertaken by each Minister in his Department during the course of the morning of Thursday 18 July.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport had engagements in Newcastle and Kent respectively.

I attended Cabinet and my other ministerial colleagues and I attended various meetings with departmental officials and others.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are taken by his officials to keep up-to-date records of circumstances where urgent improvement work is needed to public sector dwellings and local authorities state they do not have the resources to carry out the necessary work.

Sir George Young: My Department has recently asked all English housing authorities to complete a return, detailing the expenditure they consider is needed on their own housing, their estimated expenditure in 1985-86 on the works identified, and their proposed programme for 1986-87. The returns from this inquiry are currently being analysed.

Housing (Humberside)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new council houses were authorised and built in Grimsby borough each year since 1976-77; and how many were sold over the same period.

Sir George Young: The numbers of council house starts, completions and sales for individual local authority areas are published in "Local Housing Statistics". Figures of housing starts and completions are available for the period 1976 to 1984 and figures of sales are available for the period 1976 to the first half of the 1984-85 financial year. Copies of "Local Housing Statistics" are kept in the Library and the relevant issues are listed below:

Council House Starts and Completions

Year	
1976	Edition 41
1977	Edition 45
1978	Edition 49
1979	Editions 53, 59
1980 to 1984	Edition 73
Council House Sales	
1976	Edition 41
1977	Edition 45
1978	Edition 49
1979	Edition 53
1980-81	Edition 62
1981-82	Edition 63
1982-83	Edition 67
1983-84	Edition 71
1984-85 (1st half)	Edition 73

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the contribution, in cash and as a percentage, made by central Government to local government expenditure in *(a)* Grimsby borough and *(b)* Humberside county in each year since 1977-78, together with any sums held back.

Sir George Young: The available information about the authorities' rate fund revenue expenditure is in the following tables because of changes in the rate support grant system, particularly in the allocation of the various elements to different tiers of authorities, the information relating to years earlier than 1981-82 does not provide meaningful comparisons.

	Government Grants (£ million)*	*Grants as per cent. of Expenditure†*	*Holdback (£ million)*
	Humberside County Council		
1981-82	193·3	62·2	7·1
1982-83	200·6	55·7	11·9
1983-84	201·8	57·2	7·5
1984-85	226·2	59·7	9·1
1985-86	201·2	53·5	11·0
	Great Grimsby Borough Council		
1981-82	4·1	71·3	0
1982-83	4·3	69·0	0
1983-84	4·8	70·2	0
1984-85	3·2	68·1	0·1
1985-86	3·9	70·1	0·2

* Includes Block Grant (after Holdback), Relevant Specific and Supplementary Grants, and Specific Grant on Mandatory Student Awards, but excludes domestic rate relief grant and grants and subsidies

paid direct to capital accounts, HRA etc.
† Total Local Rate and Grant Borne Expenditure in the rate fund revenue account (ie excluding other accounts such as capital accounts and HRA).

Hurn Airport

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those hon. Members who have made representations to him about developments at Hurn airport, Christchurch, Dorset.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend has received representations about developments at Hurn airport, Christchurch, Dorset, only from my hon. Friend.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by when he expects the Government will have implemented EEC Directive 80/778 to limit pesticides, metals and nitrates in drinking water.

Mr. Gow: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 23 July.

Water Information Letter (Publication)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons on 18 July his press office refused to give the news editor of *New Scientist* a copy of his Department's water information letter of 18 April.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: It is not the normal practice for my Department to make available to the press official communications addressed to the regional water authorities.

I am considering whether certain of such letters might with advantage be published in future but that will obviously turn on their content.

Superstores

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what priorities he uses in deciding planning appeals relating to superstores.

Mr. Macfarlane: In deciding all planning appeals my right hon. Friend takes into account all relevant considerations, including the policies set out in Circular 22/80 and Circular 14/85. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) on 5 July.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the representations received as a result of the consultation carried out in October 1983 on policy relating to large new retail developments.

Mr. Macfarlane: No. It is for those who make representations to my Department to decide whether they wish to make such representations public; it would not be appropriate for me to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail *(a)* the proportion of London superstore applications decided on appeal and *(b)* the average time which elapses between the decision to send a superstore or hypermarket application in Greater London to appeal and the date on which an appeal decision is based.

Mr. Macfarlane: There have been nine appeals in London relating to superstores since the beginning of 1983, of which six were allowed. We have no information on the number of applications determined by local planning authorities. The average time between the date of appeal and the date on which the appeal decisions were issued was fifteen months.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been achieved on his Department's pilot studies to collect data on retail sales and shops; whether a decision has been taken to extend the exercise to the rest of the United Kingdom; and what is the earliest date by which full coverage of Greater London's shopping centres can be achieved.

Mr. Macfarlane: My Department, in conjunction with the economic development committee for the distributive trades, is undertaking a pilot project to assess the costs and feasibility of a possible limited collection of retail statistics. The project is in its early stages and there is no commitment to any further research.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all current superstore applications where projected catchment areas overlap; and if he will make it his policy to have them considered in a single appeal or at linked appeals so that their cumulative impact can be considered.

Mr. Macfarlane: Information of this kind about applications to local planning authorities is not available. It is already the practice to hold joint inquiries into appeals which are clearly inter-related when it is feasible to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the cumulative impact of superstores did not feature in development control policy note 13.

Mr. Macfarlane: Development control policy note 13 gave general guidance on the effect of proposals for new retail development on existing centres.

Greater London Development Plan

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider his decision not to consider the submitted Greater London development plan alterations which provide comprehensive shopping policies for Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend is not prepared to reconsider his decision to invoke section 6 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 and thereby defer consideration of proposed alterations to the Greater London development plan submitted by the Greater London council in September 1984.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the London Docklands development corporation keeps a register which indicates the number of homosexual men and women employed.

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands development corporation has taken to provide guidance to

developers on provisions for disabled people in public buildings as required by the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as amended by the Disabled Persons Act 1981.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: All planning decision letters issued by LDDC are accompanied by guidance notes drawing the attention of applicants to the design guidance notes for disabled persons issued by the access committee for England.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* privately owned units and *(b)* publicly owned or housing association units on London Docklands development corporation-owned land have been designed for people with disabilities; and what is the London Docklands development corporation target number for such dwellings on London Docklands development corporation-owned land.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: Information on privately owned dwellings is not collected by the LDDC. Provision for the disabled is a matter for negotiation between the builder and the prospective purchaser. I shall write to the hon. Member about numbers of publicly owned dwellings.

LDDC does not have a target for the provision of housing for the disabled. The number built on publicly owned land is a matter for the housing authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many women have obtained new jobs in the London Docklands development corporation area; what industries these women are employed in; and what percentage of total new jobs it represents.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: This information is not held by the Department or by LDDC.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands development corporation has taken to seek to ensure that new leisure facilities in the London Docklands development corporation areas are designed to give access for the disabled and elderly; and what steps are being taken to provide sports and leisure facilities that are suited to the specific requirements of the disabled and elderly.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: Where LDDC has provided all or part of the finance for a leisure facility, the corporation ensures that the builders take practical steps to give maximum accessibility to all sections of the community. For example, provision is made in the London docklands arena, which is under construction, for two disabled persons' lifts making access available to all of the building's amenities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many construction jobs in the London Docklands development corporation area have been taken *(a)* by women and *(b)* by people from the black and ethnic minority communities.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: 130 full and part-time women workers are employed by construction firms based in the LDDC area. Information is not available for women employed in firms based outside but who are working within the LDDC area. Information on the second part of the question is not collected.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision the London Docklands development corporation has made of roads and pavements in its area for people with impaired mobility, wheelchair users, and pedestrians with aural and visual impairments.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: On roads built by the LDDC, provision has been made for dropped kerbs and ramps to ease mobility.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the London Docklands development corporation keeps a register which indicates the number of members of black and other ethnic minority communities employed.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *31-32*, if he will list the individual development initiatives for the royal docks being discussed by the London Docklands development corporation.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: The premature provision of information concerning development initiatives in the preliminary stages would breach commercial confidentiality and could prejudice present and future negotiations by the LDDC. However, one development initiative that has been publicised is a sports and exhibition complex on the north side of the Royal Victoria dock. Feasibility studies put forward by the developers, Intersport, are being considered by the corporation.

Royal Parks

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) to which firm his Department awarded the royal parks consultancy; what progress has been made; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much his Department is spending on the royal parks consultancy; what is the purpose of the consultancy study; when the report will be presented to his Department.

Mr. Macfarlane: Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd., in association with Land Use Consultants, has been asked to advise my Department on standards of maintenance in the royal parks; the resource implications of those standards and alternative options for getting the work done. At this stage, the commission is limited to a feasibility study based on Regent's park. The report on the feasibility study is expected to be received in September. For reasons of commercial confidentially my right hon. Friend does not reveal information about the cost of consultancies.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the staff employed in each of the royal parks by category in each of the past five years.

Mr. Macfarlane: The industrial staff numbers in each park by category are given in the following table:

Park/Category	Staff-in-post as at 1 April*				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Central†					
Horticultural	144	116	95	87½	95
Support	55	50½	43	42½	40½
Craft Grades	10	10	10	10	9
Supervisory	29	27	29	28	26
Apprentices	14	16	14	13	10
Sub-totals	252	219½	191	181	180½
Regents					
Horticultural	64	55	43	36½	43½
Support	27	24	21½	22	18
Craft Grades	5	5	4	4	4
Supervisory	18	14	17	9	12
Apprentices	9	9	8	8	8
Sub-totals	123	107	93½	79½	85½
Greenwich					
Horticultural	38	36	29	30	34
Support	15	13	11	10	9
Craft Grades	2	2	2	1	1
Supervisory	5	5	7	6	6
Apprentices	11	9	9	8	5
Sub-totals	71	65	58	55	55
Hampton Court					
Horticultural	68	64	64	63	47
Support	15	14	10	8	12
Craft Grades	6	5	5	5	5
Supervisory	14	14	14	14	26
Apprentices	16	14	13	10	7
Sub-totals	119	111	106	100	97
Richmond					
Horticultural	33	30	25	15	15
Support	24	22	18	15	15
Craft Grades	5	5	5	4	4
Supervisory	6	6	7	10	9
Apprentices	0	0	0	0	0
Sub-totals	68	63	55	44	43
Osborne Gardens					
Horticultural	8	5	5	6	6
Support	2	2	2	2	2
Craft Grades	0	0	0	0	0
Supervisory	1	1	1	1	1
Apprentices	0	0	1	0	0
Sub-totals	11	8	9	9	9
Eltham Palace					
Horticultural	3	3	3	5	5
Support	1	½	½	½	½
Craft Grades	0	0	0	0	0
Supervisory	1	1	1	1	1
Apprentices	2	2	2	0	0
Sub-totals	7	6½	6½	6½	6½

Park/Category	Staff-in-post as at 1 April*				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Totals	651	580	519	475	476½

* Part-time staff count as ½.

† Central comprises St. James Park, Green Park, Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Brompton Cemetery Osterly, Ham and a number of squares and public gardens in the centre of London.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what services in which royal parks have been privatised since 1979.

Mr. Macfarlane: Since 1979 the following services have been privatised in the royal parks:

	Park	Year
Offices/premises cleaning	Hyde Park	1979
Offices/premises cleaning	St. James's Park	1982
Operation of the Serpentine Lido	Hyde Park	1983
Operation of Golf Courses	Richmond Park	1984
Lavatory and Playground Attendants	All parks	1985
Residual office premises cleaning not already contracted out	All parks	1985

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what pesticides and herbicides are used in the royal parks.

Mr. Macfarlane: The following pesticides and herbicides are used in the royal parks:

Pesticides

Secto-insect spray including ant, fly and green fly
Novolin
Malathion
Resmethrin
Lindane
Murphume
Bortulex
Ring Master
Cast Away
Diazonin
Perimor
Carborgle
Nimrod-T
Hostiquyck
Plictron
Sycocel
Filek
Aldrex
Maneb
Dynocap
Ambush Fog 2
Actellifog
Murphy
Picket
Lyndex
Nicotine Liquid (greenhouse use)
Systemic—Unsecticide
Abol-Ex
Temic (strict control)
Nalid
Mini-Slug Pellets
Permethrin

Herbicides

Gramoxone
Moss Killer
Casuron-G
Verdone
Round Up
Spasor
Supertox
Dexuron
Garlon
Hydon
Alegrex
Weed-Ex
Clarosan
Dictatox-Extra
Cloutk
Bandweek
Thostixin (strict control gamekeeper)
Ron-Star Liquid
Paraquat
Clovitox
Tritox
Napropamide (banweed)
Propachlor
Simazine

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many apprentices have been employed in the royal parks in each of the past five years.

Mr. Macfarlane: The number of apprentices employed in the Royal Parks on 1 April in each of the past five years is as follows:

	Number
1981	52
1982	50
1983	47
1984	39
1985	30

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many handicapped workers are employed in each of the royal parks.

Mr. Macfarlane: Fourteen handicapped workers are employed in the Royal Parks, four in central parks, four in Richmond park, four in Greenwich park and two at Hampton Court gardens.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what chemicals are being used by the company cleaning the stonework of the Palace of Westminster; what is the total cost of the contract; and if there has been any revision of the cost since the work commenced.

Sir George Young: The cleaning is done entirely by water washing and grit jetting. No chemicals have been specified for use, or are known to have been used, by any of the contractors involved in this work. The total estimated cost of the first five stages (up to and including the Terrace) is £5,219,000. The original estimate for restoring all the Palace stonework, made in 1981 before work started, was £5·5 million. This estimate was revised in the light of the experience gained in the initial phases to between £7 million and £9 million at mid-1983 prices.

Field Heath Nurseries

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects that the re-opened inquiry concerning the appeal by Milton Hutchings Limited and Costain Homes against the decision of the London borough of Hillingdon not to grant planning permission for development on Field Heath nurseries will now take place.

Mr. Macfarlane: The date of 3 September has been proposed for the re-opened inquiry.

Coal Production (Rateable Values)

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to take any special measures to compensate those local authorities in England whose rate income may be affected by the low levels of coal production during the miners' strike.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The rateable value of National Coal Board mine properties is governed by a formula which depends on coal production in previous years. Local authorities in some mining areas will see a sharp reduction in NCB rateable values in 1986-87 as a consequence of the fall in production in 1984-85.

I have considered carefully whether any special measures to offset this reduction are warranted. In most cases, NCB properties represent only a small fraction of the rateable value in the area and I have concluded that there should be no special treatment. The normal equalizing effect of the block grant system will in 1987-88 compensate such authorities for the fall in rateable values. By making an announcement this early, I am giving authorities affected plenty of advance notice.

Avon

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the revised structure plan for the county of Avon.

Mr. Macfarlane: My right hon. Friend has now completed his consideration of the objections to the Avon county structure plan and to his proposed modifications published last July. He has today approved the plan subject to modifications. The structure plan will be the framework for local plans and for the control of development in the county. It will become operative on 16 August 1985.

Coalfield Communities Campaign

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the coalfield communities campaign to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No, but my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State would be pleased to meet the coalfield communities campaign to discuss environmental issues in coalfield areas if it wishes to do so.

Olympic Games

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now propose to the international olympic committee the choice of the city of Birmingham as the venue for the 1992 olympic games.

Mr. Macfarlane: No. Bids for staging the olympic games are made by national olympic committees, not by Government.

Broad Street Station

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of Monday 8 July, *Official Report* column *345*, whether the advice given in 1981 was to the effect that Broad street station should be listed; and if he will now place a copy of that advice in the Library.

Mr. Macfarlane: Unlike the advice recently given to my right hon. Friend by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, the advice offered by officials in the Department to the Secretary of State in 1981 remains, as is usual, confidential.

Green Belt

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to take to protect the green belt from development in the light of the sale by the Department of Transport of an option to develop 90 acres of green belt land known as Brickets Wood at the M1/M25 interchange.

Mr. Macfarlane: The option to be sold by the Department of Transport will simply permit the option purchaser to apply to the local planning authority for permission to develop the site. If the authority were minded to give permission for what it regarded as a substantial departure from the approved development plan, it would not be able to do so without prior reference to my right hon. Friend.

Planning

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response has been made by the Association of London Authorities to the letter sent by his Department, dated 19 May, regarding the need for statutory provision of some suitable kind to achieve co-ordination and coherence between boroughs in planning policies.

Mr. Macfarlane: A letter was sent to the Association of London Authorities on 9 May, and a reply received on 30 May. The association remained of the view that an elected, statutory London-wide strategic planning body was needed.

The Local Government Act makes provision for a joint committee of London boroughs to consider and give advice on matters of common interest relating to planning.

Buckinghamshire

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the Buckinghamshire structure plan, proposed alterations number 1, 1981.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Secretary of State has today sent to Buckinghamshire county council the report of the panel that conducted an examination in public on the proposed alterations, together with details of my proposed modifications and the reasons for them. These will be published and the statutory six weeks period allowed for

objections to the proposed modifications. Because of the summer holiday period, however, any objections received up to 1 October will be considered. All objections made before then will be carefully considered before he issues his final decision on the alterations.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a report describing the level of activity in enterprise zones; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department has today published an information report covering the 23 enterprise zones in Great Britain in autumn 1984. A separate report for Northern Ireland will be published later in the year. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

The report shows that enterprise zones are a success. They restore economic activity to areas that have suffered from decline and decay. In the autumn of 1984, over 2,000 businesses with a total of more than 48,000 jobs were located in the zones in Great Britain. The number of jobs had increased by about 45 per cent. in first round zones since designation in 1981 (excluding Corby, where detailed records of employment at designation are not available) and by 77 per cent. in second round zones since designation (excluding Milford Haven which was not designated until April 1984).

Of course, not all the firms in the zones are new ones: some have moved from elsewhere. Nevertheless, we expect increased economic activity in the zones to benefit the surrounding area generally, generating further activity.

The report provides basic information about zone activity and does not purport to be a comprehensive monitoring exercise. We intend to update the evaluation provided by the consultants, who monitored the first round zones for the initial three years by commissioning a further survey in two to three years' time.

Tower Hamlets

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what, in constant prices, was the payment to the borough of Tower Hamlets through the housing investment programme in 1985-86 and in each preceding year to 1978-79.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocations made to the London borough of Tower Hamlets at constant 1983-84 prices in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1985-86 are as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	24·604
1979-80	19·891
1980-81	15·469
1981-82	5·944
1982-83	11·024
1983-84	12·000
1984-85	11·781
1985-86	10·612

Since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to add to their spending power through the prescribed proportion of any capital receipts which they generate.

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what, in constant prices, was the value of the rate support grant payment to the London borough of Tower Hamlets in 1985-86 and for each preceding year to 1978-79; and what is the proposed payment of 1986-87.

Sir George Young: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	55·897
1979-80	53·958
1980-81	49·649
1981-82	44·045
1982-83	38·282
1983-84	33·897
1984-85	28·616
1985-86	27·225

All the figures have been revalued to 1985-86 constant prices using the GDP deflator. Figures for 1978-79 to 1980-81 contain needs and domestic elements; the council did not qualify for resources element.

The figures for 1981-82 to 1985-86 are after holdback, as appropriate. Those for 1981-82 and 1982-83 are final entitlements; those for 1983-84 to 1985-86 are latest entitlements. The figure for 1981-82 includes grant paid to the Council in respect of the GLC and the Metropolitan police; that for 1982-83 includes grant in respect of the Metropolitan police. Receipts under the London rate equalisation scheme are included for all years. Tower Hamlets' grant entitlement for 1986-87 will depend upon a number of decisions yet to be taken, including the council's budget for that year.

Hackney

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to take a decision on the appeal (APP/U356-C-84-2174-2180) against an enforcement notice imposed by Hackney council in relation to a garage site adjacent to 7 Clapton Square, Hackney E.5.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend regrets that there has been some delay in dealing with this appeal. However, an inspection of the site by the planning inspector appointed to decide the appeal will take place shortly; and the inspector's decision will be issued as soon as possible after the inspection.

Local Government Reform

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in setting up residuary bodies in London and the metropolitan counties.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on 5 June about the appointment of Sir Godfrey Taylor as chairman of the London residuary body. I am pleased to be able to announce that the following have accepted my right hon. Friend's invitation to serve as chairmen of the residuary bodies in the metropolitan counties, when they are established by order under the Local Government Act 1985.

Greater Manchester Residuary Body—
Mr. J. P. B. Hadfield, JP, formerly Chairman and Managing Director of Bass North West Limited.

Merseyside Residuary Body—
Mr. L. F. Pocock, CBE, formerly Deputy Group Comptroller Royal Insurance Group.

Tyne and Wear Residuary Body—
Mr. A. S. Robertson, formerly Chief Executive, Northumbrian Water Authority.
West Midlands Residuary Body—
Dr. M. D. Skillicorn, Corporate Director, Public Affairs, of the GKN Group.
West Yorkshire Residuary Body—
Mr. T. McDonald, OBE, a senior partner in Armitage and Norton, Chartered Accountants.

Sir Godfrey Taylor's appointment will run for five years from the date of the establishment of the London residuary body, and those of the other chairmen until 1 April 1988.

Announcements about other appointments to the residuary bodies, and the dates on which they are to be set up, will be made shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now list the new authorities in Greater London with the power to issue precepts under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Sir George Young: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Hampshire

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the date for publication of the report of the examination in public into the proposed alterations to the north-east Hampshire structure plan.

Mr. Macfarlane: I am publishing the report today, together with my proposed modifications to the alterations and a statement of the reasons for them.

Basildon

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the number of dwellings sold by Basildon district council for each of the last four years and the proportion this represented of the council's total housing stock in each year;

(2) what information he has as to the number of dwellings sold by Basildon Development Corporation for each of the last four years and the proportion this represented of the total housing stock of the corporation in each year.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) on Wednesday 15 May 1985 at columns *131-32*.

I shall write to my hon. Friend with further information shortly.

Greater London (Sporting Schemes)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional funds he proposes to make available for sporting schemes in the Greater London area.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: It will be for London boroughs to assume full responsibility for the provision of sport and recreation in London on 1 April 1986. As already indicated, some additional central funding will be made available, through the Sports Council, for projects, schemes and facilities of wider than local significance. I am at present considering the Sports Council's case for such additional funding and will make an announcement in due course.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many planning appeals during the last 12 months he has not accepted the inspector's recommendations; how many of these involved proposals for *(a)* residential development, and *(b)* more than 300 residential units.

Mr. Macfarlane [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 July 1985]: In 1984, 16 appeals were decided contrary to the inspector's recommendations. I shall write to my hon. Friend with the further information which he has requested.

Local Government Inquiry

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of his announcement of 6 February, *Official Report*, column 957, of an inquiry into the practices and procedures in local government, he will prepare and place in the Library a paper outlining the current rights, responsibilities and duties of elected members as referred to in paragraph *(a)* of the terms of reference of the inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1985, c. *376*]: I have today placed in the Library copies of a joint submission on political organisation in local government made by my Department, The Scottish Office and the Welsh Office to the Widdicombe inquiry. We propose to submit shortly two further papers on the roles of members and officers in local government and on local authorities' use of their discretionary spending powers. These, too, will be placed in the Library in due course.

Rate Limitation

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of spending below which local authorities will be exempt from selective rate limitation for 1986-87.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 June 1985, c. *22*]: I have now announced the list of the 12 authorities designated for selective rate limitation in 1986-87 and the expenditure levels I have set for them.

It is open to these authorities to seek a redetermination of their expenditure level if they consider the amounts determined are inadequate. I will pay particular attention to the question of funding for voluntary bodies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the first meeting of the British-Chinese joint liaison group's discussions on the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the minutes of the first meeting of the joint liaison group and indicate by what means he proposes to keep the House and the Hong Kong people informed of progress

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to make a

statement on the progress of the joint liaison group talks on Hong Kong; and when the next meeting of the group will be.

Mr. Luce: The following communiqué was issued on 25 July, on the conclusion of the first meeting of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group:

Begins

The Sino-British Joint Liaison Group held its first meeting in London from 22 to 25 July 1985.—

The atmosphere was friendly and co-operative.

The two sides discussed and established working procedures for the Group.

In accordance with the provision of paragraph 4 of Annex II to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the Group held a wide-ranging discussion on Hong Kong's external economic relations. Among other things they discussed the question of how Hong Kong should continue, as a Special Administrative Region, its participation in the GATT, Multifibre Arrangements, and other international arrangements. The Group exchanged ideas on the working procedures for examining the continued application of international rights and obligations to Hong Kong.

The Group attached great importance to the role of the GATT and MFA in Hong Kong's economic development, particularly in its external trade activities. Both sides expressed their wishth to cooperate closely to ensure the maintenance of Hong Kong's participation in the above international arrangements. The Group will continue its work on these subjects.

The Group decided that the next meeting would take place in Beijing from 26 to 29 November 1985.

Ends

The House and the people of Hong Kong will be kept as fully informed about progress made in the group as is possible in view of the stipulation in annex II, paragraph 10 of the joint declaration that the proceedings of the group shall remain confidential unless otherwise agreed between the two sides. There will be an annual report to the House on Hong Kong.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether experts and supporting staff of the joint liaison group, and members and supporting staff of the Land Commission, established under the Sino-British joint declaration on the question of Hong Kong, will be accorded privileges and immunities in the same way as members of the joint liaison group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Arrangements to provide privileges and immunities for members of the joint liaison group, including the enactment of legislation in the United Kingdom and in Hong Kong, were made before the Sino-British joint declaration was ratified. A subsequent exchange of letters between the British chargé d'affaires and a Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs took place in Peking on 26 July. In accordance with the terms of this exchange, appropriate privileges and immunities will be granted to experts and supporting staff of the joint liaison group at meetings in Peking, London and Hong Kong. In London and Peking such experts and supporting staff will be appointed temporarily as members of their respective Embassies. Appropriate privileges and immunities will also be granted to members and supporting staff of the Land Commission which has been established in Hong Kong.

I am arranging for a copy of this exhange of letters to be laid in the Library of the House.

Property (Spain)

Mrs. Rumbold asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is available from his Department to people seeking to purchase property and businesses in Spain.

Mr. Renton: General information on settling in Spain may be obtained from the consular department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or our missions in Spain. British citizens seeking to purchase property and or businesses in Spain are advised to consult a lawyer.

South Africa

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions during the last year the Government have raised at the United Nations the subject of human rights in South Africa.

Mr. Luce: South Africa's human rights record is a regular item on the agenda of a number of United Nations bodies including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. We participate fully in such discussions.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the French Government their unilateral decision to withdraw ambassadorial recognition from South Africa and to ban French investment there, in the light of the unanimous agreement on European Economic Community policy on South Africa which he reported to the House on 24 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The decisions announced by the French Government were matters for their own judgment. For our part, we believe that we should maintain a positive approach which will help to resolve the serious problems of South Africa. This was the purpose of the joint statement agreed by all the Foreign Ministers of the Ten on 22 July.

Youth Councils

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has information on the participation of youth sections of political parties in the appropriate youth council or other similar body in each of the member states of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The information is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member.

North Atlantic Assembly

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what appointments have been made to the United Kingdom's delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) has replaced my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley.). My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) becomes an alternate member of the delegation.

South Africa (Emergency Powers)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards South Africa following the introduction of emergency laws in that country.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave on 24 July to the hon. Member for Wootwich (Mr. Cartwright) at column 1030.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Luxembourg about the subsequent re-export of depleted uranium supplied by British Nuclear Fuels Limited to International Metals SA in 1984 and the implication of the manner in which this was carried out for the operation of the non-proliferation treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Meriomydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 25 July. The Luxembourg Government have been made aware of our views on this matter.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, at the non-proliferation treaty meeting in August, he will propose free trade in nuclear materials between any country that is a member of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Luce: No. Our export policy with regard to nuclear materials remains as set out by the then Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) on 31 March 1976. Of course, membership by the recipient country of the non-proliferation treaty is a positive factor in our consideration of individual cases.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to breaches of the non-proliferation treaty recorded by the monitoring organisations regarding the supply of nuclear material to other states without the required notification in each of the last five years and as to the states involved and the materials involved in each case.

Mr. Luce: The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency has informed the agency board of governors that in 1984, as in previous years, the secretariat, in carrying out the safeguards obligations of the agency, did not detect any anomaly which would indicate the diversion of a significant amount of nuclear material — or the misuse of facilities or equipment subject to safeguards under certain agreements — for the manufacture of any nuclear weapon, or for any other military purpose, or for the manufacture of any other nuclear explosive device, or for purposes unknown. Details of the agency safeguards activities within particular states remain confidential to the agency secretariat and the state concerned.

Entry Clearance Officers

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers were in post at each post in the Indian sub-continent on 1 April.

Mr. Renton: The numbers of entry clearance officers in each post on 1 April were as follows:

	Number
New Delhi	4
Bombay	6
Calcutta	1
Islamabad	14
Karachi	2
Dhaka	16

Baltic States

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply of 5 July, *Official Report*, column 273, what contracts Her Majesty's Government maintain with any of the Baltic states which do not imply de jure recognition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: There have on occasions been limited contacts between members of Her Majesty's embassy and officials of the Baltic republics related to specific events when these were in our interests. A case in point was over the organisation of the British element in a trade exhibition in Riga in 1974.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the minimum yield of explosion carried out for the purposes of underground nuclear tests in the Soviet Union which can be detected using existing verification equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Current capabilities for detecting nuclear explosions are addressed in the working paper on "Seismic Monitoring for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban" which the United Kingdom tabled earlier this month at the Geneva conference on disarmament. A copy of this paper is in the Library.

Prince Masbour

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request that the Saudi Arabian Government offer no refuge, sanctuary or comfort to Royal Prince Masbour Bin Saud Abdul Aziz while he is in breach of his bail conditions in respect of drug charges.

Mr. Luce: We understand from the latest press reports that Prince Masbour is still in Britain. Any breach of bail conditions would, of course, be a matter for the courts.

Italian Terrorists

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Italian Government about the presence in the United Kingdom of Italian terrorists.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not been approached by the Italian Government.

European Assembly

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his

statement on 24 July, if he will provide details of the more positive role envisaged by her Majesty's Government for the European Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in the ad hoc committee for institutional affairs. These are to be found on page 30 in the committee's report which was deposited in the Library of the House on 22 April.

EC Directives

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his statement on 24 July, if he will explain whether it remains the intention of Her Majesty's Government to seek to preserve the principle of unanimity in European Economic Community directives relating to industry and commerce made under article 100; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Our attitude to any specific proposals will depend on whether they would in fact help achieve the reforms which are necessary in the way the Community works, including the completion of the common market.

EC Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his statement on 24 July, if he will provide details of the Treaty of European Co-operation which is to be discussed at the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Luce: The Milan European Council asked for work to be set in hand on a draft treaty on foreign policy and security in accordance with Franco-German and United Kingdom proposals. The United Kingdom draft was deposited in the House on 2 July.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Franco-German proposals on a draft treaty of European Union has yet been placed on the agenda for the intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Milan European Council asked that proposals be submitted for a draft treaty on foreign policy and security for discussion by heads of state and Government at the Luxembourg European Council. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs have subsequently instructed the Political Committee to draw up by 15 October the text of a draft treaty on the basis of the United Kingdom and Franco-German drafts. This draft will then be considered by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs meeting for this purpose within the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is his intention to submit any proposals to be placed on the agenda for the intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: We have already put forward a number of practical proposals. We are now waiting for concrete proposals from our partners as a basis for discussion at the conference. We will then consider whether to put forward any further ideas ourselves.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek clarification from the European Economic Community Commission on whether the intergovernmental conference called under article 236 of the treaty of Rome will be restricted to the consideration of amendments to the treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The conference has been called to determine by common accord what amendments should be made to the EC treaty. Discussion will also cover issues which do not require treaty amendment, such as the United Kingdom's own proposals for practical improvements.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government that any proposals made by the intergovernmental conference called under article 236 of the treaty of Rome will be considered by Parliament before the meeting of the European Council in December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The House will have ample opportunity to debate these issues. My hon. Friend will recall that the report of the Dooge committee was deposited in the House before it was discussed at the Milan European Council.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Board and Lodging Allowances

Mr. Frank Field asked the Attorney-General what special arrangements have been made to notify young people under the age of 25 years who have appealed against a supplementary benefit board and lodging decision about the date of the appeal hearing; what measures have been taken to ensure that appellants receive all appropriate papers; and what is the average time between lodging an appeal and the subsequent hearing by a social security appeal tribunal.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.
I will write to the hon. Member.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Wilson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will list the dates when he and the Lord Advocate, respectively, met the chairman or the trustees of the Trustee Savings bank of Scotland to discuss matters directly or indirectly connected with the Government's legislation to float the trustee savings banks.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No.

Mr. Wilson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if Scottish Law Officers or their officials participated in or contributed to the working groups or committees of the Trustee Savings bank central board when that body was considering questions inherent in the flotation of the trustee savings banks.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No.

Unruly Certificates

Mr. Kennedy asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will detail the types of behaviour and categories of offence in respect of which procurators fiscal seek the issue of unruly certificates.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The application for unruly certificates by procurators fiscal is governed by

section 297 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 and is not dependent on specific types of behaviour or categories of offence as such, but on whether a child is of so unruly a character that he cannot safely be committed to a place of safety or that he is of so depraved a character that he is not a fit person to be so detained. Prior to making an application for an unruly certificate, procurators fiscal will consult officials of the local authority on whether there is secure accommodation available as an alternative to recommending an unruly certificate, and the result of such consultation will be made known to the sheriff if the procurator fiscal proceeds with his application.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Newham (Trial Costs)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General what was the total cost to public funds of bringing prosecutions against those involved in the recent Newham seven trial.

The Attorney-General: This case is not fully concluded and no application has yet been made in respect of prosecution costs. If an order is made for payment of the prosecution costs from central funds, they will be subject to taxation by the appropriate officer of the Crown Court. All these defendants are legally aided and the defence costs will be the subject of determination by an officer of the Crown court.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General what was the cost of bringing prosecutions in the Newham eight trial.

The Attorney-General: The costs of the prosecution in this case were awarded from central funds. The costs are paid as taxed into court. It is not the practice to disclose the sums involved in individual cases.

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Barnett asked the Attorney-General whether it is his policy to appoint suitably qualified men and women under the age of 35 years to chairmanships of social security appeal tribunals.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor does not generally appoint barristers or solicitors who have the requisite number of years' professional standing to tribunal posts if they are under the age of 35.

Crown Courts

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General how many new Crown courts have been opened since 1983.

The Attorney-General: Five new Crown court buildings have been brought into use since 1 January 1983 at Southwark, Maidstone, Liverpool, Swindon and Salisbury, containing a total of 47 Crown court courtrooms.

Finer Committee Report

Ms. Harman asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the latest position as regards the implementation by his Department of the recommendations which affect its responsibilities of the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families.

The Attorney-General: There are no recommendations in the report of the Finer committee on one-parent families which affect the responsibilities of my Department.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Frank Field asked the Attorney-General how many outstanding social security appeals to social security commissioners were held in the office of the commissioners awaiting hearing at December 1983, December 1984 and currently, broken down between *(a)* applications seeking leave to appeal, *(b)* successful applications awaiting receipt of appeal and *(c)* appeals.

The Attorney-General: The number of pending appeals and applications to the social security commissioners in (i) April 1984 (when this information was first collected), (ii) December 1984 and (iii) currently, is respectively:

	April 1984	*December 1984*	*Currently*
(a) applications seeking leave to appeal	125	151	302
(b) successful applications awaiting receipt of the appeal papers	226	253	231
(c) appeals	698	1,019	1,207

Human Rights

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give, for judgments delivered by the European Court of Human Rights against signatory nations of the European convention on human rights, the date of judgment, the name of the country affected, the articles in question, and brief details of the nature of the judgment.

Mr. Renton [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July 1985, c. 514]: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

Country and Date of Judgment	*Articles in Question*	*Brief Details of the Subject Matter*	*Name of Case*
Austria			
1. 27 June 1968	5	Length of detention on remand	Neumeister
2. 10 November 1969	5	Length of detention on remand	Stögmuller
3. 16 July 1971	5	Length of detention on remand	Ringeisen
4. 22 November 1984	6	Independence of Tribunal	Sramek
5. 6 May 1985	6	Right of fair trial	Bönisch

Country and Date of Judgment	Articles in Question	Brief Details of the Subject Matter	Name of Case
Belgium			
1. 23 July 1968	Protocol 1 Article 2, 14	Discrimination in access to education in particular languages	Linguistic Cases
2. 18 June 1971	5	Vagrancy: right of appeal against detention	de Wilde and Others
3. 13 June 1979	8, 14, Protocol 1 Article 1	Illegitimate children—right to family life	Marckx
4. 27 February 1980	6	Right to fair trial	Deweer
5. 23 June 1981	6	Disciplinary proceedings of professional bodies	Le Compte, van Leuven and De Meyere
6. 24 June 1982	5	Recidivist: right to appeal against detention	van Droogenbroeck
7. 1 October 1982	6	Impartiality of tribunal	Piersack
8. 10 February 1983	6	Disciplinary proceedings of professional bodies	Albert and Le Compte
9. 26 October 1984	6	Impartiality of tribunal	De Cubber
FRG			
1. 28 June 1978	6	Length of proceedings	König
2. 28 November 1978	6	Right to free interpretation in criminal proceedings	Luedicke and Others
3. 15 July 1982	6	Length of criminal proceedings	Eckle
4. 27 April 1983	6	Right to an effective defence	Pakelli
5. 21 February 1984	6	Right to free interpretation in administrative proceedings	Oztürk
6. 25 March 1985	10	Right of free expression	Barthold
Ireland			
1. 9 October 1979	6, 8	Judicial separation: unavailability of legal aid	Airey
Italy			
1. 6 November 1980	5	Deprivation of liberty	Guzzardi
2. 13 May 1980	6	Right to an effective defence	Artico
3. 10 December 1982	6	Length of criminal proceedings	Foti, Lentini, Generini and Gulli
4. 10 December 1982	6	Length of criminal proceedings	Corigliano
5. 29 February 1984	5	Mental patient: lawfulness of detention	Luberti
6. 9 April 1984	6	Right to an effective defence	Goddi
7. 12 February 1985	6	Criminal trial in absence of accused	Colozza
Netherlands			
1. 8 June 1976	5, 6	Armed Forces disciplinary procedures	Engel and Others (Dutch soldiers)
2. 24 October 1979	5, 6	Mental patient: right to have detention reviewed	Winterwerp
3. 22 May 1984	5	Armed Forces disciplinary procedures	De Jong, Baljet, and van den Brink
4. 22 May 1984	5	Armed Forces disciplinary procedures	Van den Sluijs, Zuiderveld and Klappe
5. 22 May 1984	5	Conscientious objectors	Duinof and Duijf
6. 26 March 1985	8	Right to bring prosecution for assault	X and Y
Portugal			
1. 10 July 1984	6	Length of proceedings	Guincho
Sweden			
1. 23 September 1982	6 Protocol 1 Article 1	Property rights: long-term planning blight	Sporrong and Lönnroth
2. 28 October 1984	5	Right of prisoner on remand to be brought promptly before a judge	McGoff
Switzerland			
1. 25 March 1983	6	Presumption of innocence	Minelli
2. 13 July 1983	6	Length of proceedings	Zimmerman and Steiner
United Kingdom			
1. 21 February 1975	6, 8	Prisoner's access to Court	Golder
2. 18 January 1978	3	Interrogation techniques (N. Ireland)	Government of Ireland
3. 25 April 1978	3	Judicial birching (Isle of Man)	Tyrer
4. 26 April 1979	10	Freedom of expression: contempt of court	Sunday Times
5. 13 August 1981	11	Closed Shop	Young, James and Webster
6. 22 October 1981	8	Homosexuality (N. Ireland)	Dudgeon
7. 25 February 1982	Protocol 1 Article 2	Corporal punishment in schools (respect for parents' philosophical convictions)	Campbell and Cosans
8. 5 November 1981	5	Mental patient: right to have detention reviewed	X
9. 25 March 1983	6, 8, 13	Prisoners correspondence	Silver and Others
10. 28 June 1984	6, 8, 13	Boards of Prison visitors: conduct of disciplinary proceedings	Campbell and Fell
11. 2 August 1984	8	Telephone tapping	Malone
12. 28 May 1985	8 with 14, 13	Immigration—discrimination on grounds of sex	Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parades

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the occasions on which he and his predecessors in office have agreed to the re-routing or banning of parades, loyalist and otherwise; and if he will list his powers in the matter.

Mr. Scott: Under the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, the routing of public processions is a matter for the police. As far as can be ascertained from available records, the Secretary of State's powers under the 1981 order, and the legislation that preceded it, to prohibit the holding of public processions have been exercised on the following occasions:

Date	*Location of Proposed Procession*
3 June 1972	Londonderry
18 June 1972	Belfast City Centre
1 July 1972	Coalisland
12 August 1972	Londonderry
19 November 1972	Belfast City Centre
10 February 1973	Belfast City Centre
9 December 1973	Belfast City Centre
8 June 1975	Dungiven
12 July 1975	Feeny
13 June 1976	Dungiven
8 July 1977	Feeny
12 July 1977	Feeny
3 July 1978	Feeny
16 June 1978	Belfast City Centre
26 November 1978	Armagh
1 January 1980	Belfast/Maze
3 December 1980	Belfast City Centre
5 April 1981	Cookstown
11 April 1981	Cookstown
15 April 1981	Belfast City Centre
30 May 1981	Castlewellan
1 June 1985	Castlewellan
27 June 1985	Castlewellan

The Secretary of State's powers are contained in article 4(3) of the Public Order (Northen Ireland) Order, 1981 which relates to the prohibiting of public processions in the circumstances prescribed.

Catering Training

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the relationship between the Northern Ireland catering industry training board and the Council for Education Recruitment and Training in the Republic of Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: There is no formal relationship between these organisations. However, informal meetings are held from time to time between their representatives for the exchange of information, knowledge and ideas about training in the hotel and catering industry.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the involvement of the Northern Ireland catering industry training board in the youth training programme since this scheme was instituted; and what are the number of places targeted, those filled and the number who completed the course.

Dr. Boyson: The catering industry training board has been involved in the youth training programme by supporting employers and further education colleges in the provision of off-the-job training, education and work experience for young people.

In 1983-84, of the 85 targeted places 46 were filled. Ten young people completed their year's course, and 24 obtained catering industry jobs before completion.

In 1984-85, of the 92 targeted places 91 were filled. Fifty-three young people are still following their year's course, and 28 have already obtained catering industry jobs.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the involvement of the hotel and catering industry in the youth training programme.

Dr. Boyson: The hotel and catering industry makes a valuable contribution to the training of both 16 and 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland through its participation in the youth training programme which offers training for young people in the two years following the minimum school leaving age. Full-time training for 16-year-olds is delivered through partnerships of two or more providers, one of whom must be an employer, and hotel and catering firms participate in these full-time training partnerships. For 17-year-olds, the hotel and catering industry is involved with the provision of training in the programme through the YTP workscheme and the skill training scheme.

Information relating to numbers of employers in the hotel and catering industry involved in the youth training programme cannot be extracted except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the opportunities for hotel and catering studies at colleges of further education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the courses in hotel and catering studies set out in the attached schedule will be available in further education colleges in Northern Ireland in the academic year 1985-86.

Course	*Mode*	*College*
Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC)		
BTEC National Certificate in Hotel Catering and Institutional Operations	Day Release	NI Hotel and Catering College
BTEC National Diploma in Hotel Catering and Institutional Operations	Full-time	NI Hotel and Catering College Belfast College of Business Studies
City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI)		
CGLI No. 120 Bakery Certificate Part I and II	Full-time/Part-time/Block Release	Belfast College of Business Studies

Course	Mode	College
CGLI No. 688 Foundation Course in Food Industries	Full-time	Banbridge
		East Tyrone (also Part-time)
		Larne
		Limavady
		Newtownabbey
		North Antrim
		Portadown
		Rupert Stanley
	Day Release	North Down
		North West College of Technology
CGLI No. 700 Catering—Specific Skills Schemes	Part-time	Fermanagh
		Down
		Larne
	Full-time/Day Release	Fermanagh
CGLI No. 705 Catering General	Full-time	Ballymena
		Belfast College of Business Studies
		Fermanagh
		Larne
		Lisburn
		Newry/Kilkeel
		North Down
		NI Hotel and Catering College
		Omagh
		Portadown
CGLO No. 706 Cookery for the Catering Industry	Day Release	Antrim
		Armagh
		Ballymena
		Banbridge
		Down
		East Tyrone
		Larne
		Limavady
		Lisburn
		Lurgan
		North Down
		Omagh
	Full-time/Day Release	Fermanagh
		Newry/Kilkeel
	Part-time/Day Release	Magherafelt
		Newcastle
		Newtownabbey
		North West College of Technology
	Block Release/Day Release (Part I)	NI Hotel and Catering College
	Full-time/Block Release (Part II)	NI Hotel and Catering College
	Day Release (Part III)	NI Hotel and Catering College
	Day Release/Part-time (Part I)	Belfast College of Business Studies
	Full-time/Day Release/Part-time (Part II)	Belfast College of Business Studies
	Day Release (Part III)	Belfast College of Business Studies
CGLI No. 707 Food and Beverage Service	Full-time	Limavady
		Newry/Kilkeel
		Omagh
	Block Release	Belfast College of Business Studies
		NI Hotel and Catering College
	Day Release	Larne
	Full-time/Part-time	Banbridge
	Full-time/Part-time/Day Release	Fermanagh
CGLI No. 709 Hotel Reception	Full-time	Belfast College of Business Studies
		NI Hotel and Catering College
		North West College of Technology
		Newry/Kilkeel
		Omagh
	Full-time/Part-time	Banbridge
CGLI Skills Tests in Catering:		
No. 7001—Call Order Cooks	Full-time	North Antrim
No. 7003—Food Service Assistants	Full-time	North Antrim
No. 7004—Counter/Service Assistants	Full-time	North Antrim
Hotel Catering and Institutional Management Association (HCIMA):		
Membership		
Part A	Block Release/Day Release	Belfast College of Business Studies
Part B	Sandwich	Belfast College of Business Studies

Course	Mode	College
National Examination Board in Supervisory Studies:		
Supervisory Studies for Catering and Food Studies: Certificate	Day Release	NI Hotel and Catering College
Certificate and Diploma	Day Release	Belfast College of Business Studies
Royal Society of Health:		
Hygiene of Food Retailing and Catering	Part-time	North Down
		Portadown
	Day Release/Part-time	Larne
	Day Release	North West College
Catering Industry Training Board:		
Food Service and Waiting Techniques	Part-time	Antrim
College Pre-Vocational Courses in Catering	Full-time	Antrim
		Armagh (also Part-time)
		Ballymena
		Coleraine
		Down
		East Tyrone
		Fermanagh
		Larne
		Limavady
		Lisburn
		Lurgan
		Magherafelt
		Newcastle
		Newry/Kilkeel
		North Antrim
		North West College of Technology
		Omagh
		Portadown
		Rupert Stanley College

The following Colleges provide catering courses for trainees undertaking the Youth Training Programme:
Antrim, Armagh, Ballymena, Banbridge, Belfast College of Business Studies, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Down, East Tyrone, Fermanagh, Larne, Limavady, Lisburn, Lurgan, Magherafelt, Newtownabbey, North Antrim (in partnership with NI Hotel and Catering College), North West College of Technology (Strabane Annex), Omagh, Portadown.

Tourism

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average amount of capital employed per job in the tourist industry in Northern Ireland compared with the economy as a whole.

Dr. Boyson: The information is not available.

Teaching Posts

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of all Northern Ireland schools which have been allocated discretionary teaching posts during the school year 1985-86, including the number of such posts in each school.

Mr. Scott: As the details are voluminous, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultation takes place between education and library boards and the Department of Education regarding the allocation of discretionary teaching posts in each board area.

Mr. Scott: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland has full discussions with officers of each education and library board about the allocation of teaching posts to all controlled schools under its management.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of schools which have had falling enrolments since 1984-85 and have been allocated discretionary posts in 1985-86.

Mr. Scott: This information cannot be supplied because figures for school enrolments in 1985-86 are not yet available.

Animals (Slaughter)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total number of animals slaughtered in Northern Ireland during the months of April, May and June; and what were the figures for the same period in 1984.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Cattle		
April	44,080	48,132
May	31,788	39,318
June	33,043	40,531
Sheep		
April	16,596	36,605
May	30,296	37,454
June	52,842	48,248
Pigs		
April	103,631	114,072
May	85,589	83,989
June	80,130	89,644

Milk Production

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the amount of milk

produced in the first three months of the 1985 quota year; what is the comparison with 1983 levels for the same period; and what percentage above or below quota production is at present.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	Million litres
1 April to 30 June 1983	451,397
1 April to 30 June 1985	443,954 (5·4 per cent above quota)

Source: Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland.

Schools (Pupil Choice)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many pupils were awarded the school of their first choice in the Southern education and library board area, in all grades of the transfer procedure; and how many have had to accept an alternative.

Mr. Scott: In the Southern education and library board area 3,035—94·2 per cent.—pupils from selective areas obtained the school of their first preference; 2,367—99 per cent.—from non-selective areas obtained the school of their first preference.

Some 211 pupils were unsuccessful in obtaining the school of their first preference.

A and M Grades

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the percentage of A and M grades awarded in *(a)* controlled primary schools and *(b)* maintained primary schools in the Southern education and library board area.

Mr. Scott: The number of A and M grades awarded to pupils in controlled primary schools, maintained primary schools and preparatory departments, expressed as a percentage of the total number of A and M grades awarded in the Southern education and library board area is as follows:

	A per cent.	*M per cent.*
Controlled	21·7	25·8
Maintained	76·7	73·7
Preparatory Departments	1·6	0·5

Skimmed Milk Powder

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of skimmed milk powder is used by the intensive sector of agriculture in Northern Ireland in animal feeds.

Dr. Boyson: 2,274 tonnes of skimmed milk powder was incorporated in intensive livestock feeds in 1984, under two European Community schemes.

[*Source:* Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce].

Beef

Mr. James Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of beef produced in Northern Ireland during 1984 was exported *(a)* to countries within the European Economic Community and *(b)* to countries outside the Community.

Dr. Boyson: The quantity of beef exported during 1984 was equivalent to 68 per cent. of the tonnage of beef slaughtered in 1984; 53 per cent. went to Great Britain, 31 per cent. to other European Community countries and 16 per cent. directly to third countries.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated waiting list of patients for Craigavon area hospital and Daisy Hill general hospital in Newry.

Mr. Chris Patten: Actual waiting lists at 31 March 1985 were as follows:

	General Surgery	*ENT*	*Gynaecology*	*Out-patients**
Craigavon Area Hospital	427	187	162	2,307
Daisy Hill Hospital	Nil	77	64	850

* Waiting for first appointments.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sheltered dwellings were provided in the Newry and Armagh area during 1984; what was the cost of provision; and how many sheltered dwellings he hopes to provide during 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: None during 1985. 37 units of sheltered accommodation are due to be completed by registered housing associations in 1985.

Agricultural Training Colleges

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the finance allocated to agricultural training colleges in Northern Ireland went towards research and development in the financial year 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: Approximately 35 per cent. of gross expenditure.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of finance allocated to agricultural training colleges in Northern Ireland went towards staff wages in the financial year 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: Approximately 54 per cent. of gross expenditure.

Ultra Heat-treated Milk

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the amount of ultra heat-treated milk imported into Northern Ireland during 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: No ultra heat-treated milk was imported into Northern Ireland from outside the United Kingdom in the period 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims for supplementary benefit that were refused were allowed on appeal in (i) the Newry office area and (ii) the Armagh office area in 1984.

Mr. Chris Patten: I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Schools (Amalgamation)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in amalgamating the royal school, Armagh and Armagh girls high school.

Mr. Scott: The Department of Education for Northern Ireland has approved a development proposal which provides for this amalgamation to take place. The premises of the royal school will have to be suitably altered and extended, and planning of these alterations has now reached an advanced stage.

Jobcentres

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many adults and school leavers were placed in employment by the jobcentres in Armagh in 1984;

(2) how many adults and school leavers were placed in employment by the jobcentre in Newry during 1984.

Dr. Boyson: Separate information is not available for school leavers, who are included in the figure for young persons aged under 18. In 1984, 542 adults and 202 young persons were placed in employment through the Jobmarket in Armagh city or its sub-office in Keady, and 680 adults and 246 young persons were placed in employment through the Jobmarket in Newry town or its sub-offices in Crossmaglen, Forkhill, Newtownhamilton and Warrenpoint.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff were employed in the jobcentres in *(a)* Armagh city and *(b)* Newry during 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	Armagh	*Newry*
1982	11 full-time plus 1 part-time	23 full-time
1983	13 full-time plus 1 part-time	25 full-time
1984	12 full-time plus 1 part-time	22 full-time plus 1 part time

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people in the Newry and Armagh district travel-to-work area are presently engaged in the youth training scheme.

Dr. Boyson: Statistics for the youth training programme are compiled by Jobmarket areas rather than by travel-to-work areas. At 28 June 1985, the number of young people engaged in the youth training programme in the Newry Jobmarket area was 792 and in the Armagh Jobmarket area 210, making a total of 1,002.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people in the Newry and Armagh district travel-to-work area are presently unemployed.

Dr. Boyson: Newry and Armagh do not of themselves constitute travel-to-work areas. However, the number of unemployed young persons aged under 18 in the Newry and Mourne and Armagh district council areas at June 1985 were 218 and 138 respectively.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many redundancies are registered in the Newry and Armagh district travel-to-work areas.

Dr. Boyson: Newry and Armagh do not of themselves constitute travel-to-work areas for Department recording purposes. There were no notified redundancies in the towns of Newry or Armagh at 30 June 1985.

Housing Executive (Rehabilitation Schemes)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many rehabilitation schemes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to implement during the financial year 1985-86 in the Newry and Mourne district council area, listing the estates proposed and when they were built;

(2) how many rehabilitation schemes the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to implement during the financial year 1985-86 in the Armagh district council area, listing the estates proposed and when they were built.

Mr. Chris Patten: These are matters for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Housebuilding

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new houses the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to build in *(a)* Newry town area and *(b)* the rural area of Newry and Mourne district council in the financial year 1985-86

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985-86, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to build 41 new houses in the Newry town area, all of which are under construction at present, and 107 new houses in the rurual area of Newry and Mourne district council, 97 of which are under construction at present.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new houses the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to build in the Armagh district council area during the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to build 61 new houses in the Armagh district council area in 1985-86, 30 of which are under construction at present.

Agriculture Students

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost to the Departmemnt of Agriculture in Northern Ireland of training students at colleges in the financial year 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: The net teaching cost at the three agricultural colleges for 1983-84 was £2,445,000, excluding certain central administration and service costs.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students attended agriculture colleges in Northern Ireland in 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: 434 on residential education courses, and some 480 various short training courses.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost to the Department

of Agriculture in Northern Ireland of payments towards the costs of agriculture students and research in Queen's university, Belfast, for the last three years for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Expenditure by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland on agricultural *research and the faculty of agriculture was as follows:

	Teaching £000's	*Research £000's*
1981-82	585	2,410
1982-83	652	2,658
1983-84	564	2,687

Note: Includes some research expenditure at centres other than Newforge.

Further information is available in the annual Northern Ireland Estimates and Appropriation Accounts for class 1, vote 1.

Departmental Land

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hectares of land are owned by the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: 92,633, including 16,826 hectares of lakes and reservoirs but excluding Lough Erne.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hectares of land are presently used by the Department of Agriculture for training and experimental work.

Dr. Boyson: 2,306.

Store Cattle

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many store cattle were imported into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland during 1984.

Dr. Boyson: There were 111,565.

Cattle Imports (Slaughter)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many live cattle for immediate slaughter were imported into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland during 1984.

Dr. Boyson: There were 82,121.

Forestry

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hectares of forest land presently planted with trees are owned by the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: At 31 March 1985, 56,618 hectares, including land on lease to and managed by the Department. Separate statistics are not readily available for land owned by the Department.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the total running costs of the forestry division within the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, for the financial year 1983-84;

(2) what was the value of trees sold from forests in the possession of the Department of Agriculture in 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to pages 45 and 34 respectively of the Northern Ireland Trading and other Accounts 1983-84 (House of Commons Paper No. 409, 12 June 1985.)

Housing Executive Property

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses remain in the ownership of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in *(a)* Armagh district council area and *(b)* Newry and Mourne district council areas.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that information as at 30 June 1985 was 4,722 and 9,413 respectively.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses have been sold to tenants of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive since the inception of the scheme in *(a)* Armagh district council area and *(b)* Newry and Mourne district council area.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that up to and including 30 June 1985, 1,039 houses had been sold to tenants in the Armagh district council area, and 1,877 had been sold to tenants in the Newry and Mourne district council area.

Student Nurses

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many student nurses are presently in training at Craigavon school of nursing; and how many of these students are citizens of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: At present there are 271 student nurses in training at the southern area college of nursing, of whom seven are from the Republic of Ireland.

Southern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure of the Southern health and social services board for the financial year 1983-84.

Mr. Chris Patten: £95·2 million.

Southern Education and Library Board

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure of the Southern education and library board for the financial year 1983-84.

Mr. Scott: The total recurrent and capital expenditure of the Southern education and library board in 1983-84 was £42,243,091.

Housing Executive (Maintenance Costs)

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total expenditure by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on planned maintenance throughout the Province for 1983-84;

(2) what was the total expenditure on planned maintenance by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the Armagh district council area for 1983-84;

(3) what was the total expenditure on planned maintenance in the Newry and Mourne district council area for 1983-84.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the expenditure was as follows:

	£
Northern Ireland	23,000,000
Armagh district council area	485,600
Newry and Mourne council area	1,319,900

Roads Expenditure

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total expenditure by the Department of the Environment roads service for the financial year 1983-84 in the Armagh district council area;

(2) what was the total expenditure by the Department of the Environment roads service for the financial year 1983-84 in the Newry and Mourne district council area.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland's roads service carries out its functions on a divisional basis; within the Craigavon division it is estimated that expenditure in the Armagh district council and Newry and Mourne district council areas was approximately £3·4 million and £4·6 million respectively.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure by the Department of the Environment roads service for the financial year 1983-84 in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: £102·9 million.

Vacant Housing

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the Newry and Armagh constituency are vacant at present;

(2) how many houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the Armagh city and district area are presently unoccoupied; and how many have been vacant for more than six weeks;

(3) how many houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the Newry town area are presently unoccupied; and how many have been vacant for more than six weeks;

(4) how many houses owned by the Northern Ireland Housing executive in Forkhill, Crossmaglen, Camlough, Newtownhamilton, Mullaghbawn, Cullyhanna, Silverbridge and Bessbrook are unoccoupied at present.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chief executive that the information requested is as follows:

Area	*Unoccupied Houses (Excluding redevelopment areas at 30 June 1985)*	*No. of houses vacant more than 6 weeks*
Constituency of Newry and Armagh	175	166
Armagh City District	30	27
Newry Town	143	138
Forkhill	0	—
Crossmaglen	0	—
Camlough	1	—
Newtownhamilton	0	—
Mullaghbawn	0	—
Cullyhanna	0	—
Silverbridge	0	—
Bessbrook	1	1

Live Cattle

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many live cattle were exported to the Republic of Ireland during 1984.

Dr. Boyson: There were 31,756

Pigs

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many live pigs were exported to the Republic of Ireland during 1984.

Dr. Boyson: There were 309,319.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average price received by the farmer for pigs slaughtered in Northern Ireland in 1984.

Dr. Boyson: It was 99·22p per kilo (deadweight).

Agriculture Training Colleges

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what were the costs involved in the running of the agriculture training colleges in the financial year 1983-84;

(2) what was the total money spent by the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland on *(a)* education and *(b)* research and development in 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Northern Ireland Appropriation Accounts 1983-84 class I, vote 1. (House of Commons Paper 148, 30 January 1985).

Experimental Farms

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the running costs of the experimental farms in Northern Ireland in the financial year 1983-84.

Dr. Boyson: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The available information in relation to three of the establishments is in the Northern Ireland Appropriation Accounts 1983-84, class I, vote 1 (House of Commons Paper 148, 30 January 1985).

Ewe Premiums

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he hopes to make the payment of ewe premiums to farmers in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Payment of the ewe premium for the 1984-85 European Community marketing year will commence following publication of the relevant regulation in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total value of imports into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland in 1984.

(2) what was the total value of exports from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland during 1984.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

	£
Into Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland	959,996,915
From Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland	952,993,187

Note: These figures are provisional.

Processions

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to the cost of policing the Loyalist parades on 12 and 13 July in Portadown in each of the last five years including 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Chief Constable regularly informs my right hon. Friend and me of law enforcement issues, including the conduct of parades and particular events and the police resources involved. So far as the policing of the Portadown parades is concerned, the estimated cost for 12 and 13 July 1984 was £34,150, and for 1985 it was £341,000. Similar information is not available for 1981-83.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Royal Ulster Constabulary, Army and Ulster Defence Regiment personnel, respectively, were deployed in Portadown in connection with Loyalist parades on 12 and 13 July in each of the last five years including 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: It would not be appropriate for me to give details of the deployment of members of the security forces at particular locations; these are operational matters decided by Royal Ulster Constabulary and Army commanders.

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the total number of individual and group representations he received objecting to the route along Obins street, Portadown, being traversed during annual Loyalist parades in the current year;

(2) what representations concerning the routeing of annual Loyalist parades along Obins street, Portadown in July he received from *(a)* the Government of the Irish Republic, *(b)* the Social Democratic and Labour party, *(c)* Sinn Fein and *(d)* the Workers' party of Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Since the routeing of marches and parades is a matter for the Chief Constable's operational judgment, the Northern Ireland Office does not keep a comprehensive record of all those who have expressed views to me or my colleagues on these matters. Representatives of the Social Democratic and Labour party gave my right hon. Friend and me their views on the Portadown marches which were to take place on 7, 12 and 13 July, but there were no representations during this period from the Irish Government, the Workers party or from Sinn Fein.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many marches in the Province have been re-routed annually during the past 5 years.

Mr. Scott: The routes of a large number of processions are altered each year after consultations between the organisers and the police. Only a very small proportion give rise to any difficulty or public disorder. Police records are not maintained in a way which would allow the detailed information requested to be obtained at other than disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the first six months of 1985 are now available together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: Yes, the statistics, together with those since 1971, are as follows:

Statistics on Security—Part 1 (Yearly figures) 1971-1978

	1971	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*
Shooting incidents	1,756	10,628	5,018	3,206	1,803	1,908	1,081	755
Explosions	1,022	1,382	978	685	399	766	366	455
Bombs neutralised	493	471	542	428	236	426	169	178
Weight of explosives in lbs*	10,972	47,462	47,472	46,435	13,753	17,596	2,839	5,343
Explosions neutralised	3,001	19,978	32,450	27,094	11,159	16,252	2,188	5,860·5
Armed robberies	437	1,931	1,215	1,231	1,201	813	591	442
Amount stolen	£303,787	£790,687	£612,015	£572,951	£572,105	£545,497	£446,988	£232,650
Malicious fires†	—	—	587	636	248	453	432	269
Deaths								
Civilian	115	322	171	166	216	245	69	50

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Army/UDR	48	129	66	35	20	29	29	21
RUC/RUC'R'	11	17	13	15	11	23	14	10
Injuries								
Civilian	1,838	3,813	1,812	1,680	2,044	2,162	1,027	548
Army/UDR	390	578	548	483	167	264	188	135
RUC/RUC'R'	315	485	291	235	263	303	183	302

* Estimated weight only
† Consolidated figures not available for earlier years

Statistics on Security—Part 1 (Yearly figures) 1979-85

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	January to June 1985
Shooting incidents*	728	642	815(327)	382(165)	290(134)	230(101)	101(27)
Explosions	422	280	398	219	266	193	
53							
Bombs neutralised	142	120	131	113	101	55	32
Weight of explosives in lbs†	11,181	9,059	9,261	11,199	6,923	8,545	4,161
Explosions neutralised	4,530	6,405	9,168	7,300	7,503	6,114	2,072
Armed robberies	434	412	587	580	622	627	201
Amount stolen	£568,359	£496,825	£854,929	£1,392,202	£830,258	£701,903	£269,999
Malicious fires‡	315	275	536	499	528	840	433
Deaths							
Civilian	51	50	57	57	41	36	15
Army/UDR	48	16	23	28	15	19	3
RUC/RUC'R'	14	9	21	12	18	9	19
Injuries							
Civilians	557	530	878	328	280	513	208
Army/UDR	153	77	140	98	88	86	20
RUC/RUC'R'	165	194	332	99	142	267	111

* Figures in ( ) refer to shots heard only and not included in the total
† Estimated weight only
‡ No figure for April-June 1981

Statistics on security—Part II (yearly figures)

	*Houses searched	Finds: Firearms	Finds: Ammunition (rounds)	Finds: Explosives
1971	17,262	717	157,944	2,748
1972	36,617	1,264	183,410	41,488
1973	74,556	1,595	187,399	38,418
1974	71,914	1,260	147,202	26,120
1975	30,092	825	73,604	11,565
1976	34,939	837	70,306	21,714
1977	20,724	590	52,091	3,809
1978	15,462	400	43,512	2,108
1979	6,452	301	46,280	1,996
1980	4,406	203	28,078	1,810
1981	4,104	409	47,127	7,536
1982	4,045	317	41,452	5,066
1983	1,497	200	32,451	3,762
1984	1,282	197	17,211	8,534
1985 (January-June)	367	112	6,020	3,859

* Includes occupied and unoccupied houses searched.

*Persons charged with terrorist type offences**

	Murder	Attempted murder	Firearms offences	Explosives offences	Theft act	Other	Total
31-July-31 December							
1972	13	16	242	86	111	63	531
1973	71	85	631	236	186	205	1,414
1974	77	76	545	161	239	276	1,374
1975	138	88	460	100	314	97	1,197
1976	120	121	353	215	188	279	1,276
1977	131	135	301	146	203	392	1,308
1978	60	79	225	79	151	249	843
1979	45	39	177	40	159	210	670
1980	63	59	112	39	128	149	550
1981	48	72	155	39	158	446	918

	Murder	Attempted murder	Firearms offences	Explosives offences	Theft act	Other	Total
1982	50	96	173	41	130	196	686
1983	75	60	150	48	119	161	613
1984	41	68	155	21	94	149	528
1985 (January-June)	21	19	56	15	40	91	247

* These figures are not available in consolidated form for earlier years.

Convictions for scheduled offences—January to June 1985

Offence	Number convicted	Non-custodial sentence	Young offenders centre training schools	Less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 15 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Life
Murder	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Attempted murder	16	1	0	0	0	3	3	6	3	0
Conspiracy to murder	3	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing grievous bodily harm	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing explosion	9	0	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	0
Placing explosive	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing explosives with intent	12	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0
Other explosive offences	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Possessing a firearm with intent	43	12	5	9	6	5	5	1	0	0
Possessing a firearm	17	7	4	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying a firearm with intent	6	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
Other major firearms offences	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minor firearms offences	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	97	46	19	16	8	5	3	0	0	0
Aggravated robbery	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted robbery	20	9	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burglary	16	7	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Membership of illegal organisations	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlawful collection of information	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	7	3	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of an offensive weapon	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	15	10	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted hijacking	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	6	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	59	42	12	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Intimidation	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing prohibited articles	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common law riot	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conspiracy to arm terrorists	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	376	164	63	61	30	20	13	8	4	13

Notes:

1. The offence classifications are based on those used by the Crown and Peace Office in their annual return.
2. The tables relate to persons convicted at the Belfast Crown court. This covers all scheduled offences tried on indictment.
3. Some jury trials are included in cases where the Attorney-General certified out of the scheduled mode of trial, that is, non-terrorist serious offences.
4. Where a person has been convicted of more than one offence only the most serious or that which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets have been fired in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the current year and in what circumstanes; in what location the bullets were fired; and how many, if any, persons were injured as a result of the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: Between 1 January and 13 July, 116 plastic baton rounds were fired in Northern Ireland. Police records indicate that four people were allegedly injured by plastic baton rounds during that period.

I am writing to the hon. Member with the information he has requested about the circumstances and places in which the baton rounds were fired. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the number so far in the current year concerning the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 *(a)* what was the yearly total of arrests made under the Act, *(b)* how many persons arrested under the Act were detained for the following periods: (i) up to 12 hours, (ii) 12 to 24 hours, (iii) 24 to 36 hours, (iv) 36 to 48 hours, (v) 48 to 60 hours and (vi) 60 to 72 hours, indicating those numbers (1) not ultimately charged under the Act and released, (2) those charged under the Act and (3) those charged with an offence but not under the Acts indicating which offences and (4) those charged under the Act but not initially detained under the Act;

(2) if he will state the current number of people who were detained so far in the current year under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and charged with scheduled offences under the Act and other Acts, separately; and with which offences they have been charged.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: In the first six months of this year there were 576 arrests by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and 41 by members of the armed forces under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. Some of those arrested by members of the armed forces would be recorded in the Royal Ulster Constabulary figures if they were subsequently handed over to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Of those arrests carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, in 492 of the cases the persons concerned were released without charge; in two cases persons were subsequently charged with offences under the Act only; and in 82 other cases persons were charged with offences under other legislation. 72 of the cases involved persons charged with scheduled offences, though details of the offences are not readily available. No one was charged with an offence under the Act after arrest under other provisions.

Information on the length of time individuals were held under the Act could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many arrests were made for disorderly or riotous behaviour at the venue of each Orange demonstration on *(a)* 12 July 1984 and *(b)* 12 July 1985 during the period from the start of the procession to the departure of those taking part from the point where the procession terminated; and in each case how many of those arrested were taking part in the demonstration.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Processions

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of policing the Orange procession through the Gortalowry estate in Cookstown on 12 July; what was the cost in 1984, and how many incidents there were which required police action on either occasion.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: No information is available for 1984. Precise details of the cost of policing the Orange Order parades in Cookstown on 12 July 1985 could be provided only at disproportionate cost, but an estimate shows it to have been in the region of £1,130. It is not possible to say how many incidents required police action.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the processions which took place in Northern Ireland between 1 March 1985 and 30 April 1985 in respect of which the prescribed notice was not received by the police; if he will indicate in each case whether *(a)* masked men or *(b)* armed men were observed by the police or of whose presence the police have photographic evidence; and if he will state in each case how many persons have been charged in connection with such a procession.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received and from what sources requesting a ban on the Apprentice Boys 12 August demonstration in Londonderry city; whether, in deciding whether to impose a ban on demonstrations of this type, he seeks the advice of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regarding the practicality of re-routeing the procession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 July 1985]: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. In deciding whether to use his powers to prohibit a public procession, he considers a range of factors, including police advice.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Costs

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will identify the residual housing costs which will no longer be met in the assessment of income support under the proposals contained in paragraph 2.93 of volume 2 of the Green Paper; what are the average amounts paid out for such residual housing costs; and how many claimants are in receipt of such payments, broken down according to the normal classification claimant groups.

Mr. Newton: The residual housing costs referred to in paragraph 2.93 of volume 2 of the Green Paper are water rates, recurring charges for emptying cesspits, septic tanks and the cost of materials for a chemical toilet and the allowance for repairs and insurance. Provisional information shows that in 1983 about 3 million supplementary benefit claimants received help with their water charges and that the average payment was little over £1. There is no reliable information about the numbers or average amounts of payments made for the other residual housing costs.

Schizophrenic Patients

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision he is making for the care of schizophrenic patients whose long-stay mental hospitals have been closed and who are subsequently refused admission as emergency cases by other National Health Service hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 22 July.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to hold all future meetings with the tobacco industry on the voluntary code on advertising and promotion in public; if he has discussed such an arrangement with the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The practice is for the discussions leading to the voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry to be confidential.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the four-page advertising feature in the August edition of "Options" magazine, a copy of which has been sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South, which emphasises the logo and colours of a certain brand of cigarette, should have carried the Government health warning; if this constitutes a breach of the voluntary agreement; and if he will take action to prevent any recurrence of this form of sales promotion.

Mr. John Patten: The cigarette manufacturers concerned have apologised for the lapse that led to the publication of the advertising feature in question and other similar features, and have undertaken that no further advertisements of this nature will be published.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what sanctions are available to him against cigarette manufacturers who fail to follow the code of conduct on promotion and advertising.

Mr. John Patten: The agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion is voluntary. Where breaches have been established the cigarette companies have always taken corrective action.

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will have discussions with the tobacco company concerned, in the context of the voluntary agreement on cigarette advertising, about the showing at the Live Aid charity concert at Wembley stadium on 13 July of a cigarette promotion on video tape, details of which have been supplied to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Human Growth Hormone

Mr. Conlan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances it has been decided to withdraw all supplies of pituitary-derived human growth hormone; if there are any cases known to his Department of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease arising from the use of human growth hormone; how many patients are affected by the withdrawal of supplies; and what arrangements are being made for the treatment of these patients.

Mr. John Patten: Supplies of human growth hormone derived from pituitary extract have been withdrawn on the advice of the Advisory Committee on National Pituitary Collection because of the risk of transmission of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease. The Department is aware of three cases in other countries where such transmission is thought to have occurred, and there is one case under investigation in this country. Prior to withdrawal growth hormone treatment was being provided for approximately 800 children. Sufficient synthetic human growth hormone is available for the treatment of the very small number of children for whom growth hormone supplementation is life saving.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest available figures for the number of *(a)* one-parent families and *(b)* two-parent families who have income below supplementary benefit level, at supplementary benefit level and within 110 per cent. of supplementary benefit level; and if he will give the number of children involved in each category.

Mr. Whitney: The latest information relates to 1981 and is as follows:

Income relative to supplementary benefit level	*One Parent Families*		*Two Parent Families*	
	Families	*Children in Families*	*Families*	*Children in Families*
(i) below level	60,000	110,000	200,000	490,000
(ii) at level*	370,000	630,000	250,000	540,000
(iii) above but within 110 per cent†	‡	‡	130,000	290,000

Notes: The figures have been calculated on the same basis as those in the published tables "Low Income Families 1981" and are subject to the constraints described in the notes to those tables.

* Receiving supplementary benefit.

† Excludes those given at (i).

‡ Less than 10,000.

Appeals

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of social security cases lodged and awaiting a hearing by a social security appeal tribunal at December 1983, December 1984 and currently;

(2) what was the average time between the lodging of an appeal and subsequent hearing by a social security appeal tribunal in 1983, 1984 and currently.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the number of all appeals lodged and awaiting hearing is not available. The most recent figures which are available are as follows:

	Supplementary Benefit Appeal Tribunals			National Insurance Local Tribunals		
	Number of appeals lodged	Number of appeals heard	Lodgement to initial hearing (average)	Number of appeals/ references lodged	Number of appeals/ references heard	Lodgement to initial hearing
12 month period ending 31 December 1983	142,779	60,567	9·4 weeks	n/a*	30,468	n/a*
Quarter ending 31 March 1984	37,721	16,871	10·5 weeks	n/a	8,150	n/a*

* A revised system of recording information about the processing of appeals is now in operation and more detailed information will be available in due course.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of social security cases awaiting a rehearing of appeal following a commissioner's decision which remitted the case for rehearing to a different social security appeal tribunal at December 1983, December 1984 and currently.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The numbers of social security cases remitted by the commissioners for rehearing by a differently constituted appeal tribunal were as follows:

		Issues
Year ended 31 December 1983	=	434
Year ended 31 December 1984	=	550
1 January 1985 to 2 July 1985	=	366

Housing Benefit

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate for the number of *(a)* one-parent families and *(b)* two-parent families receiving (i) certificated housing benefit and (ii) standard housing benefit; in each case what is the average amount of (1) rent rebate and (2) rate rebate; and what are the numbers receiving benefit as a percentage of those eligible.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Acute Beds (Staffing)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give figures for the staffing ratio for acute beds in National Health Service hospitals for each of the years from 1973 to the latest date available.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible to provide information on the basis requested as we cannot identify centrally all those staff working solely or mainly in the acute hospital services. The table gives the number of available acute beds in National Health Service hospitals in England, and the total numbers of directly-employed NHS staff. While the table shows the number of acute beds has decreased since 1973, it is important to remember that the number of inpatient cases treated per bed — "throughput"—has risen by nearly 32 per cent. over the period.

England

Year	NHS Directly employed staff*	Average daily number of available acute beds†
1973	662,500	158,712
1974	674,200	158,457
1975	717,800	155,995
1976	742,500	155,420
1977	747,700	152,941
1978	759,700	149,914
1979	773,300	147,044
1980	791,900	146,720
1981	822,400	143,467
1982	828,500	141,842
1983	827,400	140,301
1984	817,000	—‡

* Figures rounded to the nearest hundred. Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff, locum medical and dental staff and staff at the Dental Estimates Board and Prescription Pricing Authority.

† 'Acute' is defined as all specialities except geriatrics, units for younger disabled, obstetrics and GP maternity, mental handicap and mental illness.

‡ Figures not yet available.

NHS Staff

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of *(a)* hospital nurses, *(b)* midwives, *(c)* health visitors and *(d)* district nurses employed by the National Health Service in (i) Britain and (ii) Cheltenham health district in 1978 and 1984; what was the percentage increase in each case; and how this compares with the previous five-year period.

Mr. John Patten: Information at this level of detail is not yet available for 1984. The table shows the requested information for Great Britain for 1973, 1977, 1978 and 1983, and for Cheltenham health district for 1983 only:

*Great Britain 30 September—Whole-time equivalents**

	1973	1977	Percentage increase	1978	1983	Percentage increase
Hospital Nurses†	311,400	349,800	12·3	357,700	405,000	13·2
Hospital Midwives†	18,600	20,800	11·8	20,800	22,700	9·1
Health Visitors†•	9,900	10,300	4·0	10,600	11,800	11·3
District Nurses†•	12,200	15,500	27·0	16,300	18,800	15·3

Cheltenham Health District
30 September 1983
Whole-time Equivalents

	Numbers
Hospital Nurses[1]	970
Hospital Midwives[2]	80
Health Visitors[3]	40
District Nurses[4]	60

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Percentages calculated on unrounded figures.
[2] Excludes Agency Nurses and Midwives. Includes student nurses and midwives.
[3] Includes all staff working in the Health Visiting Service who have undertaken Health Visitor training.
[4] Includes TB Visitors without Health Visitor certificate as these can not be separated out for 1973.
[5] Includes all qualified nursing staff in the District Nursing Service whether or not they have undertaken District training.
[6] Following NHS Re-Organisation on 1 April 1974 staff previously employed by Local Authority Health Departments were transferred to area health authorities. Therefore the wholetime equivalent for 1973 and the percentage changes for 1973 to 1977 are not directly comparable with those for later years.
[7] Before the 1982 NHS Re-Organisation Cheltenham was not a separately identified health authority, but was combined with Gloucester therefore comparable figures for earlier years are not available.
[8] Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages calculated on unrounded figures.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total number of outpatient attendances in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Cheltenham health district in 1978 and 1984; what was the percentage increase in each case; and how this compares with the previous five-year period;

(2) what was the total number of inpatients treated in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Cheltenham health district in 1978 and 1984; what was the percentage increase in each case; and how this compares with the previous five year period.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information is given in the table.

NHS Hospitals

	1973	1978	1983	Percentage increase 1973-78	Percentage increase 1978-83
In-patient cases					
Great Britain	6,158,093	6,434,519	7,165,279	4·5	11·4
Cheltenham DHA*	15,842	22,696	23,710	39·1	7·6
Day cases					
Great Britain	†	668,657	967,146	†	44·7
Cheltenham DHA*	322	1,359	2,718	322·0	100·0
Total outpatient attendances					
Great Britain	39,991,217	39,683,273	42,732,890	2·9	7·8
Cheltenham DHA*	89,323	116,163	131,635	30·0	13·3

* Cheltenham hospital management committee in 1973, Cheltenham health district in 1978.
† A day case figure for Great Britain in 1973 is not available. The increase in day cases between 1973 and 1978 in England was 37·6 per cent.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of day patient attendances for treating mental illness and mental handicap for each year since 1978 in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* the Cheltenham health district.

Mr. John Patten: The available information for Great Britain is given in the table. Returns available centrally indicate that there were no facilities for treating mental illness and mental handicap patients which were managed by the Cheltenham and District health authority during 1982 or 1983 or by the Cheltenham health district in 1978. Between 1979 and 1981 the former Cheltenham and Gloucester health districts were merged within Gloucester area health authority.

Number of day patient attendances at mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in Great Britain.*

Year	Number (thousands)
1978	3,735
1979	3,737
1980	4,085
1981	4,332
1982	4,286
1983	4,445

* Attendances at day hospitals and main hospitals. Patients who attend more than once are counted separately for each attendance.

Cheltenham Health District

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* for each year since 1974-75 for the Cheltenham health district *(a)* the revenue expenditure in actual and real terms compared to 1974-75, *(b)* the number of inpatient cases treated and *(c)* the number of outpatient cases treated.

Mr. John Patten: We do not have the information requested in *(a)* available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the Chairman of the Cheltenham and District health authority for details of revenue expenditure.

The information we have on *(b)* and *(c)* is in the table.

*Cheltenham District Health Authority**

	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Inpatient cases	16,947	19,240	20,245	19,896	22,036	22,013	22,005	22,776	23,270	23,710
Day cases	1,792	1,087	1,202	1,548	1,359	1,776	1,377	1,673	2,626	2,718
Total outpatient attendances	94,394	101,479	109,315	115,094	116,163	134,679	135,513	128,411	123,579	131,635

* Cheltenham health district prior to 1979. Part of Gloucester area health authority 1979 to 1981.

Locum Doctors

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health authority has spent on locum doctors in the last three years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold the information requested centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the health authority.

Drug Abuse Centres

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of drug abuse centres in the Greater London area; and what has been the amount of his Department's money that has been spent on these centres in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to "Drug Misuse: Prevalence and Service Provision" published by the Department in June. Expenditure on specialist hospital and community health services for drug misusers is not separately identified. Under the Department's general scheme of grants to voluntary organisations, grants have been made to the following voluntary bodies providing services for drug misusers in Greater London.

Voluntary organisation	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £
Biesheim	7,600	7,600	7,600
City Roads (Crisis Intervention)	92,804	57,200	39,600
Community Drug Project	5,300	5,300	5,300
Cranstoun Project	3,770	—	—
Elizabeth House Association	10,500	6,750	4,000
Turning Point—Hungerford Drug Project	12,700	16,153	12,700
Turning Point—ROMA Hostel	45,800	32,976	21,700

Under the central funding initiative grants have been made to health authorities and volunary organisations in the Greater London area as follows (1983-84 was the first year of the scheme):

	1983-84 £	*1984-85* £
HEALTH AUTHORITY		
North West Thames RHA		
Hillingdon HA	11,482	37,035
Paddington and North Kensington HA	5,000	83,000
Riverside HA	—	13,971
Ealing HA	23,173	17,969
North East Thames RHA		
City and Hackney HA	32,375	39,100
Bloomsbury HA	15,411	75,952
Barking, Havering and Brentwood HA	—	15,610
South East Thames RHA		
Bromley HA	3,700	11,991
West Lambeth HA	17,229	1,312
Lewisham and North Southwark HA	20,551	—
Bethlem and Maudsley SHA	8,700	—
Greenwich	—	19,055
South West Thames RHA		
Kingston and Esher HA	1,367	8,898
Wandsworth HA	—	6,145
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS		
Barnet Borough Voluntary Service Council	—	27,658
Blenheim Project	8,464	—
City Roads	13,945	—
Community Drugs Project	8,885	—
Cranstoun Projects	12,211	19,874
Elizabeth House Association	3,380	—
Phoenix House—Featherstone Lodge TRANX	10,183	30,000
Turning Point—Hungerford	—	—
Turning Point—ROMA	10	58,160

Hospital Beds

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the net trend in numbers of National Health Service hospital beds since the Resources Allocation Working Party formula was first applied *(a)* in regions which have gained under the Resources Allocation Working Party formula and *(b)* in regions which have had resources reduced under the Resources Allocation Working Party formula.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is given in the table. Over this period the number of inpatient cases treated in England rose from 5,345,000 in 1977 to 6,019,000 in 1983.

Average daily number of available beds in NHS hospitals

	1977	*1983*
Regions which received more than their target fair share of resources		
Thames Regions*	122,391	107,485
Regions which received less than their target fair share of resources		
Northern	26,254	24,728
Yorkshire	30,890	28,034
Trent	32,187	30,481
East Anglian	13,241	13,001
Wessex	19,634	18,310
South Western	25,190	23,459

	1977	1985
West Midlands	37,310	34,544
Mersey	22,964	19,848
North Western	31,681	30,384
Other[1]		
Oxford	14,184	12,817

[1] The four Thames regions (together with hospitals managed by Boards of Governors Special Health Authorities) have been treated as a single unit for the purposes of this reply. Boundary changes in 1982 would mean that trends by separate authorities would be misleading.

[2] Oxford regional health authority's position has changed relative to its target fair share of resources during the period as follows: 1977-78 to 1979-80 above target, 1980-81 to 1982-83 below target, 1983-84 on target.

Non-contributory Invalidity Pension

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many married and cohabiting women have made claims for housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension since 25 November 1984; how many of these claims have been accepted on grounds of good cause for late claim; and how many of the claims that have been accepted have been successful;

(2) how many claims for housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension received after 25 November 1984 have been refused, and, of these, how many *(a)* have made successful claims for severe disablement allowance *(b)* are in the age group excluded from severe disablement allowance until November 1985 and *(c)* have been assessed at less than 80 per cent. disabled.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. However, between 25 November 1984 and 5 July 1985 there were some 4,000 claims for housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension, 4,200 awards and 2,500 disallowances. Details are not available for the success or failure of claims for severe disablement allowance which follow an unsuccessful claim for HNCIP, but as at 2 July some 1,200 married or cohabiting women had been awarded SDA, and a further 900 had been assessed as less than 80 per cent. disabled.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether special arrangements have been made to deal with claims for invalid care allowance by married and cohabiting women since invalid care allowance was awarded to Mrs. Drake on 1 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The case of Mrs. Jaqueline Drake was referred to the Social Security commissioner for decision. The commissioner has put to the European Court the question whether the EC directive on equal treatment in social security matters applies to invalid care allowance. Until the court gives its judgment and the Social Security Commissioner makes his decision in Mrs. Drake's case, any other claims from married or cohabiting women for invalid care allowance are being stored to be adjudicated once the outcome of Mrs. Drake's case is known. A letter explaining the position is sent acknowledging all such claims.

"S" Manual

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department's "S" manual has been revised or updated since the 1983 edition; and if he will make it his practice to place copies of new editions in the Library.

Mr. Whitney: The 1983 edition of the "S" manual has been updated by means of circulars and replacement pages. All these are placed in the Library as soon as they are publicly available.

Pensions

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that nurses, midwives and health visitors retiring during the next 18 months will not suffer a reduced pension consequent upon the phasing of the pay award due on 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, for the reasons set out in my reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), on 28 June at column *531*.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek to ensure that cigarette manufacturers do not carry out promotional activities contrary to the terms of the voluntary agreement on cigarette advertising.

Mr. John Patten: The agreement is monitored by the Department and if my hon. Friend has a particular breach in mind perhaps he would write to me with details.

North-West Thames RHA

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the health authorities under the responsibility of the North-West Thames regional health authority and name the chairmen, vice-chairmen and secretaries of each of the authorities and the addresses to which official correspondence should be sent.

Mr. John Patten: We do not appoint the vice-chairmen of district health authorities. They are elected by the chairmen and members of the authority from within their own number. This information is therefore not held centrally. The right hon. Member may wish to obtain it from the relevant district health authority chairman. District health authorities do not have such a post as secretary. The other information requested is as follows:

North West Thames Region

District Health Authority	*Chairman*	*Official Address*
North Bedfordshire	Mr G Hitchcock CBE	3 Kimbolton Road Bedford MK40 2NU
South Bedfordshire	Cllr Mrs E Dodd	Bute House St Mary's Hospital 112 Dunstable Road Luton Bedfordshire
North Hertfordshire	Cllr I Dixon	Hampden House Bedford Road Hitchin Hertfordshire

District Health Authority	Chairman	Official Address
		St Albans City Hospital Normanby Road St Albans
North West Herts	Mr N Tilley	Herts AL3 5PN 43 Kings Close Watford Hertfordshire
South West Herts	Mr R Fielding JP	WD1 8DD District HQ East Herts Hospital Stanstead Road
East Hertfordshire	Mr G Seward	Hertford SG13 7HU Colindale Hospital Colindale Avenue
Barnet	Dr J Carter	London NW9 5HG Northwick Park Hospital Watford Road Harrow
Harrow	Mr J Shrimpton JP	Middlesex HA1 3UJ Central Middlesex Hospital Acton Lane Park Royal
Brent	Mr E I Kingston	London NW10 7NS District offices St John's Hospital Kingston Lane Uxbridge
Hillingdon	Mr A Barren CBE JP	Middlesex UB8 3PL St Bernard's Wing Ealing Hospital Uxbridge Road Southall
Ealing	Mr R Hetherington	Middlesex UB1 3EU 92 Bath Road Hounslow
Hounslow and Spelthorne	Mrs T Golding	Middlesex TW3 3EL
Paddington and North Kensington	Mrs B Basham CBE JP	16 South Wharf Road London W2 1PF Brandenburgh House 116 Fulham Palace Road
Riverside	Mr G T Howd	London W6 9HH

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the members of the North-West Thames regional health authority, the dates of their appointments and any qualifications in relation to the health service which they hold.

Mr. John Patten: Regional health authority members are appointed for their own personal qualities and not because of the professional or other qualifications they may hold.

The available information is as follows:

Name of member	Date of appointment
Mr. S. A. Mallick	1 April 1985
Mr. J. McClenhan	1 October 1982
Mr. W. Milner	1 October 1982
Mrs. J. Partridge OBE	1 October 1984
Mr. D. Rennie	1 October 1984
Dr. D. Richardson	1 October 1984
Cllr. Marian Shepherd MBE	1 October 1982
Mr. R. A. Snowing	1 October 1982
Mr. M. Storey	1 October 1984
Mrs. J. Wynnhamkaye OBE	1 November 1984
Mr. R. Brown JP	1 October 1982
Miss P. Fletcher	1 October 1982
Prof. T. W. Glenister CBE	1 October 1984
Mr. K. A. Greenfield	1 April 1985
Dr. M. P. W. Godfrey	1 April 1985
Cllr. Mrs. J. Hanham	1 October 1982
Mr. F. Hobson	1 October 1982
Cllr. Mrs. B. Langmore	1 October 1982
Mr. E. Lyall	1 October 1984

Westminster Hospital

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his officials have had any discussions with officials of the new Riverside health authority about the future of Westminster hospital.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive recommendations from the new Riverside health authority about the future of Westminster hospital.

Mr. John Patten: I explained in my reply to the right hon. Member on 22 July that the planning of services at the Westminster hospital is in the first instance the responsibility of the Riverside health authority.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the case for restoring the drug Mucodyne to the National Health Service prescription list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 24 July.

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the case for restoring the following drugs to the National Health Service prescription list: Alprazolam, Asilone, Dimotapp tablets, Dolasan and Equagesic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received a number of letters and other representations about these drugs. The Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs will be free to reconsider at any time the need for these drugs, either on its own initiative or in response to representations from doctors or the pharmaceutical industry. Formal representations have already been received in respect of asilone and dimotapp.

Health Services (Stockport)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will provide details of the changes which have taken place in the Stockport district health authority (formerly the Stockport area health authority) between 1978 and the last year for which figures are available in respect of the following: *(a)* the number of family doctors, *(b)* the average family doctor list size, *(c)* the number of dentists, *(d)* the number of courses of dental treatment, *(e)* the number of health visitors, *(f)* the number of district nurses and *(g)* the number of home helps;

(2) if he will provide details of the changes which have taken place at Stepping Hill hospital, Stockport, between 1978 and the last year for which figures are available in

respect of the following: *(a)* the number of available beds in acute services, *(b)* the number of available beds in non-acute services, *(c)* the number of inpatient cases treated, *(d)* the number of day case attendances treated, *(e)* the number of outpatient attendances, *(f)* the number of those employed in direct patient services broken down into category and stating whether full-time or part-time and giving the total wage bill, *(g)* the number of those employed in support service posts broken down into categories and stating whether full-time or part-time and giving the total wage bill, *(h)* the total amount of revenue expenditure in cash terms and real terms and (i) the facilities available giving the total of the capital expenditure between such dates.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will provide details of the changes which have taken place in the Stockport district health authority, formerly the Stockport area health authority, between 1978 and the last year for which figures are available in respect of the following: *(a)* the total amount of revenue expenditure in cash terms and real terms, *(b)* the amount available for capital expenditure giving details of the total amount of capital expenditure between such dates, *(c)* the number of those employed in direct patient services giving the total wage bill, and *(d)* the number of those engaged in support services giving the total wages bill;

(2) if he will provide details of the changes which have taken place in the North-Western regional health authority between 1978 and the last year for which figures were available in respect of the following: *(a)* the total amount of revenue expenditure in cash terms and real terms *(b)* the amount available for capital expenditure giving details of the total amount of capital expenditure between such dates, *(c)* the number of those employed in direct patient services giving the total wage bill, and *(d)* the number of those engaged in support services giving the total wages bill.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested on revenue and capital expenditure on health services in North-Western region between 1978-79 and 1984-85 is given in the table. We do not have centrally the details requested on the number and costs of staff and the information relating to the Stockport district health authority. My hon. Friend may like to approach the North-Western regional health authority for this information.

	Revenue expenditure £ million		*Capital expenditure £ million*
Year	*Cash*	*At 1983-84 prices (using gross domestic product deflator)*	*Cash*
1978-79	380·3	648·4	38·2
1979-80	460·5	671·8	51·0
1980-81	599·9	737·5	60·7
1981-82	675·3	754·9	84·7
1982-83	726·0	759·2	82·5
1983-84	764·0	764·0	69·2
1984-85	808·0	773·2	76·5

Notes:
1978-79 to 1983-84: Actual expenditure from health authorities summarised accounts.
1984-85 provisional expenditure.

Oxfordshire Health Authority

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what in real terms is the budget of the Oxford regional health authority now as compared with 1978-79.

Mr. John Patten: Revenue spending on health services in Oxford regional health authority increased by 106·1 per cent. in cash terms between 1978-79 and 1984-85, representing an increase in real terms of 15·8 per cent., after taking account of general inflation as measured by the gross domesitic product deflator.

Horton Hospital, Banbury

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what in real terms is the budget of Oxfordshire district health authority now as compared with 1978-79;

(2) what in real terms is the budget of the Horton hospital, Banbury, now as compared with 1978-79;

(3) what has been the value at current prices of new building work at the Horton hospital, Banbury during the last six years;

(4) what is the anticipated value at current prices of new building works at the Horton hospital, Banbury, expected to be carried out in the next five years;

(5) how many *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* medical ancillary staff and *(d)* administrative staff were employed at the Horton hospital, Banbury, in 1978-79; and what are the latest figures;

(6) what is the estimated value of new medical equipment bought for the Horton hospital, Banbury, since 1978-79.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many inpatients were treated at the Horton hospital, Banbury, in 1978-79 and during the last year for which figures are available;

(2) how many outpatients were treated at the Horton hospital, Banbury, in 1978-79 and during the last year for which figures are available;

(3) how many operations were carried out at the Horton hospital, Banbury, in 1978-79 and during the last year for which figures are available;

(4) what was the average waiting time for operations at the Horton hospital, Banbury, in 1978-79; what is the average waiting time at the latest available date; and how this relates to the national average.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information is given in the table. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the Oxford regional health authority who may be able to provide the remaining information.

Horton Hospital, Banbury

	1978	*1984 (provisional)*
All specialties		
Inpatient cases	8,339	8,982

	1978	1984 (provisional)
Day cases	727	878
Total outpatient attendances	39,239	43,611
Surgical specialties		
Inpatient cases	4,446	4,516
Day cases	559	484

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of people who satisfy the test of incapacity for work for the purposes of severe disablement allowance, but do not satisfy the test of 80 per cent. disability; and what is the cost of benefits currently in payment to such people.

Mr. Newton: As at 2 July, 1,165 people who satisfied the incapacity for work test had been assessed as less than 80 per cent. disabled for the purposes of severe disablement allowance. Information about the cost of benefits currently in payment to these people is not available.

Disability Aids

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what sources of information on the various aids for the disabled are available from his Department to private individuals seeking to purchase equipment for their own use, doctors and social workers seeking to provide publicly-funded equipment for their clients' or patients' use, and National Health Service staff wishing to acquire such aids in bulk for use within their area.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 1 July, at column 65, to his general question about sources of information on aids, when I explained that the Department publishes reports on the assessment and evaluation of ranges of equipment which are aimed at relevant professionals, and provides additional advice and information to supplies officers within the National Health Service. I also mentioned the booklet "Aids for the Disabled" (HB2) and exhibitions of aids; the booklet is freely available on request and the Department regularly participates in NAIDEX and is occasionally represented at other exhibitions.

Artificial limb and appliance centres are sources of information on wheelchairs. The Department produces a descriptive catalogue of the wheelchairs in its range and is currently working with therapists to update that catalogue and to produce more information and training materials aimed at therapists and other professionals. The catalogue is distributed to all general practitioners and relevant hospital staff and is available on request to others, though it is not supplied to members of the public. A booklet giving details of the environmental control and typewriter equipment provided by the Department and how it can be ordered has been distributed to all relevant staff in health authorities and local authority social services departments and to other bodies with a particular interest.

Apart from its own activities, the Department has for many years taken every opportunity to encourage dissemination of information by others. In particular, substantial financial support is given to the Disabled Living Foundation, which provides a national service for disabled people, their carers and the professionals who work with them. The foundation's activities include an information service which collects, stores and distributes up-to-date information on the aids available in the United Kingdom and an aids centre which displays aids and arranges individual assessments. The Department also subsidises "Equipment for the Disabled", a series of illustrated books, published by Oxford health authority, which contain information on aids which have been assessed in use with disabled people or subjected to research evaluation.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what considerations were given to *(a)* the availability of temporary summer employment, *(b)* the cost of living for students and *(c)* the proportion of student income currently represented by housing and social security benefits, when drawing up the proposals to exclude students from eligibility for these benefits in the Green Paper on the reform of social security; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517) states in broad terms the Government's policy on student access to the benefit system. How best to put that policy into practice will be for further consideration in the light of all the relevant factors.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the arrangements for reviewing the financial limits of elderly residents in board and lodging accommodation.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my announcement yesterday in the House, at column 1355.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend the board and lodging regulations covering residential care homes to include *(a)* those which prior to 29 April met their fees from their own resources but whose capital has subsequently fallen below the £3,000 limit and *(b)* those which had claimed some benefit prior to 29 April but had it temporarily stopped because their capital exceeded the £3,000 limit.

Mr. Newton: I assume the hon. Member has in mind the provisions within the board and lodging regulations concerning transitional protection. We have no plans at present to extend these provisions to cover the groups the hon. Member mentions. It is the normal practice where changes in the benefit system are necessary to confine the protection arrangements to existing claimants.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will amend the board and lodging regulations covering residential homes for the elderly to cover all existing residents irrespective of income.

Mr. Newton: No. The board and lodging regulations deal solely with payments of supplementary benefit. This is a means-tested benefit and all other income is therefore generally counted as a resource.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that priority treatment is given to appeals against rejection of applications for exemption under the new board and lodgings regulations.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is responsible for the preparation of supplementary benefit appeal documentation and transmission to the clerk of a social security appeal tribunal. Responsibility for the hearing itself rests with the president of social security appeal tribunals. The Department gives a high priority to the handling of appeals, which should normally be cleared within 15 days from receipt. Arrangements are in hand to ensure that, within the generality of appeals, those which relate to the new board and lodging regulations are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has conducted a survey to establish whether claimants affected by the expiry of time limits on payment as boarders have been able to make alternative arrangements to receive supplementary benefit as householders or non-householders or to obtain payment as boarders in other areas.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the analyses of board and lodging following the 29 April changes have not yet been completed. However, initial feedback suggests that as a result of the new rules the numbers receiving board and lodging payments have declined significantly, and that most of the claimants affected are now receiving benefit at the householder or non-householder rate.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many elderly residents there were in residential care homes between *(a)* 1 January and 28 April and *(b)* 29 April to the latest available date; and what information he has to how many have their fees paid by his Department, and how many are self-supporting.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of *(a)* statutory, *(b)* private and *(c)* voluntary residential care homes for the elderly and *(d)* the number of places in such homes in 1979 and each subsequent year in each social services authority.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the numbers of statutory, voluntary and private homes for the elderly and disabled, and the number of places in such homes, as at 31 March 1984, the latest date for which information is available, is given in the table. Equivalent figures for each of the years 1979 to 1983 were given in my replies to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 2 March 1984, at columns *386-90*, to the hon. Member herself on 11 June 1984, at columns *378-82*, and to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on 15 June 1984 at columns *586-94*.

Residential accommodation for the elderly and disabled—31 March 1984

	Number of homes			Number of places		
	Local authority	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Local authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*
NORTHERN REGION	229	27	114	9,324	905	2,069
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Cleveland	35	2	5	1,470	85	54
Cumbria	45	5	34	1,613	127	545
Durham	44	3	8	1,836	73	183
Northumberland	21	4	12	1,033	155	234
Metropolitan Districts						
Gateshead	15	1	2	646	24	21
Newcastle upon Tyne	28	7	15	987	267	277
North Tyneside	10	2	25	468	63	504
South Tyneside	10	1	8	442	10	142
Sunderland	21	2	5	829	101	109
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION	367	69	299	14,565	1,874	4,645
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Humberside	60	8	58	2,360	213	959
North Yorkshire	47	29	107	2,020	862	1,519
Metropolitan Districts						
Barnsley	18	—	1	651	—	7
Doncaster	19	2	5	743	80	73
Rotherham	18	1	3	646	12	41
Sheffield	47	5	8	1,876	85	149
Bradford	37	6	59	1,453	111	988
Calderdale	19	3	16	703	61	230
Kirklees	31	3	15	1,251	71	295
Leeds	51	9	23	2,104	328	303
Wakefield	20	3	4	758	51	81
NORTH WESTERN REGION	437	119	463	17,189	4,967	7,086
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Cheshire	61	11	15	2,053	794	254
Lancashire	98	23	243	3,996	886	3,537
Metropolitan Districts						
Bolton	15	2	6	653	71	77

	Number of homes			Number of places		
	Local authority	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Local authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*
Bury	11	3	3	467	282	65
Manchester	45	10	17	1,936	345	291
Oldham	22	—	11	688	—	219
Rochdale	18	1	8	612	31	193
Salford	22	7	1	831	223	17
Stockport	18	1	26	629	35	330
Tameside	11	3	2	400	120	53
Trafford	13	6	17	548	154	238
Wigan	17	—	3	748	—	40
Knowsley	5	—	—	247	—	—
Liverpool	29	19	11	1,431	748	275
Sefton	18	25	62	707	1,078	874
St. Helens	7	3	3	315	80	83
Wirral	27	5	35	928	120	540
WEST MIDLANDS REGION	265	72	253	12,008	2,654	3,858
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Hereford and Worcester	30	16	76	1,281	532	1,126
Salop	21	1	33	1,068	31	521
Staffordshire	46	15	30	2,084	420	527
Warwickshire	25	12	33	1,114	344	496
Metropolitan District						
Birmingham	52	16	43	2,611	1,003	632
Coventry	18	2	5	684	46	94
Sandwell	22	—	4	841	—	68
Solihull	6	5	—	331	131	—
Walsall	15	—	1	701	—	14
Wolverhampton	17	4	17	707	105	198
Dudley	13	1	11	586	42	182
EAST MIDLANDS	210	75	216	9,017	1,986	3,035
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Derbyshire	53	15	58	2,144	388	904
Leicestershire	46	21	40	2,160	571	462
Lincolnshire	33	9	50	1,429	215	771
Northamptonshire	31	9	34	1,229	320	433
Nottinghamshire	47	21	34	2,055	492	465
LONDON NORTH REGION	316	161	452	14,350	5,858	7,072
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Bedfordshire	26	5	24	1,124	166	347
Berkshire	30	20	46	1,130	703	725
Buckinghamshire	23	17	25	924	835	401
Cambridgeshire	33	8	25	1,360	303	348
Essex	64	42	113	3,341	1,872	1,567
Hertfordshire	36	26	33	1,692	743	588
Norfolk	47	15	109	2,010	457	1,719
Oxfordshire	25	11	17	1,212	314	330
Suffolk	32	17	60	1,557	465	1,047
LONDON CENTRAL	333	211	251	17,069	7,743	4,021
Inner London	132	57	31	7,540	3,006	848
Camden	13	8	4	626	207	103
Greenwich	9	—	7	531	—	349
Hackney	10	6	1	528	197	20
Hammersmith	10	1	—	497	91	—
Islington	13	1	1	675	48	30
Kensington	7	10	1	407	791	25
Lambeth	16	5	4	949	272	104
Lewisham	13	—	9	790	—	145
Southwark	11	9	—	691	313	—
Tower Hamlets	9	3	—	487	127	—
Wandsworth	12	12	4	728	922	72
Westminster	9	2	—	631	38	—
City of London	—	—	—	—	—	—
Outer London	201	154	220	9,529	4,737	3,173
Barking	7	—	—	378	—	—
Barnet	12	24	26	528	969	420
Bexley	9	1	1	437	5	17
Brent	10	4	7	461	117	68
Bromley	10	31	15	505	661	204
Croydon	15	22	29	774	404	482
Ealing	16	15	17	613	474	220
Enfield	15	3	25	632	158	309
Haringey	9	11	5	488	503	68

	Number of homes			Number of places		
	Local authority	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Local authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*
Harrow	8	3	23	400	150	307
Havering	9	—	9	501	—	160
Hillingdon	14	5	1	550	120	29
Hounslow	9	3	—	470	124	—
Kingston upon Thames	6	4	13	253	54	163
Merton	7	6	9	294	168	87
Newham	14	2	1	628	53	8
Redbridge	9	6	13	482	184	233
Richmond upon Thames	7	7	4	349	407	53
Sutton	6	6	15	341	174	252
Waltham Forest	9	1	7	445	12	93
SOUTHERN REGION	317	283	1,243	14,562	8,822	19,271
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Dorset	37	28	215	1,831	654	2,755
Hampshire	66	34	233	2,925	1,108	3,391
Isle of Wight	6	6	42	311	131	671
Kent	57	49	135	2,807	1,226	2,504
Surrey	44	60	68	1,953	2,045	1,114
East Sussex	45	46	291	1,998	1,813	5,096
West Sussex	37	53	203	1,587	1,671	2,839
Wiltshire	25	7	56	1,150	174	901
SOUTH WESTERN REGION	199	115	799	8,346	3,433	12,015
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Avon	62	33	132	2,605	1,066	1,867
Cornwall	27	10	99	1,153	279	1,459
Devon	55	38	441	2,289	1,086	6,995
Gloucestershire	28	18	54	1,206	641	656
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somerset	27	16	73	1,093	361	1,038
ENGLAND	2,673	1,132	4,090	116,430	38,242	63,072

Social Security Review

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, under proposals in his social security Green Paper, a double family premium will be paid to all families having a visually handicapped child whether or not the child is in receipt of mobility or attendance allowance.

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the double family premium proposed in his social security Green Paper will be increased for families with more than one child who is visually handicapped or otherwise disabled.

Mr. Newton: The proposal is that it would not.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements, under the pension plans proposed in his social security Green Paper, will be made to make provision, in addition to basic state retirement pension, for people with erratic work records or low incomes because of sickness or disability throughout their working lives.

Mr. Newton: Under the new arrangements proposed in the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security", employers and employees will be required to contribute at least a minimum amount to an occupational or personal pension scheme. The minimum requirements proposed for the new arrangements are intended to ensure that everybody is able to build up a reasonable additional pension to supplement his basic national insurance pension. The value of that additional private pension will depend on a variety of factors, including how the individual's earnings change during his working life. People will be able to decide for themselves whether they wish to increase their contributions above the minimum level. The Green Paper makes it clear that the Government will be giving further consideration to the implications of the new arrangements for invalidity benefit.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, where both partners of a couple are *(a)* blind, *(b)* partially sighted or *(c)* otherwise disabled, a double disablement premium will be paid under the proposals in the Government's social security Green Paper;

(2) if the disablement premium proposed in his social security Green Paper will be paid to non-disabled claimants in respect of a partner who is *(a)* blind or *(b)* partially sighted.

Mr. Newton: The disablement premium would be payable where the partner of a claimant is blind. In cases where both partners satisfy the qualifying conditions for the disablement premium, one premium only would be payable. As regards the position of partially-sighted people, I refer the hon. Member to my other reply to him today.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the higher pensioner premium proposed in his social security Green Paper will be paid to all visually handicapped claimants aged 60 years or over;

(2) if the higher pensioner premium proposed in his social security Green Paper will be paid to non-disabled claimants in respect of a visually handicapped partner aged 60 years and over;

(3) if a double rate of higher pensioner premium will be paid, under the proposals in his social security Green Paper, where both partners in a couple are visually handicapped or otherwise disabled.

Mr. Newton: A higher pensioner premium would be payable in respect of blindness in the same way as receipt of one of the qualifying benefits. Thus a blind person, whether claimant or partner, aged 60 years and over would be eligible for it. One higher pensioner premium only would be paid in respect of any couple.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, under the proposals in his social security Green Paper, the disablement premium will be paid to partially sighted claimants who are unemployed.

Mr. Newton: We shall consider this issue as we work up the details of the income support scheme and in the light of comments received.

Nursing Staff (Bexley)

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will call for a report from the South East Thames health authority about the restriction of admissions to the psychiatric division of Bexley hospital arising from a shortage of nursing staff.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. This is a matter for Bexley health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the authority.

Care in the Community

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the Government remain satisfied that care in the community for those needing special care and attention remains cost effective; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the latest estimate of the cost of caring for those with physical or behavioural difficulties and those who suffer mental handicap in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The cost of providing community care depends on the particular needs of individuals and the range of services required to meet those needs. For people with a low level of dependency community care may well cost less than institutional care: for those of higher dependency, it may well cost more. The comparative cost will also depend upon local circumstances such as the services already available and the opportunities for development.

I do not think that in the present state of knowledge I could offer any useful generalisations about the cost of community care. The programme of pilot projects which we are centrally funding under the care in the community initiative should in due course provide useful insights into the cost of providing community care for people with a wide range of needs moving out of hospital into the community in a variety of situations.

We are not promoting community care as a cost-neutral policy. We expect health and local authorities to give priority to services, both hospital and community, for vulnerable people, such as mentally handicapped, mentally ill, elderly and disabled people. There has been a very significant increase on the level of spending on all services for these patients over the last six years.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the progress of the community care programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Some progress has been made in recent years in the development of community care. For example, over the last decade or so places for mentally handicapped people in local authority homes and hostels have more than doubled to reach over 14,000, and adult training centre places have increased by almost one third to 47,000. Places funded by local authorities in residential accomodation for mentally ill people have increased from about 3,000 to over 5,000. Day hospital places for mentally ill people more than doubled to over 15,000 and day centre places increased from about 5,000 to over 8,000. The number of psychiatric nurses working in the community has tripled to over 2,000 in the period. A study in 1981 showed that over 1,000 supported housing schemes for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people had been developed in the preceding 10 to 15 years, providing over 5,000 places. Many more people will have moved through these schemes into ordinary accommodation over the period.

Spending by local social services authorities has increased by over 20 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. We have supported the development of community care by the injection of over £600 million of National Health Service funds through the joint finance arrangements up to and including this year's allocation.

Progress in developing community care will depend to a large extent on the further development of joint planning between health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations. We will continue to encourage health authorities to promote the care in the community initiative and to develop community care working with local authorities and voluntary bodies. The new social fund, proposed as part of the Government's reform of social security, will, among other things, help to promote community care.

War Pensions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to disallow war pensions when assessing rate allowances and housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so, but current legislation already provides for the first £4 of a war disablement pension or war widow's pension to be ignored when calculating entitlement to housing benefit (including rate rebates).

Skoal Bandits

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will introduce legislation to prohibit the sale of Skoal Bandits in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Snuff Dipping

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice the Chief Medical Officer has issued to medical practitioners in England and Wales on the dangers of snuff dipping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Chief Medical Officer informed doctors on 19 April of advice from the Department's

committee on carcinogenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment that snuff-dipping increased the likelihood of oral cancer. Doctors were told that although snuff-dipping was less dangerous than cigarette smoking and its use as an alternative to cigarettes would lead to lower risks of cancer and other conditions, it could not be recommended as an aid to smokers to give up the habit. For non-smokers snuff-dipping would undoubtedly increase the risk of cancer.

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to him as to the connection between the incidence of mortality of mouth cancer and the practice of snuff dipping by women; from what sources this is drawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Private Patients (Charges)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent capital costs are included in the fees charged to private patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Charges are enhanced by 18·9 per cent. to reflect capital costs.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether private patients are charged for emergency pathology requests.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Private non-resident patients at health service hospitals are those who give an undertaking (or for whom one is given) to pay the charges determined by the Secretary of State for services made available at authorised hospitals. Requests for emergency pathology investigations are chargeable under these arrangements. Private resident patients pay an all-inclusive daily charge and are not liable to pay additional charges to the hospital for diagnostic procedures.

National Health Service

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *495-97*, how the better quality of service to patients is being measured; and by whom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We use a range of indicators covering such matters as the level of staff and other resources directly involved with patient care, changes in the pattern and distribution of services, developments in service levels and advances in new forms of diagnosis and treatment. We are well advanced with the development of better information and indicators on all these subjects. Health service managers at all levels monitor these improvements through regular performance reviews.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *495-97*, if he will make a statement on the implications for achieving value for money and clearer accountability in the National Health Service of the decision, from 1 April, to make independent family practitioner committees directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The change in family practitioner committee status on 1 April established accountability from FPCs to the Secretary of State. Circular HC(FP)(85)10 which we issued in April, introduced management arrangements to secure that accountability including a process of annual FPC reviews and scrutinies which is now under way. We require FPCs to pursue value for money across the whole range of their responsibilities and, in addition to the management circular, we gave further guidance in a letter dated 29 March 1985 and sent it to all FPC chairmen. Copies of both are in the Library.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *495-97*, if he will provide further details of the opinion poll on attitudes to the National Health Service; what was the size of the sample; and what were the other findings.

Mr. John Patten: The opinion poll, conducted by Marplan, was commissioned by the National Association of Health Authorities and the Health and Social Services Journal, from which the hon. Member could obtain further information.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *495-97*, how many of the inpatients treated had been in five-day wards and have had to return for further treatment.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, columns *495-97*, what criteria were used to determine that the 1984 treatment figures should be compared with 1978 and waiting list figures with 1979.

Mr. John Patten: These were the figures which best reflected activity in the National Health Service at the end of the last Labour Government's tenure of office.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the effect on demand on the National Health Service resulting from the increased numbers of unemployed and, in particular, the increase in long-term unemployed.

Mr. John Patten: Little of the research carried out so far to quantify the possible effects of unemployment on health has been conclusive. Our priority is to continue to pursue policies to bring down unemployment and to continue to meet the health needs of the population, whatever their cause.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average capital expenditure on the National Health Service per year from 1974 to 1979; and how this compares with the average capital expenditure on the National Health Service per year from 1979 onwards.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Average annual National Health Service capital spending in England was £325 million between 1974-75 and 1978-79 and £641 million between 1979-80 and 1984-85.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether income from the sale of National Health Service property is taken into account when allocating funds to the National Health Service health regions and health districts, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not take this income into account when we allocate funds to regional health

authorities. The allocation of funds to district health authorities is a matter for RHAs to determine in the light of local needs and circumstances. As a general rule, we expect districts to be allowed to keep receipts from the sales of land or property without prejudice to their future allocations. But in the event, for example, of the sale of a large mental illness or mental handicap hospital serving a number of districts, we would expect the region to bear the income from the sale in mind in considering how to deploy resources generally to promote services in the districts concerned.

Hospital Contractors (VAT)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated loss of revenue from the freeing of hospital contractors from value added tax.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No special VAT arrangements apply to hospital contractors. Health authorities, in common with Government Departments, are able to reclaim VAT paid on certain contracted-out services. There was no loss to the Exchequer on existing contracts when the arrangement was introduced. Health authorities' cash allocations were adjusted accordingly. The effect in relation to new contracts is not determinable.

Doctors

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many doctors providing treatment in the private sector do not also work in the National Health Service; and how many were not trained in the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have this information.

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the net income to the National Health Service from services provided to private patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 14 December 1984 at columns 667-68.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to satisfy himself of the adequacy of the arrangements to prevent fraud in the course of co-operation between private hospitals and the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The form of any contractual agreement and the terms of the financial arrangements are for negotiation between a health authority and the private body, but are subject to audit in the usual way.

Opticians (Prices)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the abolition of the sole right of qualified opticians to dispense glasses has led to a fall in prices to below the level previously charged for National Health Service glasses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes, we are satisfied that, in addition to a range of attractive frames at prices which many would not have thought possible 18 months ago, the current prices of many prescription glasses compare favourably with prices of National Health Service glasses prior to April of this year.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the average hospital waiting list in September from 1974 to 1978; and how this compares with the average September waiting list from 1979 to 1984;

(2) what was the fall in inpatient waiting lists between April 1979 and April 1981;

(3) what was the fall in inpatient waiting lists between April 1982 and April 1984.

Mr. John Patten: The district inpatient list return (SBH203) was introduced in September 1975 and records the position on 31 March and 30 September each year. The available information since 30 September 1975 is given in table 4 of the Department's statistical note 1/85 "In-Patient Waiting List on 30 September 1984, NHS Hospitals, England", a copy of which is in the Library. Information for September 1974 is not available.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the criteria used for compiling hospital waiting lists; and how those criteria have changed since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The coverage of the district inpatient waiting list returns (SBH203) is given on the first page of the latest bound volume of district returns for 30 September 1984, a copy of which is in the Library. There has been no change in coverage since the introduction of this return in September 1975, but the guidance notes for completion were clarified on two occasions in September 1979 and March 1980. Details of these clarification notes were given in health notice HN(79)103 and statistical memorandum SM(80)2/1, copies of which are available in the Library.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish for each year since 1978 and at the latest available date the number of National Health Service hospital wards closed *(a)* permanently and *(b)* temporarily and the average number of National Health Service hospital beds which could not be used because of staff or other shortages.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have information in the form requested. Numbers of beds in hospitals or parts of hospitals approved for permanent closure are as follows. These are all beds no longer sensibly required for any patient services. We do not collect information on temporary closures or on beds which cannot be used.

Number of beds approved for closure

Year	*Number*
1978	4,895
1979	1,987
1980	2,517
1981	2,722
1982	1,157
1983	4,336
1984	4,822
1985*	869

* To 31 March.

Family Expenditure

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the analysis of the Family Expenditure Survey, detailing data on the numbers of poor and low income households.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 3 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) at column *177*.

British Pensioners (South Africa)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost of providing retirement pensions at the current United Kingdom level for *(a)* all British pensioners living in the Republic of South Africa and *(b)* all British pensioners aged 75 and over living in the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Whitney: The cost of paying retirement pensions to British pensioners living in South Africa at current United Kingdom levels, including those of 75 years and over, is estimated at about £8·5 million. Separate figures for pensioners aged 75 and over are not available.

Population Statistics

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people there were aged *(a)* between 65 to 75 years and *(b)* over 75 years in (i) Dorset (ii) Devon (iii) Cornwall and (iv) Somerset in each year since, and including, 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is as follows:

Resident population

County	*Estimated resident population: mid year* 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
(a) Aged 65–74						
Dorset	78,200	78,400	79,000	77,800	75,300	73,500
Devon	114,000	114,400	112,600	110,600	107,200	104,500
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	49,200	49,400	49,000	48,700	47,000	46,500
Somerset	45,200	45,800	46,100	45,400	44,200	43,600
(b) Aged 75 and over						
Dorset	51,600	53,100	54,600	56,300	58,700	61,000
Devon	74,800	76,000	78,300	80,900	83,400	85,500
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	29,100	30,600	30,800	31,400	33,500	34,200
Somerset	28,800	29,600	30,600	30,800	32,500	33,300

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list *(a)* the number of people aged between 65 years and 75 years and *(b)* the number of people of 75 years and over in 1979 and each subsequent year in each social services authority.

Mr. John Patten: The following information is available for regional health authority areas in England and Wales. Population estimates are not available for social service authority areas.

RHA	*Estimated resident population: mid-year* 1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
(a) Aged 65-74						
Northern	283,600	282,900	280,600	276,600	270,300	264,000
Yorkshire	338,300	339,100	336,200	329,400	318,600	309,700
Trent	415,700	418,600	417,500	411,900	402,200	392,500
East Anglian	182,700	186,000	186,400	184,200	179,700	176,900
North West Thames	296,700	297,100	295,800	289,500	281,000	273,000
North East Thames	348,600	349,300	343,900	336,700	327,200	317,200
South East Thames	369,200	369,500	365,700	359,600	348,800	338,500
South West Thames	293,300	293,900	290,600	284,300	274,800	266,000
Wessex	274,300	276,700	277,100	273,900	267,100	261,400
Oxford	177,100	178,400	179,600	178,900	173,300	171,500
South Western	326,100	326,900	324,900	320,500	312,000	305,800
West Midlands	441,300	446,000	444,700	440,600	429,400	421,100
Mersey	218,700	219,000	218,000	213,500	206,900	201,400
North Western	393,200	390,700	385,900	376,100	361,700	348,900
Wales	272,700	274,100	272,200	268,700	262,800	258,600
(b) Aged 75 and over						
Northern	161,400	165,200	170,100	174,400	176,900	180,800
Yorkshire	204,400	210,200	214,200	218,900	224,300	229,400
Trent	238,000	245,900	252,600	259,900	266,600	276,300
East Anglian	110,000	114,600	118,100	122,400	126,900	131,400
North West Thames	173,300	178,400	183,600	188,500	195,400	201,300
North East Thames	212,100	215,700	219,300	224,600	231,100	236,100

RHA	Estimated resident population: mid-year					
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
South East Thames	242,700	247,700	251,700	257,500	265,700	270,900
South West Thames	190,100	197,200	201,800	206,800	211,000	217,700
Wessex	174,100	179,700	184,800	190,100	198,000	204,000
Oxford	107,400	109,800	113,400	116,600	120,100	123,400
South Western	205,200	211,600	217,600	222,900	230,800	236,300
West Midlands	245,100	252,700	259,400	266,700	272,900	282,500
Mersey	126,900	129,500	133,300	136,300	139,100	142,400
North Western	228,500	234,900	240,900	246,200	249,400	253,500
Wales	158,900	164,100	168,400	172,400	176,600	181,400

Arm Amputees (Chiropody)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reach a decision on whether or not to provide private chiropody for war pensioner arm amputees when their need for treatment cannot be met through the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: As soon as possible.

Special Health Authorities (Appointments)

Mr. Walden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be appointing new chaimen and members to the special health authorities for London postgraduate teaching hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The term of office of six chairmen of the special health authorities for London postgraduate teaching hospitals and some 80 members ends on 31 March 1986. We are currently seeking nominations for these posts and if hon. Members wish to recommend any individuals I invite them to write to me by 30 September 1985. Reappointments and changes will be announced in due course.

Newcastle Pensions Office (Dispute)

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what effects are still being felt as a result of industrial action at the Newcastle pensions office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: There are still substantial arrears of work leading to delays of up to four weeks in dealing with correspondence. However, substantial progress in clearing the backlog is being made and, in general, payments of pension are being issued on time and the emergency payment arrangements have now ceased.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make extra resources available to regional health authorities' for the development and expansion of rehabilitation and treatement centres for drug addicts.

Mr. John Patten: We have already made available £11½ million centrally to pump-prime local projects. The possible need for further money will be considered in the light of health authorities' plans for service development and other competing priorities.

Coronary Bypass Operations

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures showing coronary bypass operations per 100,000 of the population, in the west midlands, the national average, and the national target figure for this form of surgery for the latest available date.

Mr. John Patten: During 1984 West Midlands regional health authority carried out coronary artery bypass graft operations at an approximate rate of 10 per 100,000 population. It plans to double the number of operations by the end of the decade. The national average figure for 1983, the latest available date, was 16·86 operations per 100,000 population. We do not set a national target figure, but health authorities have been asked to develop coronary artery surgery as a priority.

Students (Accommodation)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department concerning the number and proportion of students who live in accommodation covered by approved tenancy agreements which include rental for part of the vacations; and what effect the proposals contained in the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security" will have on these students and this sector of the housing market.

Mr. Newton: The number of students living in accommodation covered by tenancy agreements is not known. The Green Paper states the Government's general aim that students should have one channel of support through the education system rather than the income support or housing benefit schemes. What effect, if any, that policy would have for students with tenancies and the relevant sector of the housing market cannot be evaluated until detailed proposals have been drawn up.

Nurses

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why nurses are not considered for distinction awards in the same way as are doctors and surgeons.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

National Insurance

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had in his consultations with the computer industry, including the suppliers of pay-roll packages, on his Departments'

requirements for year-end information from employers on national insurance contributions under the new mutliple regime; and when he expects to make his response.

Mr. Whitney: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further action he proposes to take to trace former supplementary benefit claimants from whom benefit was wrongfully withheld on grounds of voluntary unemployment; and whether he will make it his policy that no action will be taken to destroy the relevant files before the House has had an opportunity to debate the matter.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Basildon Hospital

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of births at Basildon hospital in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Hospital Radio

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidelines to health authorities regarding the availability of hospital radio.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Welfield Hospital, Hatfield

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the proposed expansion of the Welfield hospital in Hatfield is expected to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about arrangements for the marketing of products and processes at the Public Health Laboratory Service Board's centre for applied microbiology and research.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 April 1985, c. *772*]: I am pleased to announce that the Public Health Laboratory Service Board has entered into a further agreement with Porton International Limited whereby Porton International Limited will construct and operate a new fermentation production plant, funded wholly by it, at the centre for applied microbiology and research (CAMR). Up to one third of the new plant will be made available for public health laboratory service research and development activities at CAMR.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total expenditure on National Health Service ancillary services for the latest available year including practitioner service staff;

(2) what was the total expenditure on National Health Service professional and technical services for the latest available year;

(3) what was the total expenditure on National Health Service administrative and clerical services for the latest available year;

(4) what was the total expenditure on National Health Service works and maintenance services for the latest available year.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 July 1985, c. *374*]: We do not collect figures in this precise form. The table gives figures derived from the annual accounts of health authorities in England for 1983-84, which are summarised in House of Commons paper No. 331 of 1984-85. Booklets giving a more detailed summary of the accounts for recent years are also available in the Library.

Current expenditure by Health Authorities, 1983-84

	£ million
Catering, domestic/cleaning, portering, laundry and linen services and transport	1,146·9
Medical and paramedical supporting services	734·4
Administrative and clerical support services at local level (including ambulance service administration)	522·0
Headquarters administration	361·2
Building, engineering and grounds maintenance	436·1

Notes

1. The figures exclude the expenses of the Dental Estimates Board, Prescription Pricing Authority and other special health authorities providing NHS central services.
2. The costs of ancillary staff employed in the family practitioner services are not separately identifiable centrally.
3. The figure for catering, domestic etc services includes expenditure on those services which appear in the published summary as part of "Headquarters administration". This expenditure is excluded from the total for headquarters administration given in the table.

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give, in round figures, the annual cost of the National Health Service for each of the last five years, specifying for each year the amount spent on administrative, clinical and auxiliary services, respectively, and the percentage figures each represents of the whole;

(2) if he will give, in round figures, the annual cost of the National Health Service for each of the past five years, specifying the numbers employed and the total wage bill in respect of each year, giving the wage bill as a percentage of the total annual cost;

(3) if he will give, in round figures, the total annual cost of the National Health Service for each of the past five years, broken down into regions and districts, respectively; and what is the percentage figure each represents of the whole.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. *132*]: For the analysis of expenditure by function, and for the breakdown between pay and non-pay items, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on 18 January 1984, at columns *251-55* and 21 December 1984 at columns *412-14*. These are the latest figures available. The numbers of staff employed in the hospital and community health services (in whole time equivalents) on 30 September of each year were:

	Numbers
1979	769,800
1980	788,100

	Numbers
1981	818,700
1982	825,000
1983	823,800

The table shows the breakdown of hospital and community health services current expenditure between regions. An analysis by districts (areas for 1980-81 and 1981-82) is included in summaries of English health authorities' accounts which our Department has prepared as a series of booklets. Copies of these are available in the Library.

Hospital and community health services—Current expenditure by health authorities

	1983-84		1982-83		1981-82		1980-81		1979-80	
	£ million	per cent.	£ million	per cent	£ million	per cent	£ million	per cent	£ million	per cent.
Northern	554·0	6·4	520·8	6·4	482·7	6·3	437·0	6·3	338·0	6·3
Yorkshire	619·6	7·2	583·4	7·2	547·8	7·2	494·2	7·2	380·7	7·1
Trent	742·5	8·6	696·7	8·6	646·9	8·5	585·4	8·5	449·3	8·4
East Anglian	312·5	3·6	289·0	3·5	269·2	3·5	244·6	3·5	188·9	3·5
North West Thames	665·4	7·7	633·2	7·8	650·0	8·5	580·1	8·4	450·6	8·5
North East Thames	841·1	9·7	800·7	9·8	700·2	9·2	636·3	9·2	488·2	9·2
South East Thames	739·4	8·6	700·4	8·6	662·7	8·7	603·0	8·8	471·2	8·8
South West Thames	559·1	6·5	530·4	6·5	515·0	6·8	465·4	6·8	361·3	6·8
Wessex	449·2	5·2	418·4	5·1	389·0	5·1	349·4	5·1	271·2	5·1
Oxford	352·8	4·1	334·7	4·1	313·1	4·1	285·3	4·1	223·6	4·2
South Western	540·4	6·3	507·3	6·2	474·3	6·2	426·8	6·2	332·1	6·2
West Midlands	861·3	10·0	809·7	9·9	751·7	9·9	681·9	9·9	532·2	10·0
Mersey	456·6	5·3	436·2	5·4	407·4	5·3	368·9	5·4	287·5	5·4
North Western	769·2	8·9	729·6	9·0	679·8	8·9	603·6	8·8	463·2	8·7
Total (Regions)	8,463·1	98·1	7,990·5	98·1	7,489·8	98·2	6,761·9	98·2	5,238·2	98·2
London post-graduate special health authorities*	162·3	1·9	150·7	1·9	140·2	1·8	123·5	1·8	94·7	1·8
Total	8,625·4	100·0	8,141·2	100·0	7,630·0	100·0	6,885·4	100·0	5,332·9	100·0

* Boards of Governors.

Tooth Decay

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates to be the cost of treating tooth decay in school age children in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 July 1985, c. *137*]: The cost of providing fillings, crowns and inlays or pinlays in school age children in England under the general dental service for each of the last five years was as follows:

	£ million
1980	19·9
1981	21·7
1982	21·8
1983	22·4
1984	21·8

The cost of similar treatment provided under the community and hospital dental services cannot be separately identified.

Repatriation Scheme

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of individuals aided by his Department's repatriation scheme in 1982, 1983 and 1984 and the expenditure incurred in each of those years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 July 1985, c. *307*]: The following information is readily available about single payments for voluntary repatriation expenses made under the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976. The table shows the number of persons assisted in 1982, January 1983 to November 1983 inclusive and December 1983 to May 1985 inclusive.

	Number of cases	Amount £
1982	49	16,534
January 1983 to November 1983	39	30,113
December 1983 to May 1985	40	

Nurses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list nursing manpower levels in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1979; and which district or regional health authorities have been affected most resulting from decreases in such manpower.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 July 1985, c. *234*]: Figures for regional health authorities are shown in the table. We could not extract the information for district health authorities without disproportionate cost. We do not yet have figures for 1984 at this level of detail. Apart from small decreases in four regions in 1982, the figures show nursing manpower levels in hospitals have continued to increase since 1979.

(England)
*NHS Hospital Nursing Staff**

Whole time equivalent†

Region	*1979*	*30 September ‡1980*	*‡1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Northern	21,300	22,500	23,300	23,500	26,800
Yorkshire	24,000	25,100	26,900	26,600	29,800
Trent	28,900	29,000	30,800	31,100	35,200
East Anglian	11,500	11,900	12,500	12,800	14,500
North west Thames	24,000	24,100	26,000	25,600	28,000
North east Thames	27,900	28,100	29,100	31,500	34,600
South east Thames	25,900	26,500	28,000	27,800	31,000
South west Thames	21,300	21,700	22,600	22,200	24,800
Wessex	17,600	18,200	19,000	19,300	21,900
Oxford	12,800	13,500	14,300	14,500	16,600
South western	21,200	22,400	23,400	23,400	26,100
West Midlands	32,200	33,900	36,100	36,900	40,800
Mersey	18,800	19,200	20,000	20,000	22,300
North Western	27,800	29,700	31,400	32,300	37,100
Total	315,200	325,900	343,300	347,600	389,700

* Includes hospital midwives and hospital agency nurses and midwives.
† Figures are WTE rounded to nearest 100.
‡ In 1980 the working week for nursing and midwifery staff was reduced from 40 to 37½ hours and part of the increase of WTE's between 1979 and 1981 will be accounted for by additional staff recruited as a direct result of this change.
‖ Due to rounding the sum of the component figures may not agree with the totals.

Resettlement Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of citizens who have been accommodated in resettlement units administered by his Department since 1979.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 July 1985]: I regret that the information requested is not available, but our statistics show that the units are used by approximately 1,600 people each night.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been submitted by retirement pensioners to his Department for housing benefit in each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 July 1985]: The information is not available in the precise form requested. It is estimated that the average number of pensioner households receiving housing benefit, or help with housing costs through the former schemes, is as follows:

Number of pensioner households receiving help with housing costs
Great Britain

thousands

Year	*Help with rent and rates through supplementary benefit*	*Rent rebate*	*Rent allowance*	*Rate Rebate*
1979	1,630	800	170	2,190
1980	1,570	850	210	2,300
1981	1,640	880	200	2,430
1982	1,690	860	200	2,490
1983	—	1,970	520	3,910

Notes:
1. Housing benefit was introduced for some in November 1982 and for all from April 1983. Before this, help with rent and rates was provided through the supplementary benefit scheme or the former rent rebate and allowance and rate rebate schemes.
2. The figures for 1982 exclude the effect of the partial start of housing benefit.
3. Claims for housing benefit are made to local authorities.

Beds and Nurses

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospital beds and qualified nurses there are per head of population according to each health authority; and how this compares with each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 July, c. *582*]: The available figures are shown in the tables. It should be noted that the number of inpatient cases treated in England rose from 5,132,000 in 1973 to 6,019,000 in 1983 and the number of cases treated per available bed rose from 12·7 to 17·5 over this period.

Table A

NHS hospitals in England
Average daily number of available beds per thousand population

*Region**	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Northern	8·8	8·7	8·6	8·3	8·2	8·1	8·1	8·0	7·9	8·0
Yorkshire	8·9	8·8	8·7	8·6	8·5	8·3	8·1	8·0	7·9	7·7

Region*	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Trent	7·1	7·1	7·1	7·1	7·0	6·9	6·9	6·7	6·7	6·6
East Anglian	7·4	7·3	7·4	7·3	7·1	7·0	7·0	6·9	6·8	6·8
North West Thames	9·2	9·0	8·9	8·5	8·3	8·1	7·9	7·8	7·5	7·3
North East Thames	8·5	8·4	8·4	8·2	8·0	7·8	7·6	7·6	7·8	7·7
South East Thames	8·5	8·7	8·5	8·4	8·1	7·9	7·7	7·6	7·5	7·4
South West Thames	10·7	10·0	9·8	9·6	9·2	8·9	8·6	8·4	8·2	8·0
Wessex	8·0	7·5	7·4	7·3	7·1	7·0	6·9	6·7	6·7	6·5
Oxford	7·0	6·6	6·6	6·3	6·1	6·0	5·8	5·7	5·5	5·4
South Western	9·2	8·8	8·5	8·3	8·2	8·0	7·9	7·8	7·7	7·6
West Midlands	7·5	7·3	7·3	7·2	7·1	7·0	6·9	6·8	6·8	6·7
Mersey	9·5	9·4	9·4	9·2	9·2	8·9	8·7	8·6	8·4	8·2
North Western	8·0	7·9	7·8	7·8	7·7	7·6	7·6	7·6	7·6	7·6
England	8·5	8·3	8·2	8·1	7·9	7·7	7·6	7·5	7·4	7·3

* Because of NHS restructuring in 1974 and 1982 the regional figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period.

Table B

*Hospital Nursing Staff**
Qualified nurses per head of population

Region†	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	‡1980	1981	1982	1983
Northern	3·1	3·4	3·2	3·3	3·5	3·7	3·8	4·0	4·1	4·2
Yorkshire	2·9	3·0	3·0	3·2	3·2	3·3	3·4	3·7	3·8	3·9
Trent	2·4	2·5	2·6	2·7	2·8	3·1	3·1	3·3	3·5	3·5
East Anglian	2·4	2·6	2·8	2·8	2·8	3·0	3·1	3·2	3·3	3·4
North West Thames	3·1	3·1	3·4	3·4	3·6	3·5	3·6	4·1	4·0	3·9
North East Thames	2·8	3·0	3·2	3·4	3·8	3·3	3·6	3·7	4·2	4·4
South East Thames	2·9	3·0	3·4	3·6	3·6	3·6	3·7	3·9	4·0	4·1
South West Thames	3·3	3·4	3·7	3·6	3·6	3·7	3·7	3·9	3·9	4·0
Wessex	2·7	3·1	2·9	2·9	3·0	3·2	3·3	3·3	3·5	3·6
Oxford	2·5	2·5	2·5	2·6	2·7	2·8	2·9	3·0	3·1	3·1
South Western	2·8	3·0	3·1	3·2	3·3	3·4	3·7	4·0	3·9	3·9
West Midlands	2·4	2·4	2·6	2·8	2·9	2·9	3·1	3·3	3·5	3·6
Mersey	3·3	3·7	3·5	3·6	3·8	3·8	3·9	4·1	4·2	4·3
North Western	2·8	2·9	3·0	3·2	3·3	3·3	3·6	3·8	4·1	4·2
England	2·8	2·9	3·1	3·2	3·3	3·3	3·4	3·7	3·8	3·9

Notes:
* Includes hospital midwives; excludes agency nurses and midwives.
† Because of NHS restructuring in 1974 and 1982 the Regional figures are not strictly comparable over the period.
‡ Figures not adjusted for effect of reduction in working week.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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15th July—26th July 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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